

# Benton County Comprehensive Plan 2026 Update



# Timeline



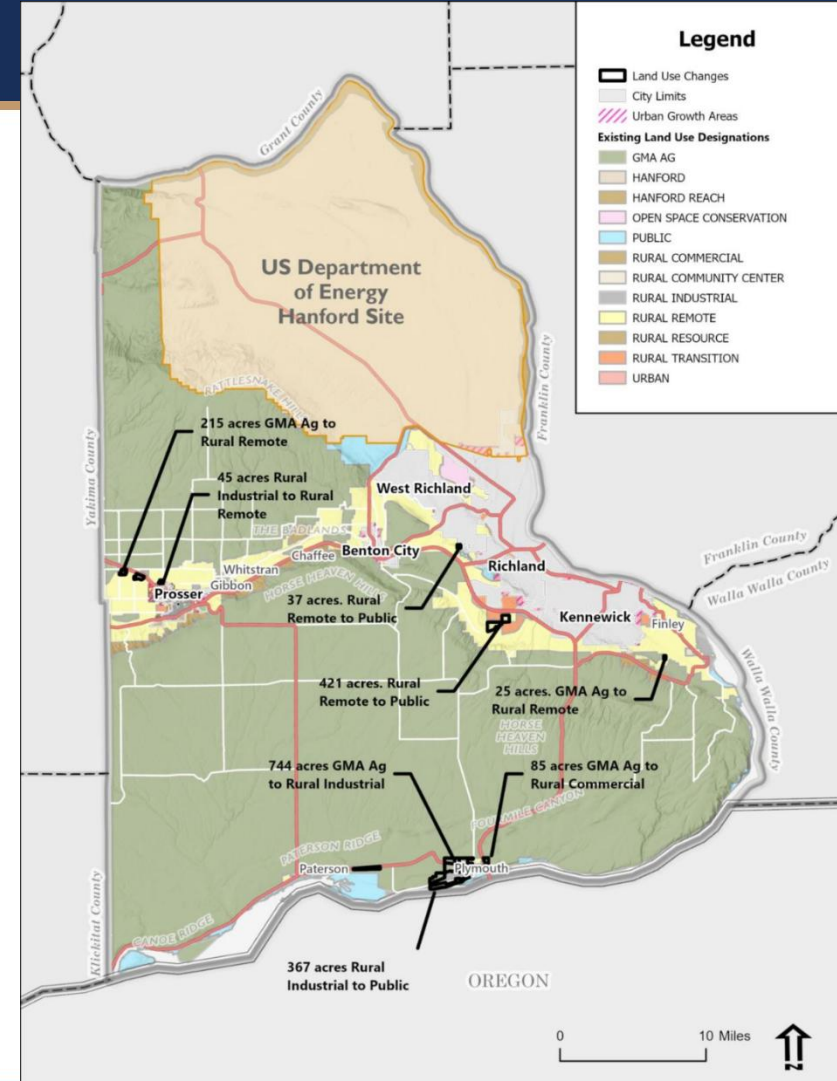
# Presentation Overview

- Comprehensive Plan Update Highlights
- Development Regulations Update Highlights
- Draft EIS
- Next Steps

# Land Use Designation Changes

## Land Use Designation Changes

From	To	Acres
GMA AG	RURAL INDUSTRIAL	744
GMA AG	RURAL COMMERCIAL	85
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RURAL INDUSTRIAL	RURAL REMOTE	45
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RURAL REMOTE	OPEN SPACE/PUBLIC	457



# Housing



# Housing

- New GMA goal – plan for and accommodate affordable housing to all economic segments
- Show sufficient land capacity to meet needs
- Make adequate provisions for projected housing needs
- Address racially disparate impacts, displacement and exclusion
- County to provide new housing for 80% and above median household income (\$87,316); lower household incomes and emergency shelter needs to be accommodated in cities



# Housing Allocations

Jurisdiction	Total Units Allocated	Permanent Housing Needs by Affordability Level (% of AMI)							Emergency Housing Allocation
		0-30% Non-PSH	0-30% PSH	>30-50%	>50-80%	>80-100%	>100-120%	>120%	
Benton City	765	97	61	152	107	59	67	222	3
Kennewick	12,626	1,597	1,007	2,513	1,772	974	1,104	3,659	57
Prosser	765	97	61	152	107	59	67	222	5
Richland	14,155	1,789	1,130	2,817	1,988	1,092	1,237	4,102	52
West Richland	4,975	629	397	990	698	384	435	1,442	19
Unincorporated Rural	4,974	0	0	0	0	384	435	4,155	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>38,260</b>	<b>4,209</b>	<b>2,656</b>	<b>6,624</b>	<b>4,672</b>	<b>2,952</b>	<b>3,345</b>	<b>13,802</b>	<b>136</b>

# Natural Resources



# Natural Resources

- Updated description of agriculture uses
- More detail on mining/mineral lands and resources
- Added reference to Groundwater Nitrate Action Plan
- Updated the Rural Water Supply Program description
- Expanded and updated discussion on WDFW Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) and shrubsteppe conditions
- Included discussion of draft shrubsteppe mitigation program

# Parks and Recreation



# Parks and Recreation

- Adopts the latest County Parks Plan by reference (if it ends up being approved soon)
- Added discussion on the Badger Canyon DNR property being sought through DNR Trust Land Transfer process
- New section (8.4.1) added under Future Considerations on Open Space preservation
- Updated planned capital improvements

# Economic Development



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# Economic Development

- Adopts the latest County Economic Development plan (2024) and 2026-2030 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) by reference
- Integrates the Industrial Lands Inventory and Energy Overlay analyses, as complements to overall strategy
- Trims outdated details
- Emphasizes role of ag, tourism, Hanford remediation and industrial development in diverse economy
- Agritourism and Plymouth industrial development provide an opportunity to help ag economy

# Capital Facilities



# Capital Facilities

- Emphasized the coordination with Cities on Capital Facility Plans in UGAs
- Updated Table 9-1 with latest improvements planned by school districts, fire districts, and utility providers
- Added in equity and environmental justice considerations
- Expanded CIP description and updates integration with Land Use element

# Transportation



# Transportation Element

- Multimodal emphasis
- Provide for habitat connectivity across roads
- Miscellaneous description updates to rail, air, water, road transportation (including transit) and trail systems
- Level of service analysis for major and minor arterials
  - All roads at A service level (highest) except for Dallas Rd south of I-182, which is D (still acceptable – within UGA)
- LOS for state highways at A or B level except for SR 397 which is projected at D (still acceptable – UGA)
- Planned future improvements



# Utilities



# Utilities

- Added new sections on wind and solar energy
- Made other minor edits and updates
  - Now 6 organizations can serve as Satellite Management Agencies for water utilities
  - Updated plan references (e.g., Solid Waste Management Plan 2023)





# Climate Element – New

# Climate Element

- Required by RCW 36.70A and House Bill 1181
- Ensure that comprehensive plans, development regulations, and regional policies, plans, and strategies adapt to and mitigate the effects of a changing climate
- Support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and per capita vehicle miles traveled
- Prepare for climate impact scenarios
- Foster resiliency to climate impacts and natural hazards
- Protect and enhance environmental, economic, and human health and safety
- Advance environmental justice

RCW 36.70A.070(9)

# Key Hazards Facing Benton County

## Extreme Heat



Higher annual average temperatures, increased high summer temperature.

## Wildfire & Smoke



Higher wildfire frequency and severity; more wildfire smoke and poor air quality.

## Extreme Precipitation



Increased flooding, more frequent and intense rain events.

## Drought



Less summer rain and reduced snowpack.

# Goals and Policies Updates

- Environmental justice/avoid overburdened community impacts
- Climate resiliency updates (water, drought, fire risk, flood risk, etc.) and new Section 2.12
- Housing type varieties – many new policies added
- Reorganization/reduce duplication
- Minor updates to Transportation, Capital Facilities, Utilities
- Implementation strategies



# Wildland Urban Interface



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# WUI

- Counties required to address wildfire hazard and risk in plan update
- 2024 law requires WUI standards in high and very high hazard areas, and directed DNR to prepare updated hazard and risk maps

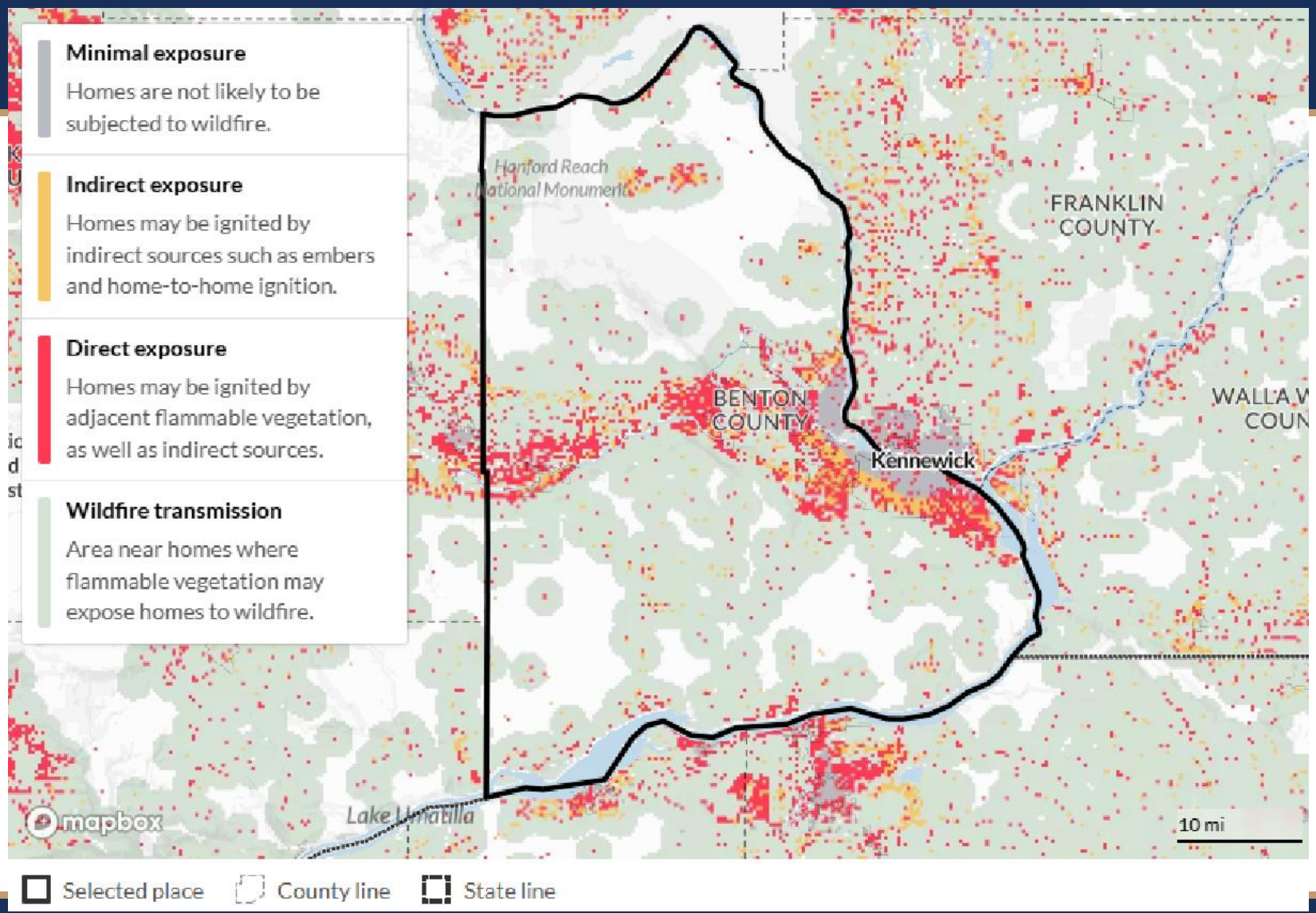
## ***WILDFIRE HAZARD:***

“How likely is fire behavior to occur here?”

## ***WILDFIRE RISK:***

“What are the consequences – to people, structures, infrastructure, and ecosystems - if fire occurs here?”

# USFS Wildfire Risk Reduction Zones



# WUI Recommendations

- Updates to policies to strengthen risk management strategies
- Conduct additional targeted outreach in priority hazard areas
- Fire Chief suggestions – road veg, rural residential areas, enhanced water supply and communications
- Vegetation and firebreak management strategies that also provide habitat benefits/reduce invasive vegetation

# Critical Areas Code Updates and Shrubsteppe Mitigation Plan



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# Critical Areas Code Updates

- Updated definitions and revised Best Available Science sources
- Updated wetlands rating and mitigation ratios per latest state guidance
- Revised stream buffers (Riparian Management Zone) to 100 feet (per WDFW guidance)
- Added in draft shrubsteppe mitigation program provisions
- Other miscellaneous updates

# Shrubsteppe Mitigation Program

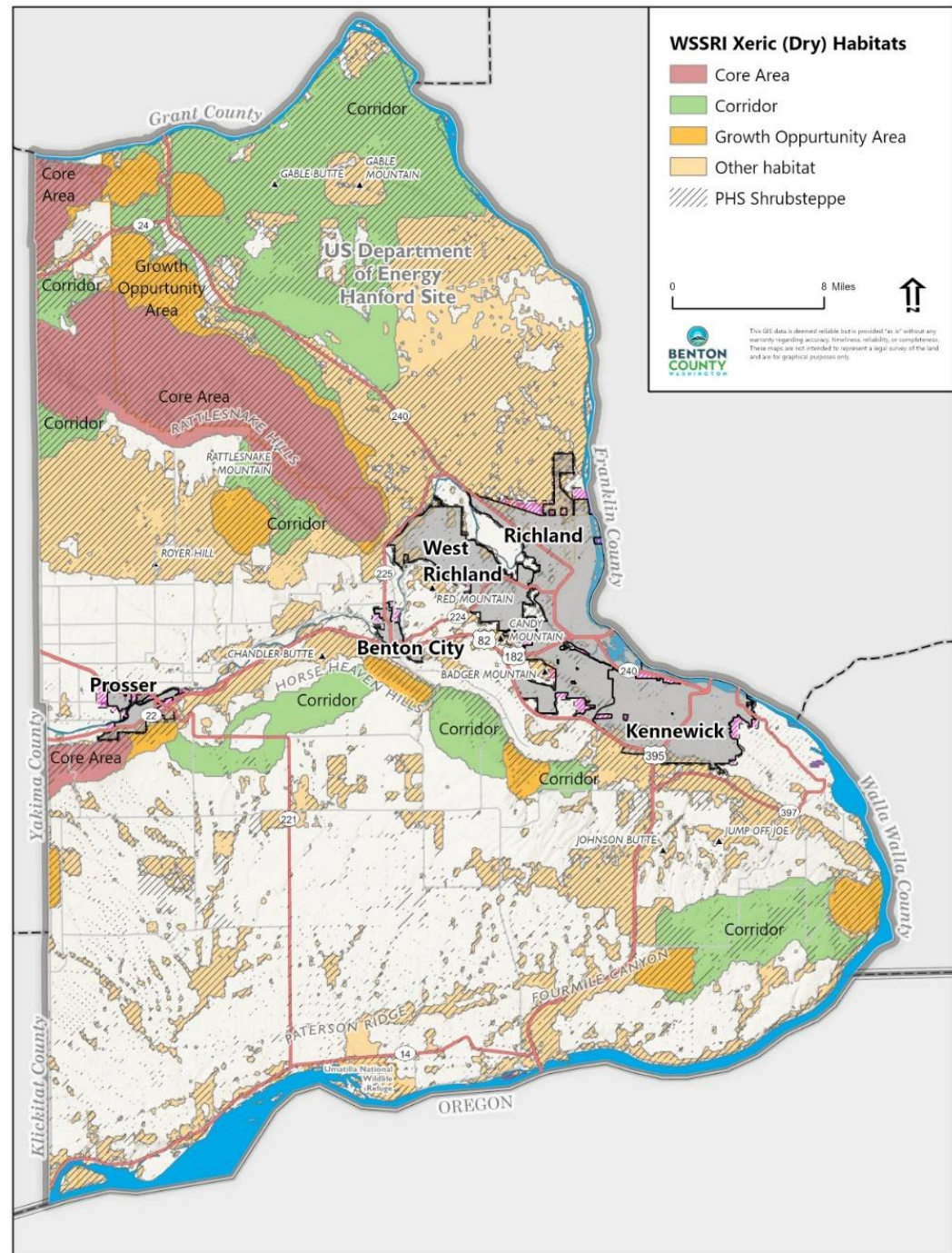


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# Shrubsteppe Mitigation Program

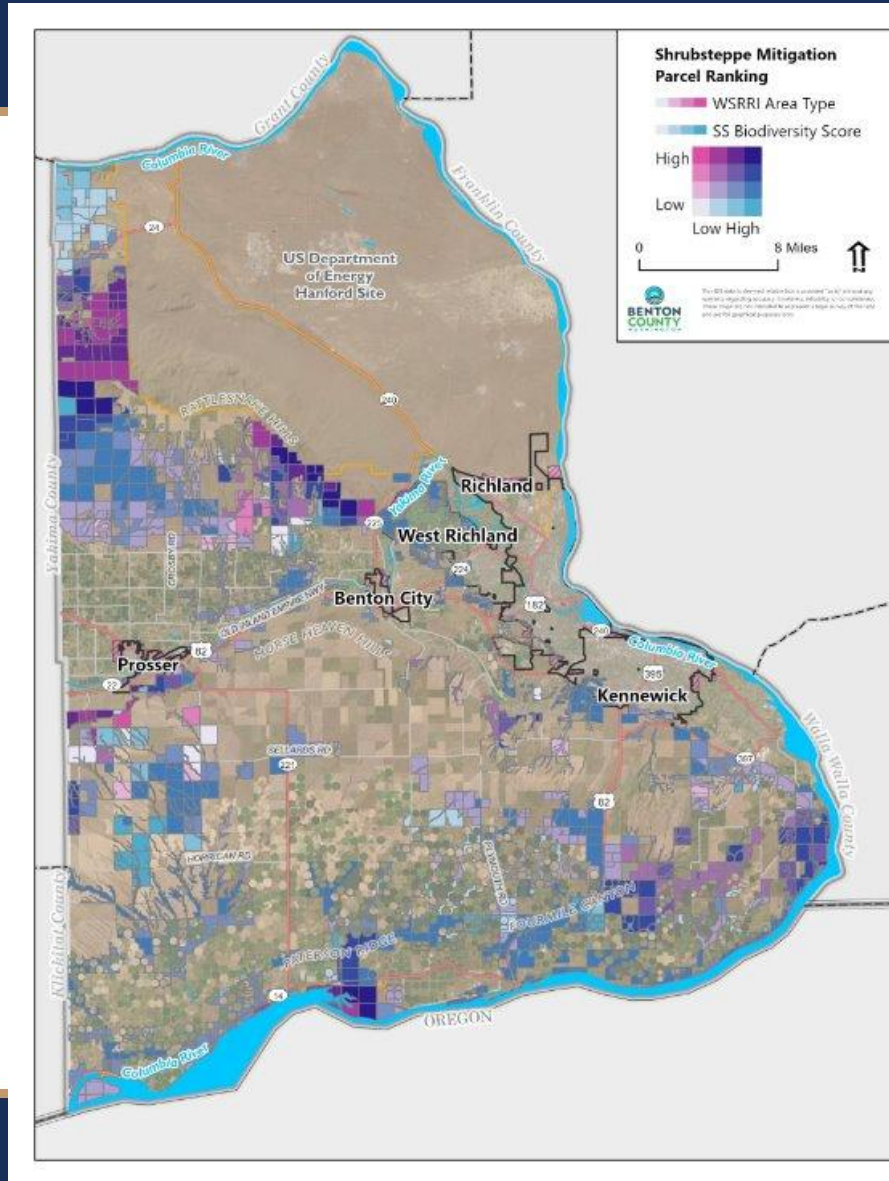
- Builds off interim program Benton CD has with Kennewick, Richland, Benton Co and PNNL
- Working group – County, cities, WDFW and Benton CD
- Developed habitat quality and spatial priority models using WSRRI, PHS and other sources, plus local info
  - To forecast potential habitat impacts
  - To identify potential mitigation properties
- Developed program description (on rev. 5)
- Outreach to land trusts; planning to work with Forterra
- Outreach to landowners with large shrubsteppe holdings

# WSRRI



# Biodiversity and Habitat Quality

- Used to identify mitigation opportunity areas



# Shrubsteppe Habitat Impact by Jurisdiction

**Table 3: Shrubsteppe Quality & Spatial Priority by Jurisdiction**

Jurisdictions	Quality:				Total	
	Poor 1	Moderate 2	Good 3	High 4		
<b>Benton City</b>	<b>0.11</b>	<b>0.42</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0.1</b>
<i>Other PHS Shrubsteppe</i>	<i>0.11</i>	<i>0.42</i>	<i>10</i>		<i>10</i>	<i>0.1</i>
<b>Prosser</b>		<b>26</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>1.6</b>
<i>WSRRI Corridor</i>		<i>6</i>	<i>16</i>		<i>21</i>	<i>0.3</i>
<i>WSRRI Other habitat</i>		<i>11</i>	<i>42</i>		<i>53</i>	<i>0.8</i>
<i>Other PHS Shrubsteppe</i>		<i>10</i>	<i>26</i>		<i>36</i>	<i>0.5</i>
<b>West Richland</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>609</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>758</b>	<b>11.1</b>
<i>WSRRI Other habitat</i>	<i>0.4</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>168</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>196</i>	<i>2.9</i>
<i>Other PHS Shrubsteppe</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>441</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>562</i>	<i>8.2</i>
<b>Kennewick</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>783</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>1,082</b>	<b>15.8</b>
<i>WSRRI Corridor</i>		<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>		<i>2</i>	<i>0.03</i>
<i>WSRRI Other habitat</i>	<i>0.2</i>	<i>102</i>	<i>513</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>667</i>	<i>9.7</i>
<i>Other PHS Shrubsteppe</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>110</i>	<i>270</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>414</i>	<i>6.0</i>
<b>Richland</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>724</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>14.6</b>
<i>WSRRI Corridor</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>169</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>218</i>	<i>3.2</i>
<i>WSRRI Other habitat</i>		<i>10</i>	<i>134</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>165</i>	<i>2.4</i>
<i>Other PHS Shrubsteppe</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>130</i>	<i>421</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>617</i>	<i>9.0</i>
<b>Benton County</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>3,123</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>3,889</b>	<b>56.8</b>
<i>WSRRI Core Area</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>196</i>		<i>241</i>	<i>3.5</i>
<i>WSRRI Corridor</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>107</i>	<i>682</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>815</i>	<i>11.9</i>
<i>WSRRI Growth Opportunity Area</i>		<i>5</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>0.6</i>
<i>WSRRI Other habitat</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>152</i>	<i>980</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>1,194</i>	<i>17.4</i>
<i>Other PHS Shrubsteppe</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>291</i>	<i>1,228</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>1,597</i>	<i>23.5</i>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>1,085</b>	<b>5,332</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>6,850</b>	<b>100.0</b>



# Path Forward

- Finalize roles & responsibilities matrix – County, Cities, CD, WDFW, Forterra and professional services
  - Forterra holds conservation easement
  - CD conducts habitat assessment and prepares restoration plan
- Establish County agreement with Forterra
- Work with landowner(s) to secure mitigation property(ies) through conservation easement(s)
- Adaptive management/refinement of mitigation ratios
- Implement/go live in 2027

# Open Space Preservation Program

- RCW Chapter 84.34 – Landowners can apply for reduced property taxes if they can demonstrate benefit to County open space priorities
- GMA (RCW 37.70A) requires Counties to address protecting and preserving open space, and identify corridors within and between UGAs
- Open Space Taxation program can provide landowners incentive to help meet open space priorities.

# Other Code Updates

- Agri-Tourism: Allow for additional flexibilities in accessory uses and food services
- Benton County Code (BCC) Titles 3, 9, 11, 15, and 17 receive minor updates
  - Compliant with the latest state requirements
  - Clarify local requirements and uses allowed in various zones



# Draft Environmental Impact



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# Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

- Programmatic EIS Required:
  - Benton County has determined that this proposal is likely to have a significant adverse impact on the environment.
  - A programmatic environmental impact statement (EIS) is required under RCW 43.21C.030 (2)(c) and will be prepared.
- Three (3) draft alternatives were formulated and evaluated in the draft EIS

# Alternatives

## *Alternative 1, No Action/No Change in Current Growth Patterns:*

- Maintain the County's existing Comprehensive Plan
- Growth would be expected based on past trends, but no land use changes (densities, designations, etc.) or regulation changes (e.g., zoning) would occur

## *Alternative 2, Aggressive Growth Target with Emphasis on Affordable Housing and Industry :*

- More multi-family housing/affordable housing in higher density areas (Finley and Plymouth)
- Designation of additional industrial areas

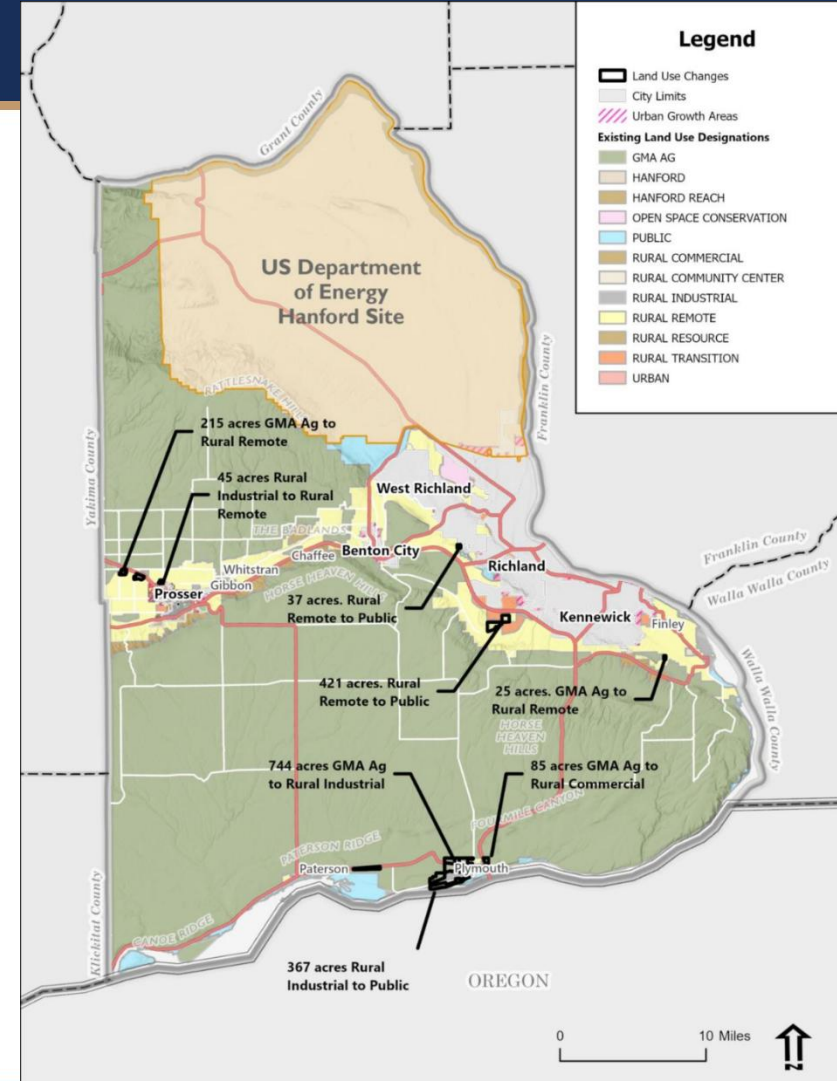
## *Alternative 3, Moderate Growth Target with More Limited Emphasis on Industry:*

- Add some industrial designated lands (but less than in Alternative 2).

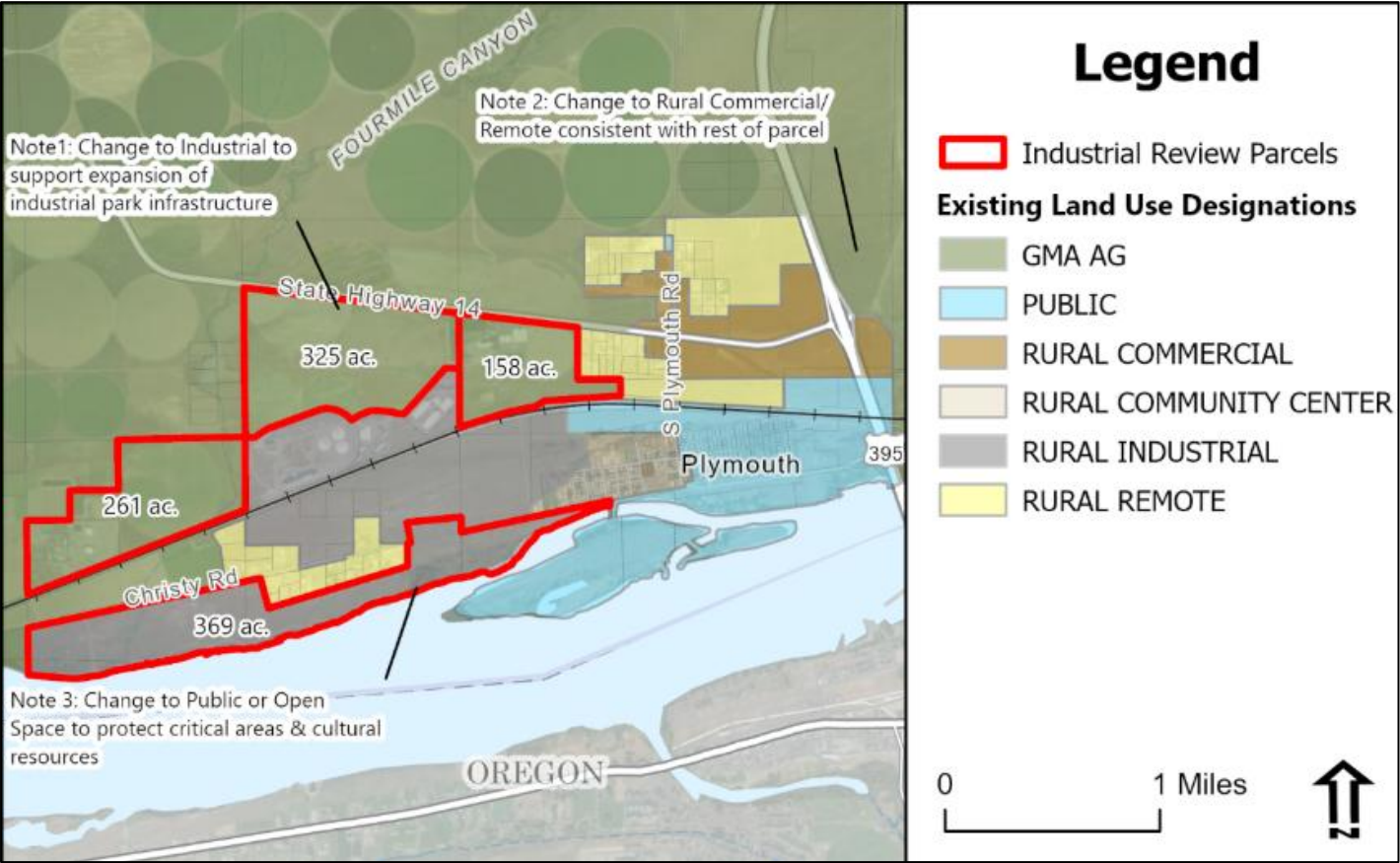
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# Land Use Designation Changes - Industrial



# EIS Elements

Consider potential impacts on the following elements of the environment:

- Earth
- Water
- Plants and Animals
- Land Use
- Environmental Health (Land and Air Quality)
- Shoreline Use
- Population, Housing, and Employment
- Parks and Recreation
- Transportation
- Public Services and Utilities
- Heritage Conservation



# Next Steps

- Comprehensive Plan and SEPA EIS review – receive EIS comments through June 18/Comp Plan by July 2
- State agencies 60-day review (in process)
- Address public and agency comments (July/Aug)
- Planning Commission Hearing/Recommendation (late Aug)
- Board of County Commission action (late Sep/Oct)



Questions/Comments?



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