PurPose And Intent Of the Benton County COMPrehensive Plan
This Plan amends the County's adopted 1985 Comprehensive Plan. The purpose and intent of this plan is to provide for local needs relating to the use of land, including the protection of property and water rights, and in so doing, to meet the state's minimum planning law requirements.

Local Purpose
At the local level, the fundamental purpose of Benton County's Comprehensive Plan is to manage growth so that it sustains and enhances the quality of life for county residents, as that quality is defined by the residents themselves via a public process.

The following excerpt from the 1985 Comprehensive Plan (Chapter 1, page 8) succinctly summarizes the local citizen's interest relative to the products of their Plan. The public process for the development of this 1997 Plan, which included a Rural Survey (Benton County Rural Visioning Survey Report, Spring 1993), as well as the extensive involvement of Rural Planning Committees in each of the rural Planning Areas has re-affirmed these as basic issues:

"Throughout the development and adoption process for this Comprehensive Plan, several issues have continually risen to the surface as major concerns that people of Benton County believe should be addressed by the County's Comprehensive Plan. These issues (in no particular order) are:
1. provisions for the economic growth of the County;
2. provisions for a variety of residential living opportunities;
3. provisions for the preservation and protection of the County's good agricultural lands;
4. provisions for the protection of the County's environmental quality; and,
5. provisions for the minimization of incompatible land uses.

The intent of this Comprehensive Plan is to provide for the realization of these five general goals in such a way that the County's livability is protected and enhanced for both the present and future generations."
(1985 Comprehensive Plan)

The above objectives are a solid base from which to construct this plan. They also display the essential paradox which challenges any effort to plan for and manage growth, i.e., that within the mix of benefits the use of land and natural resources contributes to a "high quality of life," there are inherent tensions and trade-offs, which are also interrelated and circular. In order to provide for
economic growth (# 1, above) and its accompanying residential population growth (# 2) resources of land, water, air, and biology must be converted to new buildings, infrastructure, ball fields, farms etc; cumulatively these conversions irreversibly degrade all aspects of environmental quality (# 4), and create a landscape of potential conflicts between incompatible uses (# 5); which can threaten the productivity of economies based upon natural resource lands (agriculture), as well as the custom and culture of rural communities (no 3); all of which reduce the ability to optimize and sustain economic growth (# 1).

This Plan seeks to preserve those elements of the natural environment and the local custom and culture that are the essence of the quality of life for county residents. Simultaneously, it seeks to facilitate, even encourage economically productive use of the land/resources base in order to provide the prosperity which enables the enjoyment of a quality life.

The State of Washington’s Purpose and Intent
Various provisions of the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) require local Comprehensive Plans to address planning issues of statewide importance. It is a characteristic of GMA that depending upon the issue, the state purposes for local plans can be either general or very specific. An expression of general statewide interest is that "the legislature finds that uncoordinated and unplanned growth, together with a lack of common goals expressing the public’s interest in the conservation and wise use of our lands, pose a threat to the environment, sustainable and economic development, and health and safety, and high quality of life enjoyed by residents of this state.. "(RCW36.70A.010)

Greater specificity of state interest can be seen in GMA’s thirteen planning goals to guide the adoption of plans and regulations (RCW36.70A.020); still greater specificity is in the six mandatory plan "elements," some with required provisions in detail (36.70A.70).

Relative to natural resource lands (mineral, agricultural and forestry lands), and "critical areas" (wetlands and fish and wildlife conservation, frequently flooded, critical aquifer recharge, and geologically hazardous areas), the expression of state interest is clear and specific. These must be designated and “protected” (critical areas) or “conserved” (agriculture, minerals and forestry) by regulation (36.70A.060).

Scope of the Plan
As a result of time and circumstance, and natural resources, the scope of the County’s Comprehensive Plan, though converging directly upon and serving its local purpose, extends far beyond the physical boundaries of the county.
Significant land use activities within the county have current and potential global markets and applications. Agricultural products grown and processed in the county are finding expanding global markets especially on the Pacific Rim for which the State of Washington is advantageously located relative to trade.

Additionally, local road, rail, and waterborne transportation systems connect to a global network that moves agricultural products grown regionally in the central basin and mid-west to global markets. Non-farm products move trans-continentally back and forth from Asia to Europe, pass through and make connections within the county.

In the non-farm sectors, the hazardous radio-nuclide and chemical waste cleanup technologies and science being developed locally to clean the Hanford Site for future uses are also expected to find global markets. Finally, the relatively mild climate and location at the confluence of three major river systems provides the county with a resource base for an expanding visitor, tourism and recreational economy.

The county's comprehensive plan must reflect the demands and opportunities afforded by these regional and global connections. Table 4.0 of Chapter 4 indicates how the Plan responds to these opportunities and trends.

**PLAN FORMAT**

This plan consists of 12 chapters and an Appendix. The six mandatory Plan Elements each have a chapter; there are two "optional" elements (i.e., not required by state planning law), each having a chapter. The goals and policies for all the elements are excerpted to a single chapter (Chapter 3) for quick reference; the remaining three chapters are "Introduction", "Natural Resources", and "Environmental Analysis". A Hanford Sub-Area Plan when completed will be amended as Chapter 13.

Each of the Plan Elements covers a separate topic (e.g., land use, housing, transportation etc.). The standard format for each chapter is simple, direct, and focused on the future. The progression of each chapter flows in the following order:

- Introduction
- Existing Conditions
- Current Trends
- Future Considerations

**Relationships Between Plan Components**

There is a linear connection between the plan's goals, policies and actions, and the maps, textual background information and data contained in the Elements. The connection progresses from the broad Goals, through legitimizing Policies and then to specific Actions. An example of this progression follows:
Goal 41, under Public Services, seeks "...to expand and diversify the rural economy and employment base...". Goal 49, refines the direction further by seeking to "...promote and protect tourism related to viticulture and other agricultural activities."

Policy D, under Public Services responds directly to Goals 41 and 49, by stating that "priority recipients for capital facilities planning and expenditures" are those projects which "...would improve the maintenance and growth of the rural/agricultural economy..."

Maps of the Land Use Element of the Plan show unincorporated rural and agricultural land areas, as well as specific lands (parks, industrial lands etc) where Goal 41 is most likely to be successfully achieved. The map is augmented by descriptive text focusing on which land areas offer unique tourism, viticulture, etc. opportunities.

Action 4, initiates movement toward achieving the Goal and implementing the Policy by requiring "a study to determine the marketability of a water oriented Destination Resort within the unincorporated county." Destination Resorts are uses listed in both the Rural and Agricultural land use zones.

Action 5, requires a phased construction schedule for the Master Plan of the Horn Rapids Regional Park. Development of the park which should have important visitor and recreational spin-offs outside of the park:

Table 9.0, of the Capital Facilities Element schedules projects to provide water, power, access and parking, and rest room facilities at the Park.

Relative Importance of Plan Elements
Though all the Elements of the Plan are integrated functional components, some (Land Use, Transportation, Capital Facilities, Utilities), have greater effect and are more essential to the implementation of the Plan than others.

For example, the land use map of the Land Use Element is in essence a graphic policy statement which is served by, and in turn serves the other Elements. Based upon the land use designations on the map, private and public sector service providers can project future locational demands for water, sewer, natural gas, electrical power, roads, emergency, waste management, transit, communications service, etc. Using this information, the providers can, with relative certainty, invest their resources to plan, purchase the necessary easements and real estate, secure funding and construct capital facilities to meet future land use demands.

Definition of Terms
In concert with the land use map, the "Goals, Policies, and Actions," within the plan are the primary directives for land use decision-making and long range planning. They are also the principal directives to county decision-
makers and staff relative to what planning and public works actions, studies, and other projects, have to be undertaken during the plan's 20 year "horizon" in order to address current and future growth and development, and resource issues.

An example of the linear relationship between Goals, Policies and Actions is provided above. The meaning of these terms as they are used in the Plan is defined below:

**Goals** are broad statements of intent and philosophy expressing countywide values and attitudes. Goals are used as a general guide for action by the County. A goal may never be completely attained, but it is to strive for over time.

**Policies** provide the basis for decision making and specific courses of action which move the County toward the attainment of its adopted goals. Policies have major influence because decisions, actions, and programs should neither conflict with, nor be inconsistent with adopted policy. Policies should be operable on a continuous basis and applied consistently over time.

**Actions** are work tasks, projects, studies, etc. to be undertaken as part of implementing and realizing the Plan. An action may be necessary to forward a goal; or to carry out or make possible the carrying out of a policy; or to accomplish a project scheduled in the Capital Facilities Plan, or a study in preparation for constructing the project.

Unless an action is accompanied by a specific date for initiation or completion, it has no schedule and may fall anywhere on the priority list of planning "to do's" as that list is drawn by the Planning Director and the Board of Commissioners. The undertaking of actions is always dependent upon the availability and allocation of staff and budgeting resources.

**RELATIONSHIP OF THE PLAN TO ZONING AND OTHER "OFFICIAL CONTROLS"**

The relationship of the Comprehensive Plan to zoning and other official controls is stated succinctly by the State Planning Enabling Act's definition of and authorization for development of official controls by a county. The pertinent statutes in effect prior to the enactment of GMA, which adds significant requirements (as shown below) read as follows:

"Official controls" means legislatively defined and enacted policies, standards, precise detailed maps and other criteria, all of which control the physical development of a county or any part thereof or any detail thereof, and are the means of translating into regulations and ordinances all or any part of the general objectives of the comprehensive plan.

Such official controls may include, but are not limited to: "ordinances establishing zoning, subdivision control, plating, and adoption of detailed maps." (RCW 36.70.020(11))

"From time to time, the planning agency may, or if so requested by the board shall, cause to be prepared
official controls which, when adopted by ordinance by the board, will further the objectives and goals of the comprehensive plan. The planning agency may also draft such regulations, programs and legislation as may, in its judgement, be required to preserve the integrity of the comprehensive plan and assure its systematic execution, and the planning agency may recommend such plans, regulations, programs and legislation to the board for adoption." (RCW 36.70.550).

In addition, the Enabling Act states that "Zoning maps as an official control may be adopted only for areas covered by a comprehensive plan containing not less than a Land Use Element and a Circulation Element." (RCW 36.70.720).

These statutory citations serve to clarify the relationship between a comprehensive plan and a zoning ordinance. Simply put, a zoning ordinance (and other controls) is intended to implement the comprehensive plan. Upon passage of a comprehensive plan, a county assumes a responsibility to effectuate that plan and to conform the zoning ordinance and other implementing tools to it.

Changes In The Relationship Of A Plan to Official Controls Per GMA

GMA requires that counties and cities not planning under its provisions shall bring their development regulations into consistency with their comprehensive plans by July 1, 1992. Prior to the enactment of GMA there was no legal requirement that comprehensive plans and ordinances be consistent.

Counties and cities planning under GMA must also have consistency between their plans and regulations, but were given additional time (beyond the July 1992 date) to do so. The effect of the requirement for consistency is to make the Plan a "standard" rather than a general guide for new development. As such, it can be relied upon for public and private sector capital facilities and utilities planning. The significant changes resulting from GMA in the force and effect of a comprehensive plan, and its relationship to "official controls" are presented below, each is a new requirement, previously absent from state planning law.

The Comprehensive Plan Is The Standard For Land Use Decision-making

Comprehensive Plans and Land Use Ordinances Can No Longer Be Inconsistent

Whether or not a jurisdiction is planning under GMA, its land use regulations (ordinances) must be consistent with and Implement the Comprehensive Plan.

Projections of Population Growth Are The Basis For Establishing Urban Growth Areas

Official Population Projections Are the Basis Of The 20 Year Comprehensive Planning Process
Plans
The State Office Of Financial Management will supply counties annually with official population projections to be used as the basis for determining land use needs for local Comprehensive Plans, including the need for land within Urban Growth Areas.

Locating New Urban Development
Distinguish between "rural" and "urban" areas and services
The county land use map must provide the framework for accomplishing the different roles of cities and counties. Generally, the map(s) must:
- Designate land areas adjacent to cities for the expansion of urban uses, infrastructure and jurisdiction over the next 20 years;
- Designate all lands outside of urban growth areas for lower (rural densities);
- Designate and by regulation conserve "natural resource lands" (agriculture and mineral resources) essential to the local and regional economy;

Assure Protection Of Public Health, Safety, and Welfare As They May Be Affected By Land Use Actions
Maintain the long-term integrity of biological resources and man's works
The county Plan must protect ground and surface waters, biological resources, and ensure the long term structural integrity of development undertaken in or near hazardous areas:
- Designate and protect by regulation "critical areas" (aquifer recharge, frequently flooded, geologically hazardous, fish and wildlife, and wetland areas)

Internal Consistency Of Plans
Each Plan must be internally consistent
County Plans must have the following integrated "Elements" which function as a whole:
- Land use Element with designated land uses and intensities which all other Elements must serve;
- Transportation Element provides public transportation facilities to serve the land uses and densities of the Land Use Element at identified Levels of Service (LOS), which must be monitored and maintained over time;
- Capital Facilities Element identifies capital facilities project planning as well as funding mechanisms to construct necessary public services to meet the demands of the Land Use Map as it builds-out;
- Utilities Element which enables utility providers to assess with certainty the location and intensity of future land uses so that they may cost effectively plan, schedule, capitalize and construct sufficient utilities capacities;
- Rural Element showing rural land uses and densities for unincorporated lands outside of
Urban Growth Areas and agricultural lands designations;
- Housing Element which integrates the rural housing supply with the housing type and locational needs of rural land uses including agriculture.

Coordination With Other Plans

County and Cities to Adopt County-wide Planning Policies (see Appendix 4, item 1)
- Counties and their cities must coordinate their planning to avoid conflicts and ensure that infrastructures that cross jurisdictional boundaries are functionally integrated.

Joint Development Standards
- County must work with each city to prepare and adopt "joint development standards" to guide development on lands within UGAs but not yet annexed so that developers have a single review standard, and development of the land while still in the county does not prejudice the city's ability to realize its land use plan for that area when it does annex.

Availability of Transportation System Capacity
Concurrency
- Based upon variables including the projected levels of traffic from build-out of the land use map, the county must designate Levels of Service (LOS) on its major traffic routes, and program its capital expenditures to maintain that LOS as traffic demand on those routes increases.

State Agencies Required To Comply With Local Comprehensive Plans

State Compliance
- State agencies must comply with local comprehensive plans and development regulations and amendments thereto.

The significant amendments to the 1985 Plan in response to the above changes in Washington state's planning law (GMA) are shown in Appendix 1, item 1-1, with a description of how the 1985 Plan has been implemented in this Plan, or changed to meet the requirements of current state planning law.

Differences Not In Direct Response To GMA
There are some differences between this Plan and the County's 1985 Comprehensive Plan that are not a direct response to new state planning law requirements. Significant among these are:
- new option to cluster rural residential densities in planned developments;
- an increase in "non-farm" residential densities for lands designated as Agricultural;
- the exclusion of lands previously designated Agriculture from the designation because of urban
encroachments and parcelization which has occurred within the past 10 years;
• an increase in the number of acres designated industrial;
• a greater emphasis on recreational trails, paths and other amenities.
• a detailed Economic Element integrated with an Economic Development Improvement Program (EDIP) which is not a part of the Comprehensive Plan.
• a Park and Recreation Element.

AMENDMENTS TO THIS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
Comprehensive Plans are not written in stone for all time. They are a living document designed to be at once rigid enough to hold a chosen course over an extended period of new growth and development, yet flexible enough to accommodate a wide spectrum of both anticipated and unforeseen market conditions. A fundamentally good plan can do this for a relatively short period of time (5-10 years), during which monitoring and data gathering and analysis for the purposes of "fine tuning" and improving the plan by amendment should be an ongoing program. State law requires review and update of Comprehensive Plans every seven (7) years.

Frequency of Amendments
RCW 36.70A.130 requires that:

(1) (a) "Each comprehensive land use plan and development regulations shall be subject to continuing review and evaluation by the county or city that adopted them. Except as otherwise provided, a county or city shall take action to review and, if needed, revise its comprehensive land use plan and development regulations to ensure that the plan and regulations are complying with the requirements of this chapter according to the time periods specified in subsection (4) of this section. The review and evaluation required by this subsection may be combined with the review required by subsection (3) of this section. Any amendment or revision to a comprehensive land use plan shall conform to this chapter, and any change to development regulations shall be consistent with and implement the comprehensive plan."

(2)(a) Each county and city shall establish and broadly disseminate to the public a public participation program consistent with RCW 36.70A.035 and 36.70A.140 that identifies procedures and schedules whereby updates, proposed amendments, or revisions of the comprehensive plan are considered by the governing body of the county or city no more frequently than once every year. "Updates" means to review and revise if needed, according to subsection (1) of this section, and the time periods specified in subsection (4) of this section or in accordance with the provisions of subsections (5) and (8) of this section. Amendments may be considered more frequently than once per year under the following
circumstances:
(i) The initial adoption of a subarea plan that does not modify the comprehensive plan policies and designations applicable to the subarea;
(ii) The adoption or amendment of a shoreline master program under the procedures set forth in chapter 90.58 RCW;
(iii) The amendment of the capital facilities element of a comprehensive plan that occurs concurrently with the adoption or amendment of a county or city budget.
(iv) Until June 30, 2006, the designation of recreational lands under RCW 36.70A.1701. A county amending its comprehensive plan pursuant to this subsection (2)(a)(iv) may not do so more frequently than every eighteen months; and,
(v) The adoption of comprehensive plan amendments necessary to enact a planned action under RCW 43.21C.031(2), provided that amendments are considered in accordance with the public participation program established by the county or city under this subsection (2)(a) and all persons who have requested notice of a comprehensive plan update are given notice of the amendments and an opportunity to comment.
(b) Except as otherwise provided in (a) of this subsection, all proposals shall be considered by the governing body concurrently so the cumulative effect of the various proposals can be ascertained. However, after appropriate public participation a county or city may adopt amendments or revisions to its comprehensive plan that conform with this chapter whenever an emergency exists or to resolve an appeal of a comprehensive plan filed with a growth management hearings board or with the court.
(3)(a) Each county that designates urban growth areas under RCW 36.70A.110 shall review, at least every ten years, its designated urban growth area or areas, and the densities permitted within both the incorporated and unincorporated portions of each urban growth area. In conjunction with this review by the county, each city located within an urban growth area shall review the densities permitted within its boundaries, and the extent to which the urban growth occurring within the county has located within each city and the unincorporated portions of the urban growth areas.
(b) The county comprehensive plan designating urban growth areas, and the densities permitted in the urban growth areas by the comprehensive plans of the county and each city located within the urban growth areas, shall be revised to accommodate the urban growth projected to occur in the county for the succeeding twenty-year period. The review required by this subsection may be combined with the review and evaluation required by RCW 36.70A.215.
(4) The department shall establish a schedule for counties and cities to take action to review and, if needed,
revise their comprehensive plans and development regulations to ensure the plan and regulations comply with the requirements of this chapter. Except as provided in subsections (5) and (8) of this section, the schedule established by the department shall provide for the reviews and evaluations to be completed as follows:

(c) On or before December 1, 2006, and every seven years thereafter, for Benton, Chelan, Douglas, Grant, Kittitas, Spokane, and Yakima counties and the cities within those counties."

Counties are allowed under RCW 36.70A.130(2)(b) to consider emergency amendments that conform with Chapter 36.70A, after appropriate public participation has been observed, whenever an emergency exists. During the 2006 Plan Update, the Board of Commissioners adopted a definition of emergency as: “The declaration by the Board of County Commissioners, based upon circumstances and facts at hand, that there is an eminent or expectant threat to one or more of: life, property, public health and safety, air or water resources, or the realization of economic objectives evident in the County Comprehensive Plan, and for which immediate action is necessary to end the threat.”

Procedures For Accomplishing Plan Amendments
In July of each calendar year proposed amendments to the Benton County Plan shall be brought to the Benton County Planning Commission for hearing and recommendation to the Board of Commissioners. In order for this to occur, proposals must be submitted to the Benton County Planning Department no later than December 1st of each year, so that the proposals can be packaged, analyzed for effect, and scheduled for hearings, etc.

Detailed procedures for amending the Benton County Comprehensive Plan are contained in Appendix 1, ITEM 1-2, and are adopted by ordinance in Title 16 of the Benton County Code (BCC).

History Of Comprehensive Planning In Benton County
1985 Comprehensive Plan
In 1985 the Benton County Board of Commissioners, after a several years long planning process adopted the 1985 Comprehensive Plan. Implementing Ordinances for the Plan were drafted through a public participation process, however the ordinances were never adopted due to changing economic and staffing circumstances in the early and middle 1980s. (See Appendix 1, item 1-3 for chronology of the 1985 Comprehensive Planning process as well the process engaged in under GMA to amend, or update the 1985 Comprehensive Plan).

The advice of the Benton County Prosecuting Attorney’s office to the Planning Director in the mid-1980’s was
that without adopted implementing ordinances the land use map and policies of the 1985 Comprehensive Plan could not be used as a standard for land use decisions. The Planning Director was advised to continue using the county’s zoning district map and related zoning districts (ordinances) which predated the 1985 Comprehensive Plan. Actions taken by the Board of Commissioners to implement GMA will amend or replace these controls per current state planning law.

**Continuity Between the 1985 Plan and the GMA Plan**

Though some of this Plan’s amendments to the 1985 Comprehensive Plan in response to GMA are significant, they do not substantively alter the most important and fundamental elements of the 1985 Plan, i.e., the land use designations of its Land Use Map, and its Plan Policies. In addressing the requirements of GMA, county planning staff took the position that the policies and land use designations of the 1985 Plan were fundamentally sound and should be changed only where necessary to meet the requirements of GMA, or for update or improving clarity relative to changed circumstances.

Accordingly, for these fundamentals (the Land Use map and policies) there is direct continuity between the 1985 Plan and this Plan. The maintenance of this continuity was further assured by having many of the public members who participated in the 1985 planning process also participate as Rural Planning Committee members in the preparation of this Plan.