

Draft Memorandum

To: Greg Wendt, Benton County Planning Division
From: Adam Cares, AC Geo, and Ben Floyd, White Bluffs Consulting
Date: October 17, 2025
Re: Addendum to 2018 Agricultural Land Reclassification Memorandum

Purpose

This memorandum serves as an addendum to the *2018 Agricultural Resource Land Reclassification Memorandum* prepared by White Bluffs Consulting and Anchor QEA¹ during the last periodic update to the Comprehensive Plan. The 2018 memorandum provided a countywide review of designated agricultural resource lands, and recommended parcels for addition and removal from the GMA Agriculture District.

AC Geo performed a supplemental countywide review of the 2018 analysis to evaluate whether further changes are appropriate based on historical and current land use trends, including surrounding residential and industrial development and more detailed evaluation of agricultural lands on the edges of rural residential and industrially zoned lands. The evaluation criteria used in this supplemental analysis are consistent with state guidelines for designating agricultural resource lands found in WAC 365-190-050.

Methods & Screening Criteria

Under **WAC 365-190-050**, counties must conduct a **comprehensive, countywide analysis** when classifying, designating, or de-designating agricultural resource lands, applying consistent criteria that consider both soil capability and land-use context. The 2025 supplemental review relied on the same NRCS soils and land capability data used in the 2018 analysis, along with the County's current parcel dataset, recent aerial imagery, and production information provided by landowners and local planning staff. The review considered parcels located within or adjacent to the GMA Agriculture District and applied a series of screening steps to determine whether continued designation within the GMA Agriculture District is appropriate. Each screening step was applied sequentially so that only parcels meeting all criteria were carried forward.

The screening steps and the number of parcels meeting the screening criteria are listed below:

¹ Anchor QEA, *Agricultural Resource Lands Reclassification*, Appendix L, Benton County Comprehensive Plan (2018)."
<https://bentoncountywa.municipalzone.com//files/documents/FinalCPAppendixLFeb2018129045549020718PM.pdf>

1. **Boundary Proximity** – Parcels located along the boundary between the GMA Agriculture District and other zones were selected, with 200-foot perimeter applied to ensure selection of parcels interrupted by road, rail, and utility rights of way. **415 parcels meet criteria.**
2. **NRCS Soils Non-Irrigated Capability Class** – This criterion identifies parcels with significant limitations to non-irrigated agricultural suitability, based on land capability class data from the Benton County Soil Survey². Parcels where Non-Irrigated Soil Capability Classes 4e, 4w, 4s, 4c, or Classes 5–7 comprise 50 percent or more of the parcel area were selected. **355 parcels meet criteria.**
3. **NRCS Soils Irrigated Capability Class** – This criterion identifies parcels with significant limitations to irrigated agricultural suitability. Parcels where Irrigated Soil Capability Classes 4e, 4w, 4s, 4c, or Classes 5–7 comprise 50 percent or more of the parcel area were selected. **161 parcels meet criteria.**
4. **Farmland Classification** – Parcels where lands identified by NRCS as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Farmland of Unique Importance comprise less than 50% of the parcel area. **110 parcels meet criteria.**
5. **Critical Areas Exclusion** – Parcels with less than 50 percent or more of their area intersecting with mapped critical areas, including wetlands, riparian corridors, and steep slopes. **75 parcels meet criteria.**
6. **Development Potential Review** – Desktop evaluation to assess proximity to population areas, existing development, and the potential for more intense uses of the land, consistent with WAC 365-190-050(1)(a)–(j). The consultant team and County planning staff conducted two rounds of review incorporating land use information, recent industrial development trends, interviews with property owners, building permit activity, predominant lot size, and the presence of non-agricultural land uses within and adjacent to the subject parcels. **16 parcels meet all criteria and are suggested for designation change from GMA Agriculture to other uses, as these lands after the more detailed evaluation do not appear to meet the criteria of agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance.**

Conclusion & Recommendations

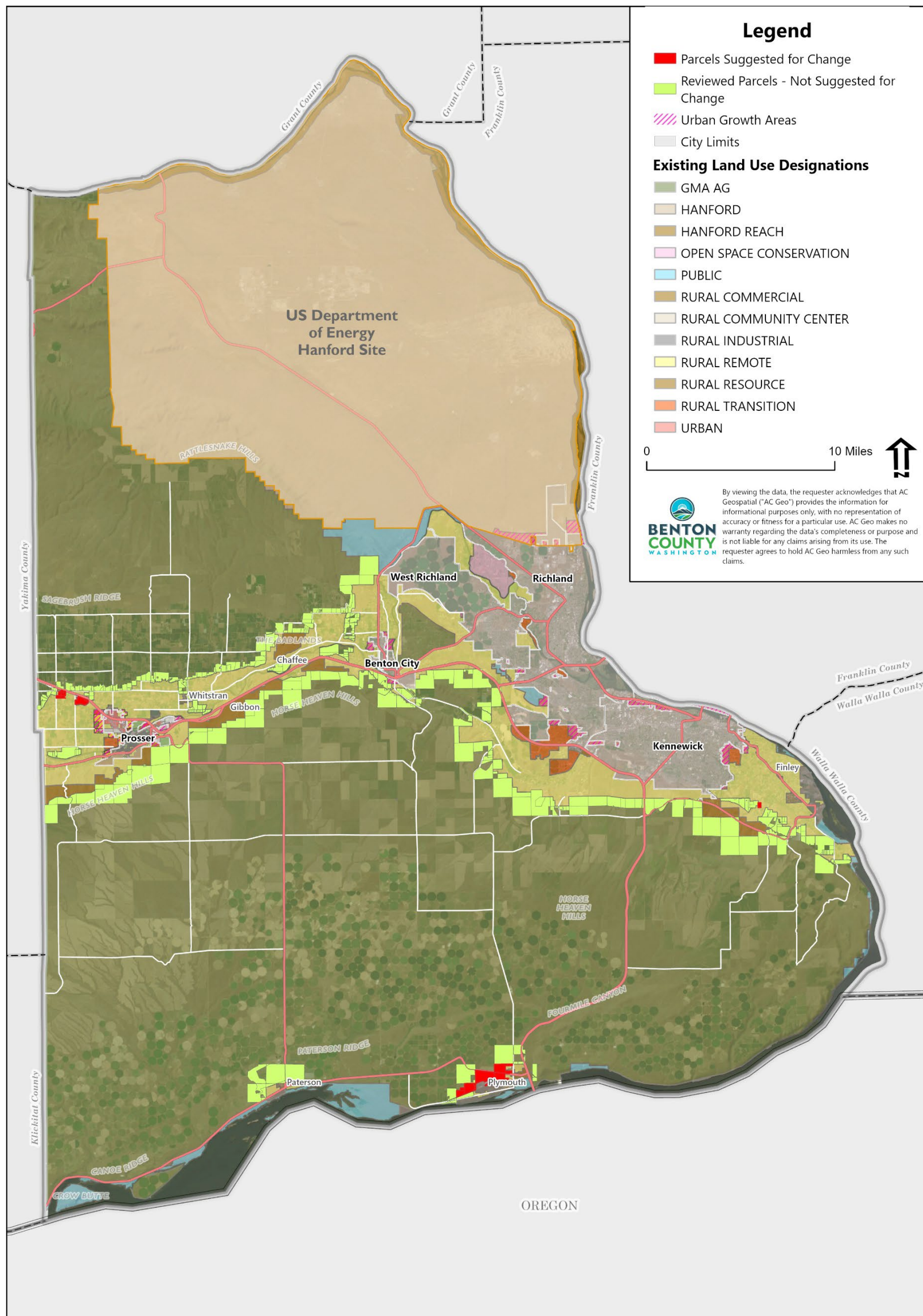
The review identified **16 parcels** currently designated GMA Agriculture where alternative designations may be more appropriate due to limited agricultural suitability and likelihood of being agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance. These parcels are recommended for re-designation to other adjacent land uses, as summarized in Table 1.

² Soil Survey report of Benton County Area, Washington, 1971 https://kid.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/wa605_text.pdf

Table 1: Suggested Agricultural Resource Land Designation Changes

Parcel ID	Acres	Suggested Designation	Reason for Change
101571000002004	357.3	Rural Industrial	Limited suitability soils, adjacent industrial growth.
111571013428001	18.3	Rural Industrial	Limited suitability soils, adjacent industrial use.
106584000005000	7.1	Rural Industrial	Limited suitability soils, railroad ROW with surrounding industrial growth.
111571000001003	150.1	Rural Industrial	Limited suitability soils, adjacent industrial growth on both sides.
106582000001002	372.7	Rural Industrial	Limited suitability soils, existing industrial land use and growth. Suggested boundary line adjustment to include south portion only.
128802000004005	25.4	Rural Remote	Limited suitability soils, surrounded by RL-5 on three sides.
128942000008000	125.7	Rural Remote	Limited suitability soils, surrounded by RL-5 and more intensive growth.
129942000001000	36.1	Rural Remote	Limited suitability soils, surrounded by RL-5 and more intensive growth.
128944000010000	3.0	Rural Remote	Limited suitability soils, surrounded by RL-5 and more intensive growth.
120943011735004	2.0	Rural Remote	Limited suitability soils, surrounded by RL-5, more intensive growth, infrastructure.
129942000010000	20.0	Rural Remote	Limited suitability soils (non-irrigated), surrounded by RL-5, more intensive growth, infrastructure. Avoids creating small, isolated pocket of ag zoning.
111572000001000	20.0	Rural Industrial	Limited suitability soils (non-irrigated), existing industrial facilities (gas plant)
129942000009001	17.6	Rural Remote	Limited suitability soils (non-irrigated), surrounded by RL-5, more intensive growth, infrastructure. Avoids creating small, isolated pocket of ag zoning.
111573000000000	72.5	Rural Industrial	Limited suitability soils. Ag use not possible due to existing industrial facilities (gas plant) on parcel.
129942000011001	15.4	Rural Remote	Limited suitability soils, surrounded by RL-5, more intensive growth, infrastructure. Avoids creating small, isolated pocket of ag zoning.
128941000008000	5.0	Rural Remote	Limited suitability soils, surrounded by RL-5, more intensive growth, infrastructure.

Figure 1: Map of Reviewed Parcels and Parcel Suggested for Change



Data Sources: Benton County GIS,
Washington Department of Transportation,
Washington DNR, Earthstar Geographics

DRAFT Agricultural Resource Land Review and Suggested Changes

Benton County Comprehensive Plan

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