



February 2020
Benton County Shoreline Master Plan Update



Public Participation Plan - Limited Amendment to the Shoreline Master Program Update

Prepared for Benton County

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Approved by Resolution 2020-163

Public Participation Plan

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ABBREVIATIONS

County	Benton County
GMA	Growth Management Act
PPP	<i>Benton County Public Participation Plan</i>
RCW	Revised Code of Washington

1 Introduction and Overview

Benton County is undertaking a periodic review of its Shoreline Master Program (SMP), as required by the Washington State Shoreline Management Act (SMA), RCW 90.58.080(4). The SMA requires each SMP be reviewed and revised, if needed, on an eight-year schedule established by the Legislature. The review ensures the SMP stays current with changes in laws and rules, remains consistent with other county plans and regulations, and is responsive to changed circumstances, new information and improved data.

The Benton County Public Participation Plan (PPP) includes guidelines and procedures for early and continuous public participation, and opportunities for input and comment related to the review and update of the County's Shoreline Master Plan as well as County contact information and web address. This plan is a working document and will be adjusted as needed to provide for the greatest and broadest public participation. This work is funded by a grant from the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology).

2 Public Participation Goals and Objectives

The County recognizes the importance of early and continuous public participation in order to adequately reflect the County's citizens' input. The goal of the PPP is to make all citizens of the County aware of the SMP update process. Taken individually, the activities are not expected to reach and inform each and every citizen of the County. Collectively, however, the plan activities are designed to effectively and efficiently provide broad-based dissemination of information and maximize opportunity for citizen involvement and comment.

The following goals for public input are incorporated into the decision-making process:

- Provide interested parties with timely information, an understanding of the process, and multiple opportunities to review and comment on proposed amendments to the SMP.
- Actively solicit information from citizens, property owners and stakeholders about their concerns, questions and priorities for the Periodic Review process.
- Encourage interested parties to informally review and comment on proposed changes to the SMP throughout the process and provide those comments to decision makers.
- Provide forums for formal public input at project milestones prior to decision-making by local officials.
- Consult and consider recommendations from neighboring jurisdictions, federal and state agencies, and Native American tribes.

3 Public Meetings and Communications

The following are key meetings, workshops, and open houses that will be hosted by the County and the Benton County Planning Commission in order to encourage outreach and public involvement throughout the SMP review process:

- **Open House.** Benton County will host one public workshop in 2020 to inform the public on the SMP review and update process to update them on progress to date, and outline next steps.
- **Planning Commission Meetings.** Upon completion of preliminary drafts of updated SMP elements, the Benton County Planning Commission will receive presentations at one or more of their regular scheduled meetings on the updated information. Opportunity for public questions and input will be provided at these meetings.
- **Coordination with State Agencies.** Coordination will be conducted with Washington State Department of Ecology and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and other interested state and local agencies to keep them informed of plan development progress and to solicit their comments early on in SMP review process. Copies of the environmental review documentation will also be provided to affected agencies for review and comment as part of the plan review and adoption process.
- **Public Hearing and Formal Comment Periods.** Once the Final Draft SMP update elements are completed, a formal public review will be conducted under the State Environmental Policy Act (RCW 43.21C) including a combined state/local public hearing and public comment period. All comments received during the public hearing and public comment period will be compiled and considered for inclusion into the SMP.
- **Develop and Maintain an Interested Parties List.** Identify interest groups such as the following and share information with these groups and others who request to be on the list:
 - Agencies and organizations included on the County's SEPA distribution list
 - Interested parties list from most recent SMP Update

Benton County Planning Department staff will place legal notices of hearings and comment periods in the County's official paper, currently the Prosser Record Bulletin. Hearing notices will be published at least 10 days prior to the hearing and shall include the date, time, location and purpose of the hearing. Legal notifications notifying dates and times of open houses and public hearings and comment periods will be distributed to the public via email, the U.S. Postal Service, and other public postings. Notices will also be provided on the Planning page of the County website and the SMP Update website.

The Planning Commission will be the primary forum for detailed review and recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners. Interested parties are encouraged to attend and provide comments

during the Planning Commission/Board of County Commissioners workshops, open houses, and public hearings. All meetings and hearings before the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners will be audio recorded and the audio recording will be available on the Planning Commission's Agenda page on the County's website. Meeting minutes also will be made available on the Planning Commission's Agenda page on the County's website and final approval.

4 Public Involvement and Outreach Strategies

Described below are key strategies developed to encourage outreach and public involvement throughout the SMP review and update process. Implementation of these strategies is expected to generate meaningful public participation.

4.1 Website

The County's SMP amendment page on the Planning department website:

<https://tinyurl.com/SMP2021Update> will include an SMP update page. This site will provide a public forum for obtaining SMP update information, including but not limited to the following:

- Status updates
- Meeting notices and agendas
- Draft documents and maps
- An email address for submitting public comments

4.2 Communications

An email distribution list will be maintained for individuals and groups who wish to receive periodic project announcements, public notices of upcoming public meetings, and other comprehensive planning and development codes update-related information. Those interested in being included on the email distribution list should contact the Benton County Planning Department. Additionally, the County will conduct the following activities:

- The Planning Department will issue news releases announcing the public meeting and hearing times, dates and locations to the local media.
- Public Notice of all public hearings and adoptions will be published under "legals" in the classified section of the Official County Newspaper at least 10 days in advance of the hearing.
- All meeting and hearings before the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners will be audio recorded.
- All persons desiring to speak or submit written comments will be allowed to do so at all meetings and hearings before the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners or during designated comment periods.
- Benton County may utilize one- or two-page information sheets to facilitate the dissemination of public information.

4.3 Work Products

The SMP update website will be updated with documents as they become available. Hard copies will be available for the cost of reproduction upon request from the Benton County Planning Department.

4.4 Public Comment

Interested parties will be encouraged to provide comments to the County by letter or email. All comments will be forwarded to the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners. The Periodic Review webpage will be the central repository for information under consideration.

The Planning Commission will conduct a public comment period and at least one public hearing to solicit input on the Periodic Review. The Board of County Commissioners will hold one public hearing before final adoption. The County will coordinate with the Department of Ecology on public notification of comment periods and hearings to take advantage of Ecology's optional SMP amendment process that allows for a combined state-local comment period (WAC 173-26-104).

5 Public Involvement Implementation and Documentation

5.1 Public Participation Timeline

The following is a general timeline including anticipated public participation opportunities. Benton County will coordinate with the Department of Ecology throughout the process.

- Public Open House – Fall 2020
- Planning Commission workshops tentatively planned for October or November 2020 and January or February 2021
- Planning Commission Hearing with County/State combined public comment period on SMP Amendments – February or March 2021
- County Commission and State Agency adoption by June 30, 2021

5.2 Documentation

All public outreach efforts and the results of those efforts will be documented in the administrative record maintained by the County. Documentation will include invitation letters and responses, meeting and hearing notices, meeting materials, meeting notes with attendance and comments received, draft and final work products, and other information as applicable.