2021 Leave a Legacy
Photograph your local culture, help Wikipedia and win!

Benton County, Washington

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Benton County is a county in the south-central portion of the U.S. state of Washington. As of the 2020 census, its population was 206,873.[1] The county seat is Prosser,[2] and its largest city is Kennewick. The Columbia River demarcates the county's north, south, and east boundaries.

Benton County was created from what were then larger versions of Klickitat County and Yakima County on March 8, 1905,[3] and was named after Missouri statesman Thomas Hart Benton.

Benton County Courthouse

Location within the U.S. state of Washington

Washington's location within the U.S.
Coordinates: 46°15'N 119°30'W

Country	United States
State	Washington
Founded	March 8, 1905
Named for	Thomas Hart Benton
Seat	Prosser
Largest city	Kennewick
Area	
• Total	1,760 sq mi (4,600 km²)
• Land	1,700 sq mi (4,000 km²)
• Water	60 sq mi (200 km²), 3.4%
Population (2020)	
• Total	206,873
• Estimate (2022)	212,791
• Density	110/sq mi (43/km²)
Time zone	UTC−8 (Pacific)
• Summer (DST)	UTC−7 (PDT)
Congressional district	4th
Website	www.co.benton.wa.us

Benton County, Washington

Geography [edit]

According to the United States Census Bureau, the county has a total area of 1,760 square miles (4,600 km²), of which 1,700 square miles (4,400 km²) is land and 60 square miles (160 km²) (3.4%) is water.[4] The highest point of land elevation within the county is the summit of Rattlesnake Mountain at 3,527 feet; and the lowest point of land elevation is along the southwestern shore of Crow Butte at 265 feet (flucfuates due to level of Columbia River).

Waterways [edit]

- Columbia River - Surrounds and forms the county's boundary on three sides. Barge trafficking is possible upriver to anchorage sites in northern Richland, the upstream extent of Lake Wallula which forms behind McNary Dam
- Yakima River - Bisects the county from west to east, emptying into the Columbia River at Richland. As a water source, the Yakima is the lifesource for agriculture in the Yakima Valley. A shallow river, the Yakima is suitably navigable only for small, personal watercraft. Historically, the Yakima River supported some of the most bountiful migratory fish populations in the entire Columbia Basin, and many of those legendary salmon runs are now rebounding after decades of demise. Amon Creek is the most notable tributary of the Yakima River in Benton County, emptying into the mainstem river near the Yakima River Delta in Richland.

Mountains and ridges [edit]

- Horse Heaven Hills
- Rattlesnake Hills
  - Lookout Summit
  - Rattlesnake Mountain
- Jump Off Joe
- Badger Mountain
- Candy Mountain
- Red Mountain

Adjacent counties [edit]

- Grant County - north
- Franklin County - northeast
- Walla Walla County - east
- Umatilla County, Oregon - southeast
- Morrow County, Oregon - southeast
- Klickitat County - southwest
- Yakima County - west

National Protected Areas [edit]

- Hanford Reach National Monument (part)
- Manhattan Project National Historical Park (part)
- Saddle Mountain National Wildlife Refuge (part)
- Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge (part)

Major highways [edit]

- Interstate 82
- Interstate 182
- U.S. Route 12
- U.S. Route 395
- Washington State Route 14
- Washington State Route 240
- Washington State Route 397

Demographics [edit]

2010 census [edit]

As of the 2010 census, there were 175,177 people, 65,304 households, and 45,699 families residing in the county.[20] The population density was 103.0 inhabitants per square mile (39.8/km²). There were 68,618 housing units at an average density of 40.4 per square mile (15.6/km²).[21] The racial makeup of the county was 82.4% white, 2.7% Asian, 1.3% black or African American, 0.9% American Indian, 0.1% Pacific islander, 9.0% from other races, and 3.6% from two or more races. Those of Hispanic or Latino origin made up 18.7% of the population.[20] In terms of ancestry, 22.3% were German, 13.4% were English, 12.5% were Irish, and 7.9% were American.[22]

Of the 65,304 households, 36.4% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 53.8% were married couples living together, 11.1% had a female householder with no husband present, 30.0% were non-families, and 24.3% of all households were made up of individuals. The average household size was 2.66 and the average family size was 3.17. The median age was 35.6 years.[20]

The median income for a household in the county was $57,354 and the median income for a family was $69,834. Males had a median income of $57,496 versus $36,575 for females. The per capita income for the county was $27,161. About 9.3% of families and 12.7% of the population were below the poverty line, including 19.3% of those under age 18 and 6.1% of those age 65 or over.[23][24]

2000 census [edit]

As of the 2000 census, there were 142,475 people, 52,866 households, and 38,063 families residing in the county. The population density was 84 people per square mile (32 people/km²). There were 55,963 housing units at an average density of 33 per square mile (13/km²). The racial makeup of the county was 86.2% White, 0.8% Black or African American, 0.8% Native American, 2.2% Asian, 0.1% Pacific Islander, 7.6% from other races, and 2.7% from two or more races. 12.5% of the population were Hispanic or Latino of any race. 18.1% were of German, 11.6% English, 9.1% United States or American and 8.4% Irish ancestry. 86.4% spoke English and 10.3% Spanish as their first language.

There were 52,866 households, out of which 38.20% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 57.60% were married couples living together, 10.20% had a female householder with no husband present, and 28.00% were non-families. 23.20% of all households were made up of individuals, and 7.70% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.68 and the average family size was 3.17.

In the county, the population was spread out, with 29.70% under the age of 18, 8.60% from 18 to 24, 26.50% from 25 to 44, 22.90% from 45 to 64, and 10.30% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 34 years. For every 100 females there were 98.70 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 96.30 males.

The median income for a household in the county was $47,044, and the median income for a family was $54,146. Males had a median income of $45,558 versus $27,232 for females. The per capita income for the county was $21,301. About 7.80% of families and 10.30% of the population were below the poverty line, including 14.30% of those under age 18 and 6.90% of those age 65 or over.

Government [edit]

Benton County is one of the 33 counties in Washington that operates under the non-chartered "commission" or "plural executive" form of government. Three commissioners share administrative aegis with several other partisan officials independently elected to four-year terms of office. Judges of the superior court are also independently elected. In Benton County, the commissioners appoint a county administrator to oversee all departments that do not fall under other elected officials.

- **Commissioner** (District 1) - Jerome Delvin
- **Commissioner** (District 2) - Michael Alvarez
- **Commissioner** (District 3) - Will McKay

The County government is seated in Prosser, with many departments having satellite and auxiliary offices and facilities in Richland, Kennewick, and elsewhere.[citation needed] An attempt to move the county seat from Prosser to Kennewick resulted in a November 1984 ballot measure, which had 54.4 percent approval but failed to meet the required 60 percent threshold.[25]

There are five incorporated cities within Benton County. The two larger cities—Kennewick and Richland—employ the "council-manager" form of government where the mayor is elected from the city council and serves a more ceremonial role, whereby direct administration of the city is the responsibility of the city manager. The three smaller cities—Benton City, Prosser, and West Richland—use the "mayor-council" form of government where the mayor is the chief administrator of the city and is directly elected by the citizens. In Washington, a majority of cities use the mayor-council form, but the council-manager structure is common among medium-sized municipalities.

Numerous special purpose districts with varying degrees of taxing and administrative authority such as port authorities and school districts oversee local responsibilities that are not a part of county or city governance.

Education [edit]

Benton County is serviced by six public school districts and a few smaller private schools.

Public education [edit]

Delta High School, located in Pasco, is a public high school specializing in the "STEM" fields of study (science, technology, engineering, mathematics). Delta High School is a collaborative venture of the Kennewick, Pasco, and Richland school districts, and is located in neighboring Franklin County, Washington. Prosser High School is located much closer to the county seat of Benton County.

Higher education [edit]

Two public college branch campuses are located in Benton County, each in Richland:

- Columbia Basin College - CBC is a community college conferring associates, transfer, and baccalaureate degrees with its main campus located in Pasco and a branch campus co-located with Delta High School in central Richland.
- Washington State University Tri-Cities - WSU/TC is a branch of the Washington State University system based in Pullman, with a growing campus located in North Richland near the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory.

Recreation [edit]

The Tri-City area's favorable climate, generally lower costs of living, and central location within a four-hour drive of the Seattle, Portland, Boise, and Spokane metropolitan areas has made it a popular destination for sportsmen, tourists, bicycle enthusiasts, wine-tourism, and other attractions.

Golf courses [edit]

Benton County is home to seven publicly accessible golf courses:

- **Canyon Lakes** (Kennewick) – 7,026 yards | 73.8 / 131
- **Columbia Park** (Kennewick) – 2,447 yards | none: "par 3"
- **Zintel Creek Golf Club** (Kennewick) – 4,900 yards | 63.9 / 115 | note: semi-private
- **Bucksbin** (Richland) - note: 9 holes
- **Columbia Point** (Richland) – 6,571 yards | 71.2 / 128 | note: municipal
- **Horn Rapids** (Richland) – 7,060 yards | 74.0 / 139
- **West Richland** (West Richland) – 6,014 yards

A private golf and country club, **Meadow Springs**, is also located in Richland.

Museums [edit]

- Benton County Historical Museum
- East Benton County Historical Museum
- Hanford Reach Interpretive Center

Sports [edit]

The Tri-City Americans are a major junior hockey team and are a founding member of the Western Hockey League and play at the Toyota Center. The Americans began as the Calgary Buffaloes in 1966, and after stints in Billings, Nanaimo, and New Westminster, moved to the Tri-Cities for the 1988–89 season where they were rebranded as the "Americans". Players are 16–20 years old and are generally considered to have amateur status, though they do receive nominal compensation and the organization is operated as a for-profit business.

Public lands [edit]

Like many Western counties, Benton County is home to considerable public lands acreage totaling about one-third of the county's total land area. The most significant holding is the **United States Department of Energy's** Hanford Site, most of which has restricted public access. However, Hanford does have a strong "nuclear tourism" element and certain Site facilities, such as the B Reactor, are a major attraction for history and engineering buffs. Part of the Hanford Site acreage is also part of the Hanford Reach National Monument, which was established in 2000 by presidential proclamation. Like with most of the rest of Hanford, most of the National Monument within Benton County is restricted from general public use.[26]

Other federal land holdings in the county include small clusters of **Bureau of Land Management**, notably an aggregation along the Horse Heaven Hills south of Benton City that is popular with hikers; **Fish and Wildlife Service**-owned islands and shorelands that are parts of the Umatilla and McNary National Wildlife Refuges; and **Army Corps of Engineers** properties along the Columbia River, most of which are managed for habitat and recreation by the County and cities.

State-owned public lands are minimal.[clarification needed] In Benton County, with the **Department of Fish and Wildlife's** Rattlesnake Slope Wildlife Recreation Area north of Benton City being the most significant and a draw for hikers and equestrians.

Benton County and the cities also own numerous parklands and open spaces, most notable the Badger Mountain Centennial Preserve, a hiking destination managed by the County located south of Richland which draws over 200,000 visits per year.

Viticulture [edit]

Kiona Vineyard in the Red Mountain AVA looking northwest toward Rattlesnake Mountain. Two varieties of grapes are evident on a crisp autumn day.

The area of south-central Washington occupied by Benton County has been known primarily as an agricultural hub since its settlement. The rise of viticulture has had a profound impact on the agricultural and tourism industries over the past two decades, and has in many ways rethraped the reputation of the region.

The Yakima Valley AVA, part of which is located in Benton County, was the first American Viticultural Area established within Washington state, gaining the recognition in 1983. As the Washington wine industry began to focus more on terroir, three sub-appellations have been created for areas within the Yakima Valley AVA that demonstrate unique microclimates and soil conditions which crafted different wines from their neighboring areas. The Red Mountain AVA, which lies in its entirety on Benton County, was created in 2001. The county also includes part of the Horse Heaven Hills AVA which is part of the larger Columbia Valley AVA.

Sites of interest [edit]

- Columbia Center Mall
- Columbia Park
- Hanford Reach National Monument: see also Hanford Reach Interpretive Center
- Hanford Site
- Ice Age Floods National Geologic Trail: Lake Lewis Section
- Irrigated Agriculture Research & Extension Center
- Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO)
- McNary Dam
- Manhattan Project National Historical Park: B Reactor
- Toyota Center (Three Rivers Coliseum)
- Walter Clore Wine & Culinary Center

Communities [edit]

Cities [edit]

- Benton City
- Kennewick
- Prosser (County seat)
- Richland
- West Richland

Census-designated place [edit]

- Finley

Other unincorporated communities [edit]

- Badger
- Berman
- East White Bluffs
- Gibbon
- Highland
- Kiona
- Longview
- North Prosser
- Paterson
- Plymouth
- Whitstran

Ghost towns [edit]

- Hanford
- Horse Heaven
- White Bluffs
- Yellept

See also [edit]

- National Register of Historic Places listings in Benton County, Washington

References [edit]

1. ^ "State & County QuickFacts".
2. ^ "Find a County".
3. ^ "Milestones for Washington State History — Part 3: 1901 to 1950".
4. ^ "2010 Census Gazetteer Files".
5. ^ "Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Counties: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2022".
6. ^ "U.S. Decennial Census".
7. ^ "Historical Census Browser".
8. ^ "Population of Counties by Decennial Census: 1900 to 1990".
9. ^ "Census 2000 PHC-T-4. Ranking Tables for Counties: 1990 and 2000" (PDF).
10. ^ "QuickFacts".
11. ^ "DP-1 Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics: 2010 Demographic Profile Data".
12. ^ "Population, Housing Units, Area, and Density: 2010 - County".
13. ^ "Population, Housing Units, Area, and Density: 2020 - County".
14. ^ "DP02 SELECTED SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS IN THE UNITED STATES – 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates".
15. ^ "DP03 SELECTED ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS – 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates".
16. ^ "Population Estimates".
17. ^ Lapp, David. "Dave Lapp's Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections".
18. ^ "Election Results".
19. ^ "Election Results".
20. ^ "Population, Housing Units, Area, and Density: 2010 - County".
21. ^ "Ranking Tables for Counties: 1990 and 2000" (PDF).
22. ^ "DP02 SELECTED SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS IN THE UNITED STATES – 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates".
23. ^ "DP03 SELECTED ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS – 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates".
24. ^ "Population Estimates".
25. ^ "Election Results".
26. ^ "Hanford Reach National Monument".

Further reading [edit]

- William Denison Lyman, *History of the Yakima Valley, Washington: Comprising Yakima, Kittitas, and Benton Counties*. In Two Volumes. Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1919. Volume 1 | Volume 2

External links [edit]

- Benton County (official website)
- East Benton County Historical Museum
- Tri-City Regional Chamber of Commerce

Historical population

Census	Pop.	%±
1910	7,837	—
1920	10,903	39.1%
1930	10,952	0.4%
1940	12,053	10.1%
1950	51,370	326.2%
1960	62,070	20.8%
1970	67,540	8.8%
1980	109,444	62.0%
1990	112,560	2.8%
2000	142,475	26.6%
2010	175,177	23.0%
2020	206,873	18.1%
2022 (est.)	212,791[17]	2.9%

U.S. Decennial Census[6]
1790–1960[7] 1970–1990[8]
1990–2000[9] 2010–2020[10]

United States presidential election results for Benton County, Washington[17] [hide]

	Republican		Democratic		Third party	
Year ♦	No. ♦	% ♦	No. ♦	% ♦	No. ♦	% ♦
2020	60,365	58.59%	38,706	37.57%	3,962	3.85%
2016	47,194	56.46%	29,360	31.53%	10,038	12.01%
2012	49,461	61.66%	28,145	35.09%	2,611	3.25%
2008	45,345	61.83%	26,288	35.84%	1,708	2.33%
2004	44,350	66.30%	21,549	32.21%	993	1.48%
2000	38,387	64.18%	19,512	32.64%	1,900	3.18%
1996	26,664	49.58%	20,783	38.63%	6,356	11.81%
1992	22,883	43.50%	16,459	31.29%	13,260	25.21%
1988	28,688	65.18%	14,817	33.66%	511	1.16%
1984	32,307	69.28%	13,784	29.56%	540	1.16%
1980	28,728	64.68%	11,561	26.03%	4,124	9.29%
1976	22,135	63.95%	11,306	32.67%	1,170	3.38%
1972	18,517	61.02%	9,824	32.37%	2,005	6.61%
1968	14,659	53.29%	10,879	38.06%	3,042	10.64%
1964	11,708	41.27%	16,650	58.68%	14	0.05%
1960	13,797	52.37%	12,518	47.52%	29	0.11%
1956	13,807	53.99%	11,760	45.99%	4	0.02%
1952	13,412	57.40%	9,889	42.33%	63	0.27%
1948	5,852	40.45%	8,458	58.46%	157	1.09%
1944	3,905	47.79%	4,233	51.80%	34	0.42%
1940	2,670	51.96%	2,414	46.97%	55	1.07%
1936	1,610	35.56%	2,402	53.06%	515	11.38%
1932	1,694	36.85%	2,633	57.28%	270	5.87%
1928	2,650	69.94%	1,080	28.50%	59	1.56%
1924	1,812	45.32%	437	10.93%	1,748	43.73%
1920	2,001	52.81%	975	25.34%	871	22.64%
1916	1,460	45.43%	1,351	42.03%	403	12.54%
1912	728	19.11%	1,238	32.50%	1,843	48.39%
1908	891	57.74%	465	30.14%	187	12.12%

Places adjacent to Benton County, Washington [show]
Municipalities and communities of Benton County, Washington, United States [show]
State of Washington [show]
Authority control databases [show]

This page was last edited on 15 January 2024, at 05:44 (UTC).
Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License 4.0; additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy. Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization.
Privacy policy About Wikipedia Disclaimers Contact Wikipedia Code of Conduct Developers Statistics Cookie statement Mobile view
Wikimedia Foundation Powered by MediaWiki