

# Benton County Planning Commission Comprehensive Plan 2026 Update



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# Timeline



# Presentation Overview

- DRAFT Elements:
  - Housing
  - Transportation
- Critical areas code and shrub-steppe mitigation program
- Wildland Urban Interface
- Draft EIS



# Housing



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# 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 housing for 80% and above median household income (\$87,316); lower household incomes and homeless needs to be accommodated in cities

# Transportation



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# 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

# 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 minimum 100 feet (per WDFW guidance)
- Added in draft shrubsteppe mitigation program provisions
- Other miscellaneous updates

# Update: Shrubsteppe Mitigation Program

Jurisdictions	Acres
<b>Benton City (City &amp; UGA)</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>Other PHS Shrubsteppe</i>	10
<b>Prosser (City &amp; UGA)</b>	<b>110</b>
<i>WSRRI/BAC Corridor</i>	21
<i>WSRRI Other habitat</i>	53
<i>Other PHS Shrubsteppe</i>	36
<b>West Richland (City &amp; UGA)</b>	<b>758</b>
<i>WSRRI Other habitat</i>	196
<i>Other PHS Shrubsteppe</i>	562
<b>Richland (City &amp; UGA)</b>	<b>1,000</b>
<i>WSRRI/BAC Corridor</i>	218
<i>WSRRI Other habitat</i>	165
<i>Other PHS Shrubsteppe</i>	617
<b>Kennewick (City &amp; UGA)</b>	<b>1,082</b>
<i>WSRRI/BAC Corridor</i>	2
<i>WSRRI Other habitat</i>	667
<i>Other PHS Shrubsteppe</i>	414
<b>Unincorporated Benton County</b>	<b>3,889</b>
<i>WSRRI/BAC Core Area</i>	241
<i>WSRRI/BAC Corridor</i>	815
<i>WSRRI Growth Opportunity Area</i>	42
<i>WSRRI Other habitat</i>	1,194
<i>Other PHS Shrubsteppe</i>	1,597
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6,850</b>

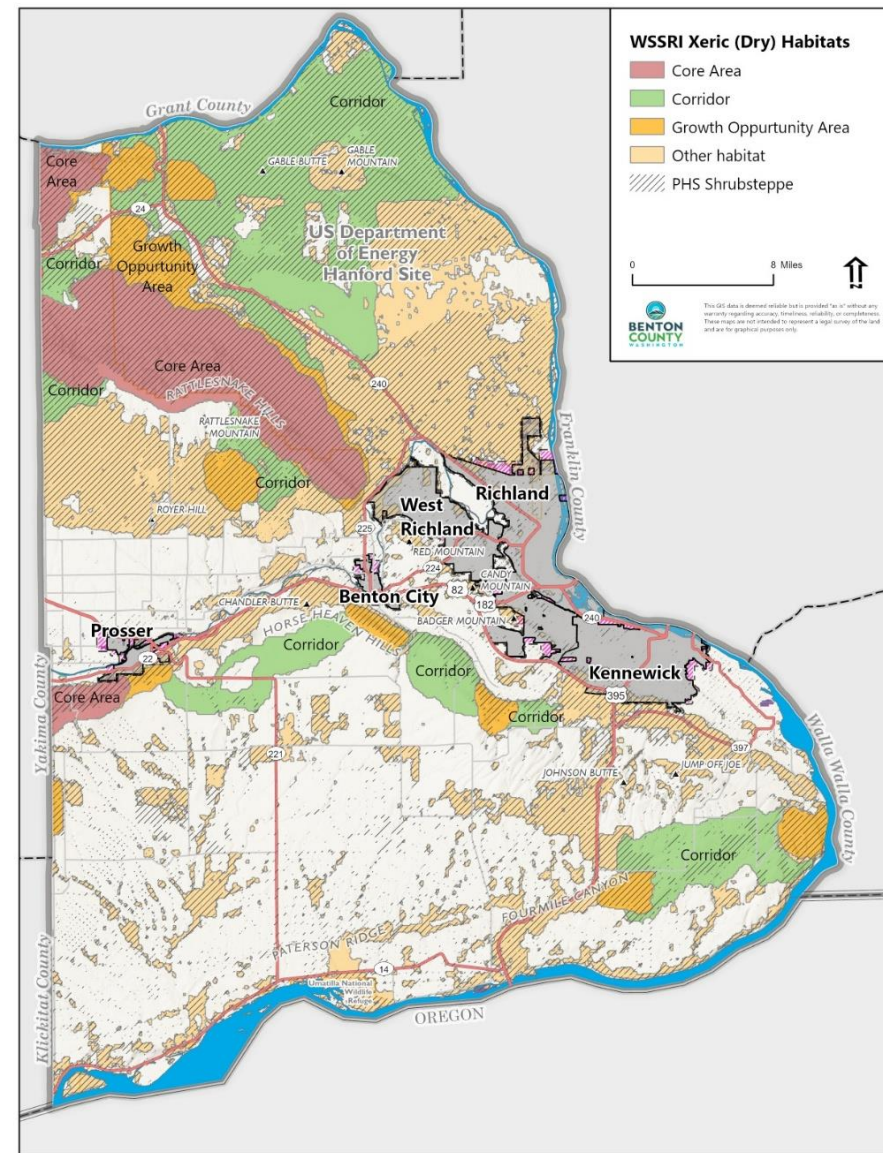


# Update: Shrubsteppe Mitigation Program

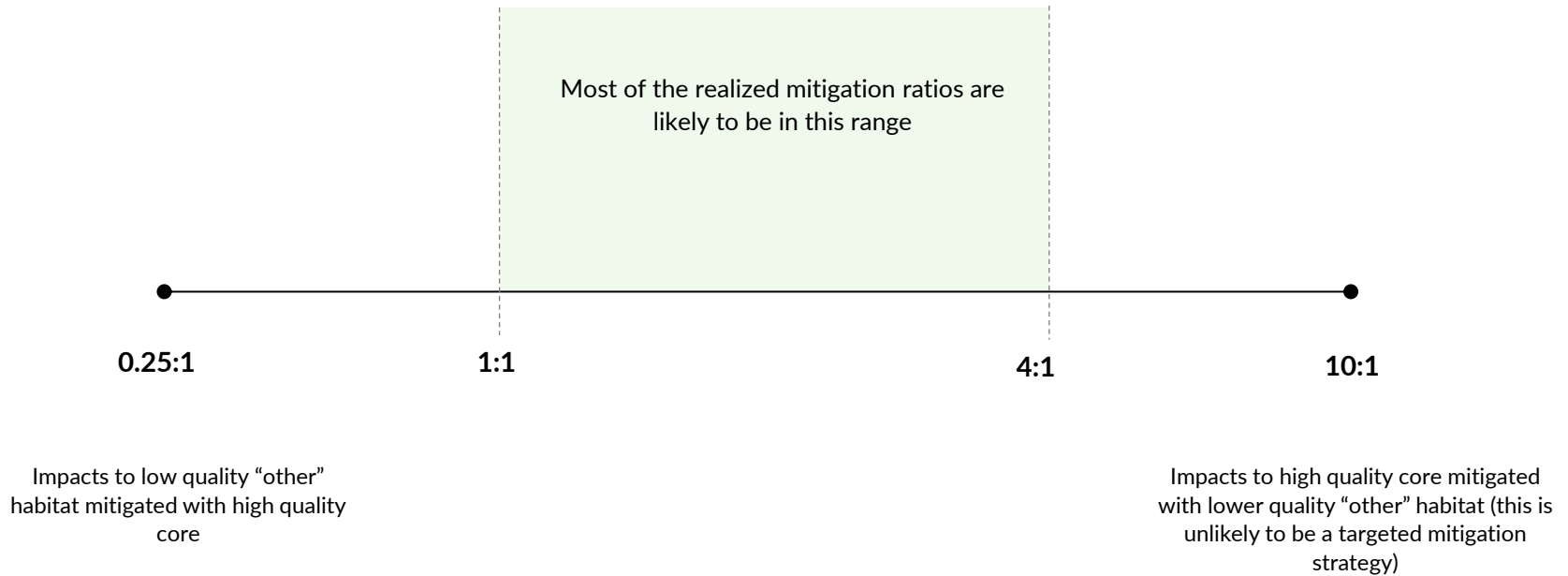
- ✓ Modeling – quality, spatial priority, mitigation ranking
- ✓ Draft Program Description
- ✓ Mitigation Workgroup Kickoff in October

## To Complete:

- 20-year impact estimate for each jurisdiction
- ID entity to hold and manage easements



# Update: Shrubsteppe Mitigation Program



# 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:***

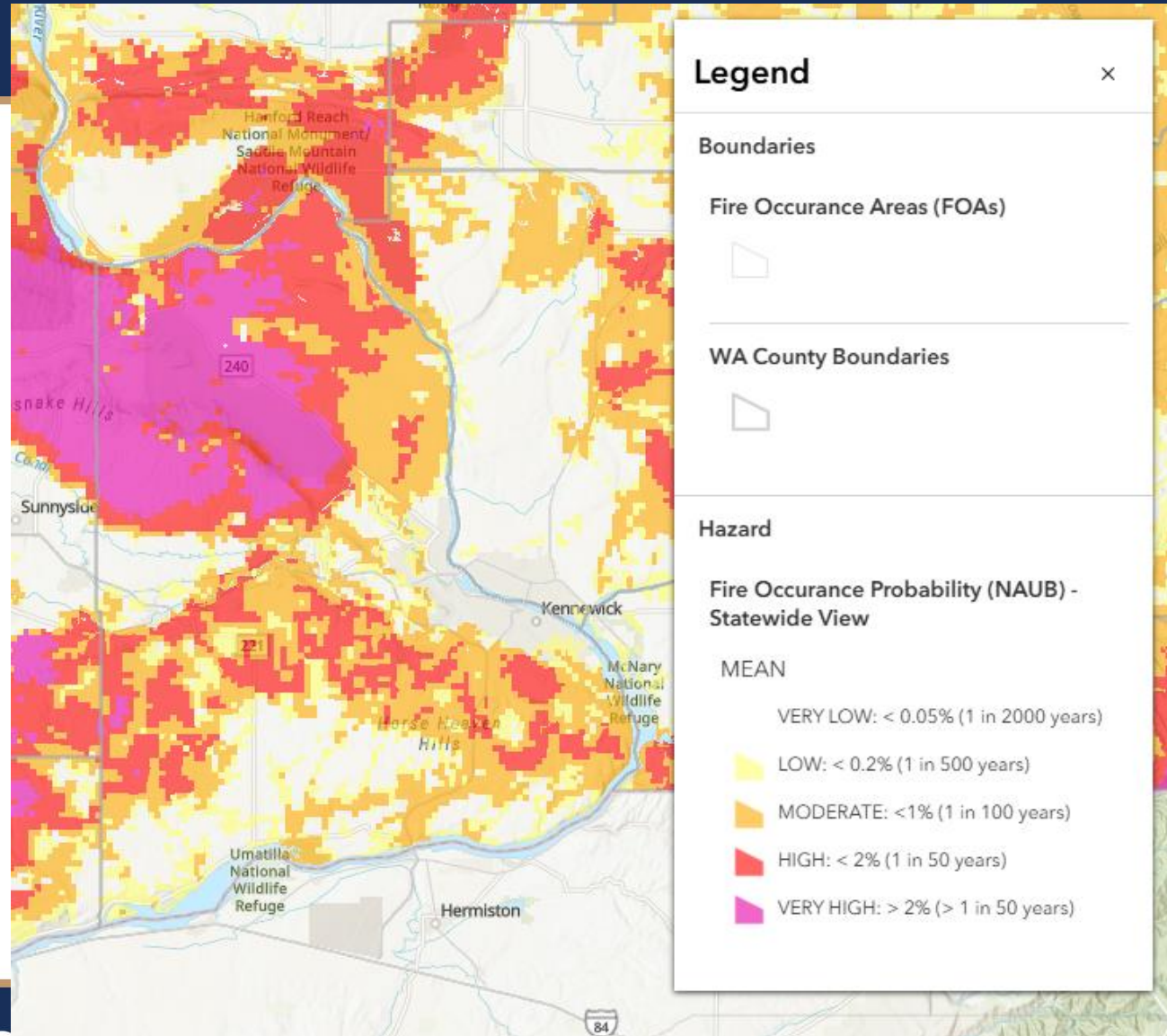
“How likely is fire behavior to occur here?”

## ***WILDFIRE RISK:***

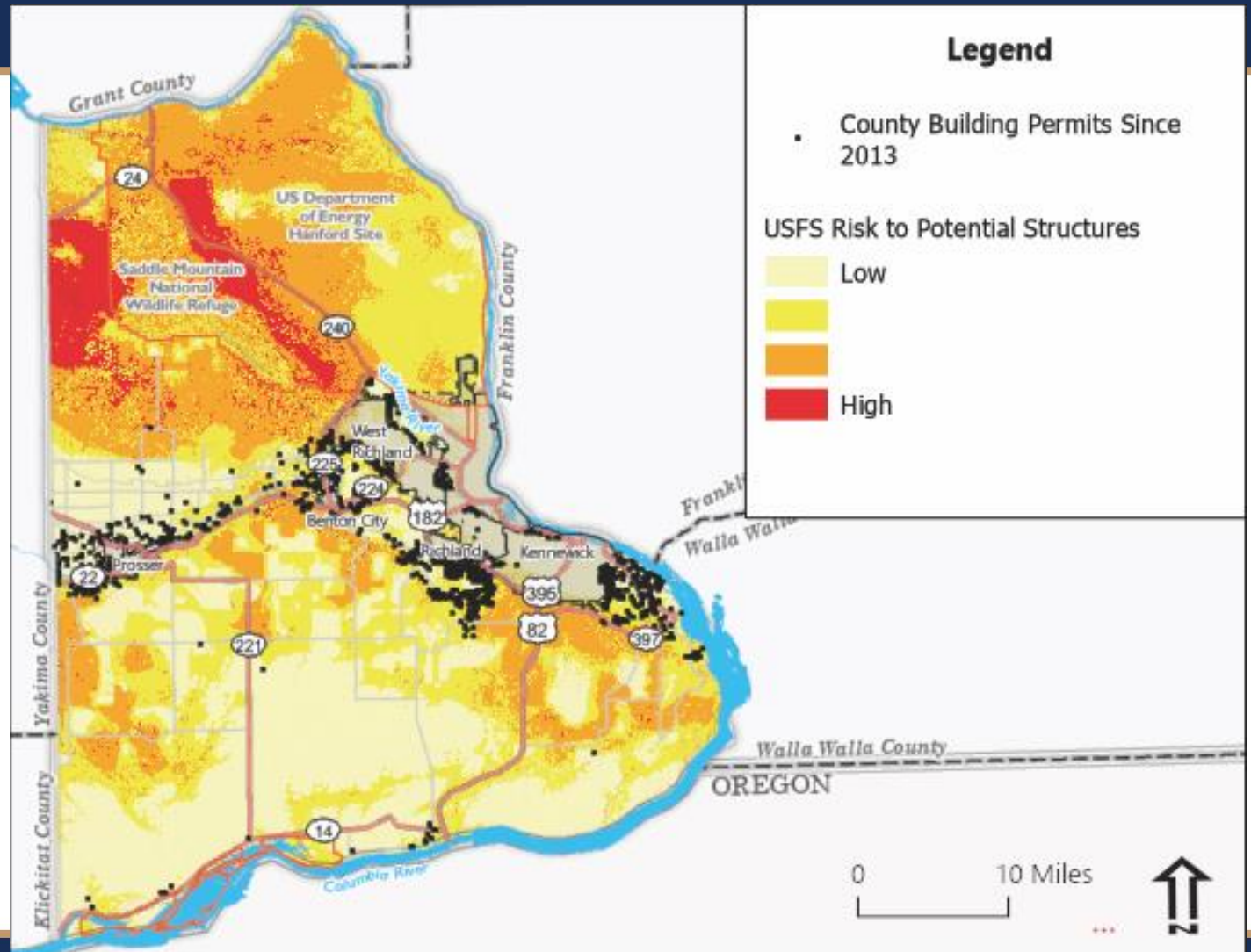
“What are the consequences – to people, structures, infrastructure, and ecosystems - if fire occurs here?”



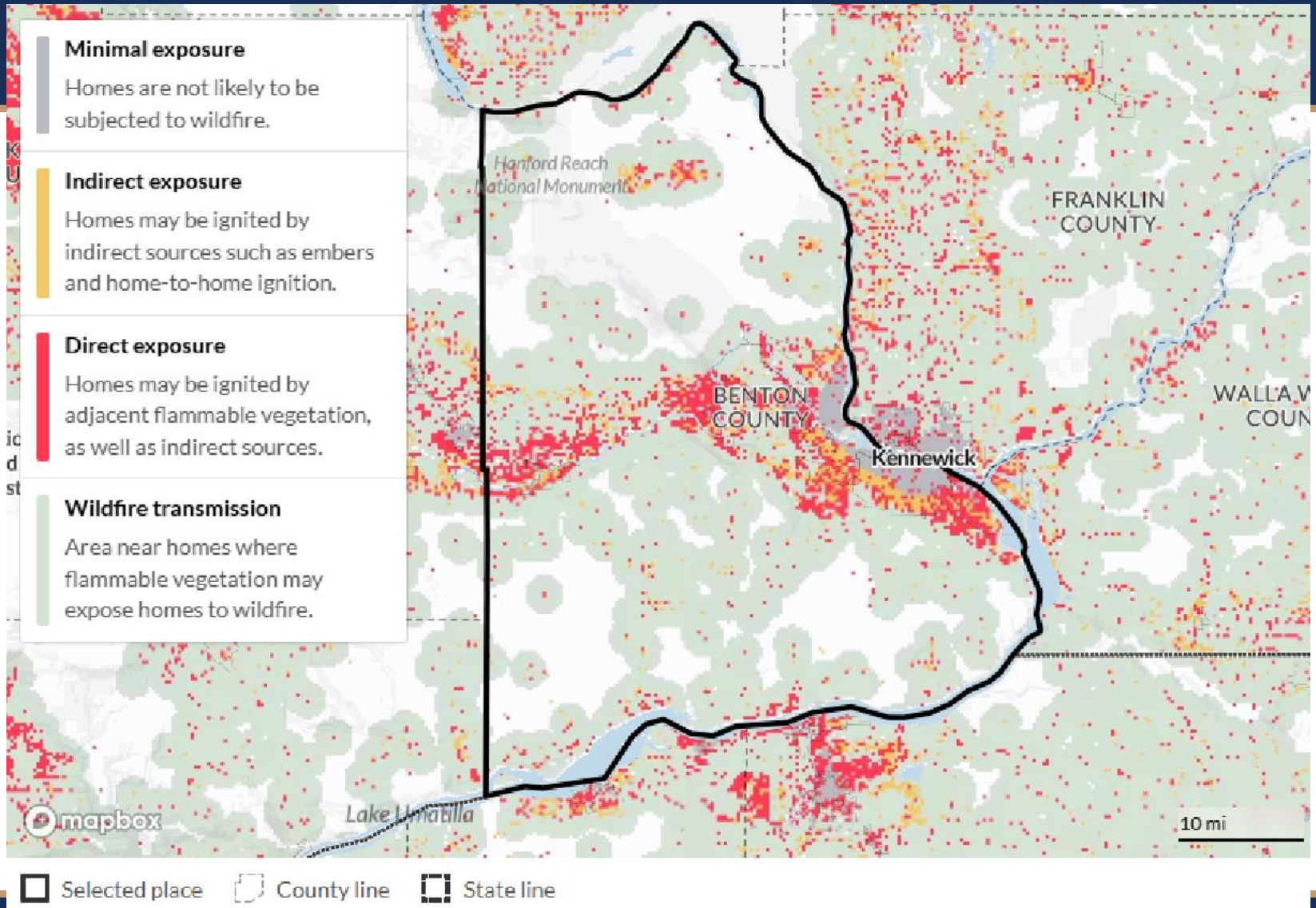
# Draft Hazard Map



# Wildfire Risk to Structures



# 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 (see USGS publications for details)



# 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 have been formulated for evaluation in the draft EIS

# Preliminary Draft 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

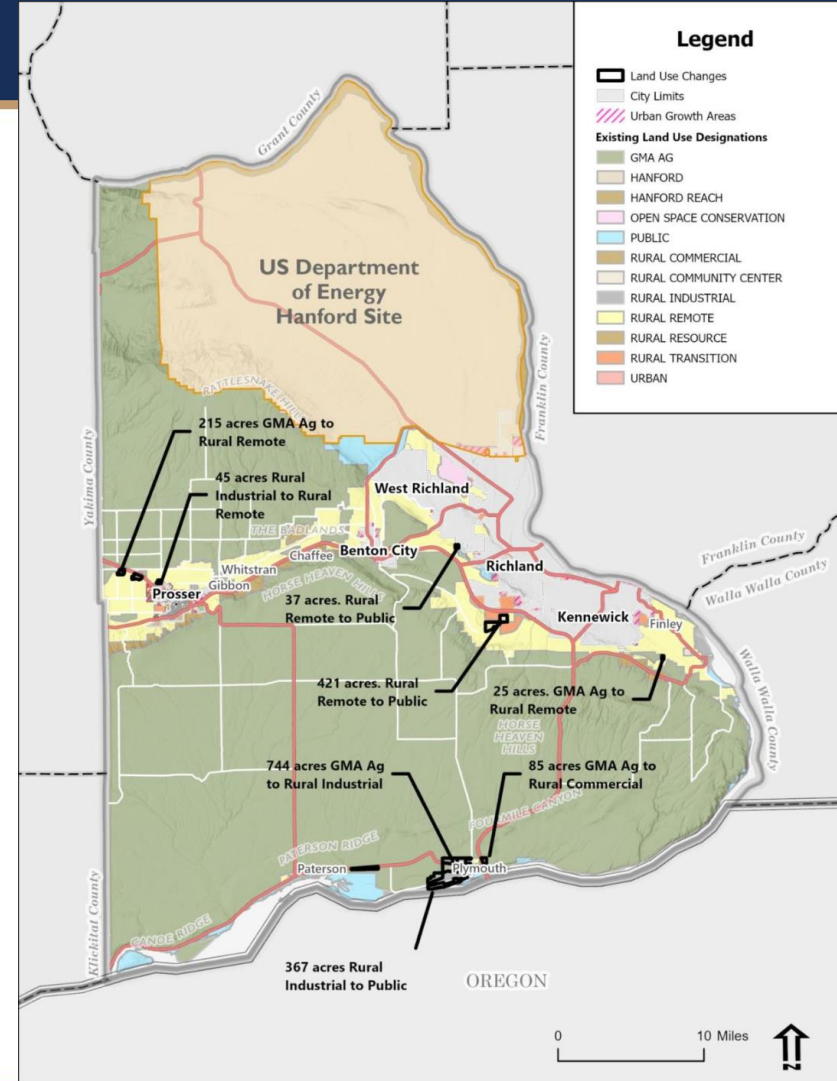
## *Alternative 3, Moderate Growth Target with More Limited Emphasis on Industry:*

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

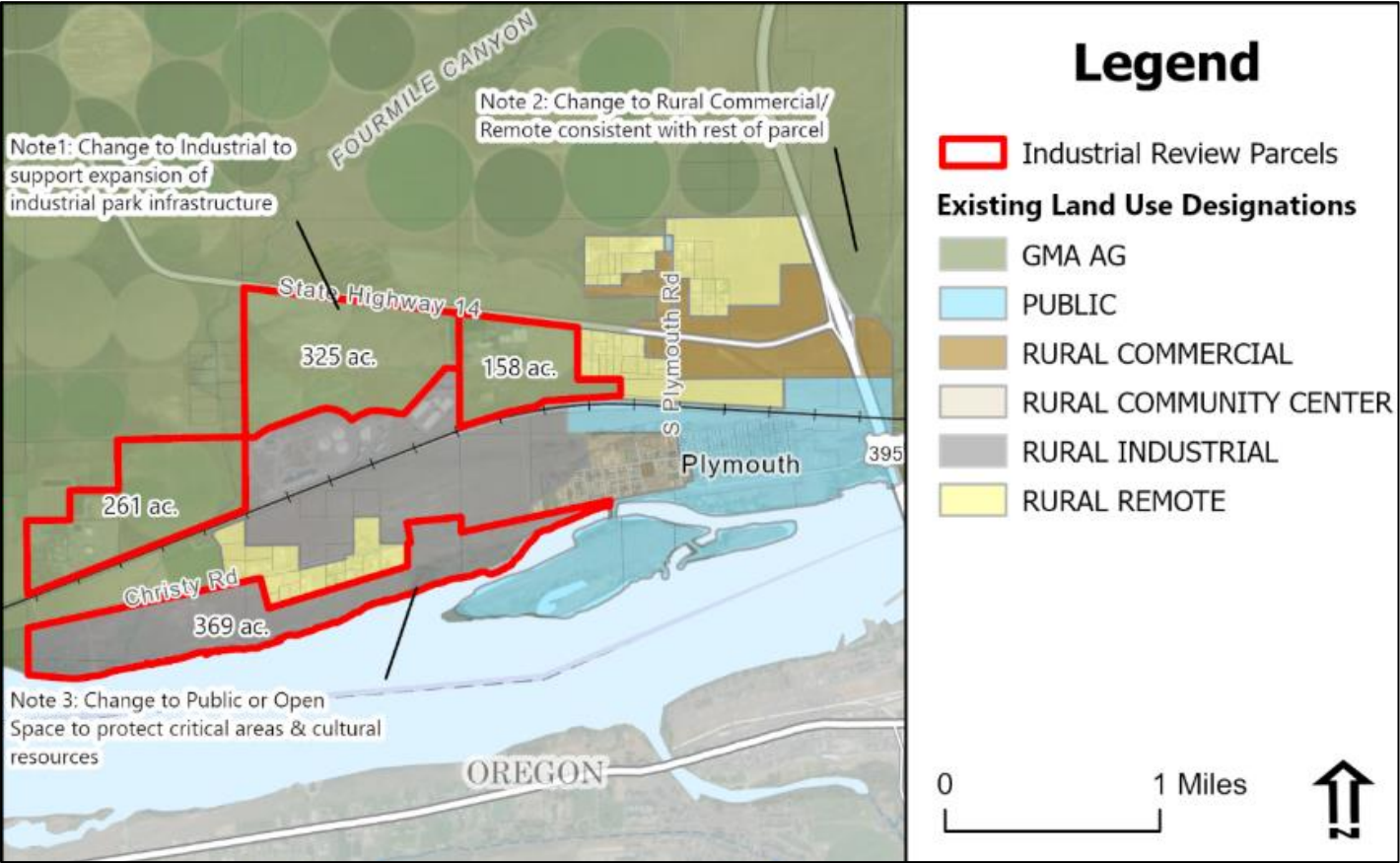
# Land Use Designation Changes

## Alternative 3 Land Use Designation Changes

From	To	Acres
GMA AG	RURAL INDUSTRIAL	744
GMA AG	RURAL COMMERCIAL	85
GMA AG	RURAL REMOTE	240
RURAL INDUSTRIAL	RURAL REMOTE	45
RURAL INDUSTRIAL	PUBLIC	367
RURAL REMOTE	OPEN SPACE/PUBLIC	457



# 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

- Addressing remaining items
  - Agri-tourism code changes
  - Updates to County development regulations (minor)
  - Finalize program for shrubsteppe mitigation
  - Clean draft versions of all work products, comprehensive plan and regulations
- SEPA EIS Review and Public Meetings (May)
- State agencies 60-day review (Apr – June)
- Address public and agency comments (July/Aug)
- Planning Commission Hearing/Recommendation (fall)
- Board of County Commission action (late fall)



Additional Questions/Comments?



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