



July 2024
Benton County Shoreline Master Plan User Guide and
Tracking, Monitoring and Adaptive Management



Public Participation Plan

Prepared for Benton County

DRAFT

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ABBREVIATIONS

County	Benton County
Ecology	Washington State Department of Ecology
GMA	Growth Management Act
PPP	Benton County Public Participation Plan
RCW	Revised Code of Washington
SMA	Shoreline Management Act
SMP	Shoreline Master Program
TM&AM	Tracking, Monitoring and Adaptive Management

1 Introduction and Overview

Benton County is developing a Shoreline Master Program (SMP) User Guide, a Tracking, Monitoring and Adaptive Management (TM&AM) Framework, and Implementation Plan.

The SMP User Guide document is intended to support outreach communication by increasing the public's understanding of the SMP/SMA requirements, standards, and processes as the County implements their SMP.

Data monitored and analyzed in the TM&AM will include information on development which has occurred in the shoreline jurisdiction under a shoreline permit or exemption, restoration projects conducted in the shoreline jurisdiction, and indicators of shoreline ecological function.

The Benton County Public Participation Plan (PPP) includes guidelines and procedures for early and continuous public participation, as well as opportunities for input and comment related to the development of the above-mentioned SMP User Guide and TM&AM Framework and Implementation Plan. It also includes 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 to adequately reflect residents' input. The goal of the PPP is to make residents of the County aware of the SMP User Guide and TM&AM Framework Planning process and to foster early and continual public participation in their development. Taken individually, the activities are not expected to reach and inform every resident of the County. However, collectively the planned activities are designed to effectively and efficiently provide broad-based dissemination of information and maximize opportunity for residents' education, involvement, and comment.

The following goals for public input are incorporated into the project work:

- Provide information on the SMP goals and processes, public access opportunities, and where to find additional information.
- Provide interested parties with timely information, an understanding of the project, and opportunities to review and comment on the proposed SMP User Guide and TM&AM Framework.
- Actively solicit information from residents, property owners, and stakeholders about their concerns, questions and priorities for the SMP more broadly, the User Guide, and the TM&AM Framework planning process work.
- Encourage interested parties to informally review and comment on the proposed SMP User Guide and TM&AM Framework throughout the project and provide those comments to the County.
- 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, Stakeholder Coordination and Communications

The following are key meetings, workshops, and open houses that will be hosted by the County to encourage outreach and public involvement throughout the project:

- **Open House.** Benton County will host a series of public workshops in 2024 to inform the public on shoreline public access opportunities and receive input on the draft SMP User Guide and TM&AM Framework Planning process. Up to four workshops will be held in various locations throughout the County.
- **Coordination with Stakeholder Agencies on the TM&AM Framework and Implementation Plan.** Coordination will be conducted with Ecology, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Yakama Nation, and other stakeholder agencies to share the tracking framework and solicit comments and guidance on the framework and implementation plan.
- **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 Periodic Update

Benton County Planning Division staff will publish legal notices of meetings and comment periods in the County's official paper, currently the Prosser Record Bulletin. Notices will be published at least 10 days prior to the meeting and shall include the date, time, location and purpose of the meetings. Legal notifications identifying the dates and times of open houses, public meetings, and comment periods will be distributed to the public via email, newspaper listings, social media, and other public postings. Communications will be in both English and Spanish. Notices will also be provided on the Planning page of the County website.

4 Public Involvement and Outreach Strategies

Described below are key strategies developed to encourage outreach and public involvement throughout the SMP User Guide and TM&AM Framework Planning process. Implementation of these strategies is expected to generate meaningful public participation.

4.1 Website

The County's SMP page on the Planning Division's website¹ 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 address² 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 Division. Additionally, the County will conduct the following activities:

- The Planning Division will issue news releases announcing the public meeting dates and locations.
- Public Notice of all public meetings will be published under "legals" in the classified section of the Official County Newspaper at least 10 days in advance of the meeting.
- All public meetings and hearings will have Spanish interpretive services available.
- Benton County may utilize one- or two-page information sheets to facilitate the dissemination of public information.

4.3 Work Products

The County SMP project website will be updated with documents and the TM&AM tracking system (if public facing) as they become available. Hard copies will be available for the cost of reproduction upon request from the Benton County Planning Division.

¹ <https://www.bentoncountywa.gov/pview.aspx?id=55547&catid=0>

² planning.department@co.benton.wa.us

4.4 Public Comment

Interested parties will be encouraged to provide comments in public meetings, and to the County by emailing planning.department@co.benton.wa.us. The SMP project webpage will be the central repository for information under consideration.

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 Ecology throughout the process.

- Public Open Houses – Fall 2024
- Stakeholder workshops on the TM&AM framework and implementation strategy – Fall 2024 and Spring 2025

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 meeting notices, meeting materials, meeting notes with attendance and comments received, draft and final work products, and other information as applicable.