



5-Year Plan (2008 to 2013) Benton Conservation District

For More Information Contact: Mark Nielson, 509-786-1923, mark-nielson@wa.nacdnet.org

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Organization of the Benton Conservation District

A political subdivision of the State of Washington – authorities, powers and structure contained in RCW 89.08.

Function of the Benton Conservation District

Provide leadership to secure available technical, financial and educational resources, whatever their source, to focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land manager with conservation of soil, water, and related natural & energy resources.

We Serve & Why

To facilitate responsible stewardship of the land and its resources for and by the residents of our county/district

Mission of the Benton Conservation District

The Mission of the Benton Conservation District is to facilitate responsible stewardship of the land and resources for the residents of Benton County through the application and administration of various volunteer and cooperative partnership programs using all available funding sources.

Values of the Benton Conservation District

- Conservation of all natural resources
- Voluntary Cooperation
- Partnerships
- Economic Viability
- Open Communication
- Information Sharing
- Integrity
- Wise Land Use
- Public Awareness of Our Goals and Objectives
- Professionalism
- Proactive in Problem Solving
- Conservation/Stewardship Education
- Customer Service

Natural Resource Priorities, Goals, Strategies & Proposed Actions:

Tier 1

- Air Quality
 - Water Quality & Quantity Issues
- Education – included in all
District Operations – included in all

Tier 2

- Wildlife Habitat
- Public Access / Open Spaces
- Urban & Non Ag/Rural

Air Quality

By January 2013, reduce wind erosion and improve air quality in Benton County through the conservation treatment on 50% of the critical eroding areas.

Strategies:

- Identify the most critical areas for wind erosion.
- Identify methods of erosion control
- Work with the Benton Clean Air Authority & Ecology for establishing a base line data and tracking system for the area

Actions:

- Establish a technical advisory group
- Establish a buffer along SR 221
- Secure funding
- Staff working with Agency Partners in developing methods of erosion control.

Water Quality

By January 2013, the water quality of the river and streams in Benton County will have shown continual improvement in terms of DOE evaluation standards.

Strategies:

- Identify the rivers and streams that do not meet the DOE water quality standards and the parameters we will work on.
- Find existing data and establish a baseline for these streams and rivers.
- Identify methods to bring these rivers and streams into compliance
- Continue work in Yakima & Columbia Basin WRIAs planning and implementation activities

Actions:

- Work to secure funding to monitor and improve the water quality in those streams and rivers that are of concern.
- Assess local stream and river bank activities that could impact water quality and work with the landowners to implement water quality improvement practices.
- Staff working with Agency Partners in researching and developing methods of river and stream water quality improvement.

Water Quantity

By January 2013 we will increase water conservation practices throughout the county to show a 10% improvement in the amount of water conserved and used more efficiently.

Strategies:

- Identify water conservation practices that assist agricultural water users.
- Identify water conservation practices that assist small farm and urban water users.

Actions:

- Work to secure funding to implement water conservation practices throughout the county.
- Assist county residents with implementation of water conservation practices through both technical assistance as well as cost share programs.
- Work with Agency Partners in researching and developing improved methods of water conservation practices such as innovative irrigation implementation, control and scheduling.
- Assist county residents with knowledge and implementation of Xeriscaping techniques to reduce irrigation demands.

Wildlife Habitat

By January 2013, there will be noticeable and demonstrable acreage preserved and/or improved in available fish and wildlife habitat within the District.

Strategies:

- Establish a baseline map of habitat types and conditions
- Identify the most critical areas for fish and/or wildlife habitat restorations
- Work to learn, test, and implement cost effective habitat improvement methods
- Identify current high quality habitat areas, and work with landowners, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations to preserve and protect these areas.

Actions:

- Increase staff capabilities in habitat improvement methods and GIS applications
- Use GIS with aerial photography or remote sensing to identify high quality habitat areas and critical areas in need of restoration
- Improve riparian habitats along the Yakima River and Snipes, Spring and Glad and Amon creeks.
- Build partnerships with governmental agencies and NGOs for funding and in-kind contributions to support habitat restoration and improvement
- Work with agency partners to develop efficient restoration techniques

Public Access / Open Spaces

By January 2013, the Benton Conservation District will assist various groups/public to obtain two additional access points to the Yakima River for recreational use.

Strategies:

- Identify likely properties for access to the Yakima River
- Identify user groups, interested public and relevant agencies
- Identify types of use

Actions:

- Establish a technical advisory group composed of public and agency personnel
- Secure funding for the purchase and management of Public access and open spaces
- Staff working with Agency Partners to develop long-term management strategies

Urban & Non Ag/Rural Areas

By January 2013, there will be five programs offered to enhance natural resource conservation in the urban interface areas of Benton County

Strategies:

- Provide positive educational experiences regarding agriculture and natural resource related issues
- Bring a balance to information for the public
- Work with other organizations and public agencies to protect and conserve the land while allowing farming to continue
- Assisting and educating land owners on proper water use, grazing, weed control, fire-wise considerations, fertilizer and pesticides use, and other natural resource issues
- Encourage sustainable agricultural practices by interfacing urban consumers with agriculture producers.

Actions:

- Publish an on-line newsletter quarterly
- Establish "talking points papers" that attempt to debunk environmental myths
- Establish partnerships with urban organizations that promote conservation of natural resources
- Evaluate other Conservation District's programs for consideration in Benton County to enhance rural and urban interface
- Evaluate other urban conservation practices, such as Xeriscaping and urban nutrient management.

Critical Geographic Areas: (attached map)

- *Enter here the names of the critical geographic areas for natural resource conservation in the district.*

Information – Education Priorities and Goals:

By January 2013, there will be three educational programs offered as part of the public education process to enhance learning about natural resource conservation in Benton County.

Strategies:

- Continue existing programs like "Salmon in the Classroom"
- Evaluate and implement successful programs utilized by other agencies (Example. . . "Provider Pals", "Water on Wheels")
- Build understanding between urban youth and rural resource providers

Actions:

- Secure financial resources so that human resources can provide desired results
- Promote resource industries to help get their message heard
- Enhance existing Web Site as a means of providing electronic educational tools

District Operations Priorities, Goals:

By January 2013, establish local funding mechanisms, which will create a stable funding source.

Strategies:

- Establish a 10 year Assessment system with local legislative authority
- Establish and continue rental income through acquisition of land and/or buildings and equipment
- Support the expanded use of Benton Conservation Association

Actions:

- Implementation of RCW 89.08.400 to create an assessment.
- Identify quality lessees for long term growth
- Create staffing that produces a constant income/revenue flow

Trends Impacting Conservation in the Benton Conservation District

- Decrease Funding
- Funding Sources
- Developing Partnerships
- Population Growth and Increase uses of resources available
- Increased Government Regulations
- Air Quality Concerns
- Increased Education and Public Awareness
- Decrease of Habitat
- Decrease of Public Access

Natural Resource Data:

Enter basic information on resources and data here.

Staffing Needs

- District Manager
- Education Specialist
- Agricultural Resource Technician
- Water Resources Technician
- Bookkeeper / Administrative
- Engineer

Annual Budget Needs

- *Enter a summary of the annual budget needed to carry out the plan of the XYZ Conservation District based on the above information.*

Key Decision Makers

- DOE regulators
- Partnering agencies
- Educators
- NRCS
- County Commissioners
- County Landowners

Priority Actions – 12 Months

- *See above*

Washington Conservation Districts assisting land managers with their conservation choices