

METHOW VALLEY CITIZENS COUNCIL



VALLEY VOICE

SUMMER 2021

**An Emerging Vision of
a Resilient Methow**
A River Runs Through It
Learn Your Forest



METHOW VALLEY CITIZENS COUNCIL

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Cover photo by Tulie Budiselich

“Deep time says, ‘Look at the gift of being, now. Look at the astonishing responsibility of legacy-leaving. And look at what you’ve inherited in the wonder of this world. And what will our time leave?’”

— from *Underland* by
Robert Macfarlane

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Letter from the Executive Director

Every place must change. Just as a person grows, ages, shifts, and defines themselves anew, a place reinvents itself over time. We, as stability-loving humans, abhor change. We hate creaky bones as much as we hate seeing the essential character of community change. We long for a return to a nostalgic past when we could bound up hills and knew every person we encountered in town.



Recently, I've been thinking about how, when at the nexus of change, it is important to walk forward while looking behind you; to have an owl's ability to twist our heads in both directions at once. The core values of MVCC remind me to do this: to remember where we came from while simultaneously visioning our future. In practice, this means remaining committed to listening to our community—hearing what values make this place unique and how they can support us into our future. These values arise from our past: The recognition that this land was lived on and understood by the Methow people for many millenia before us, a heritage of growing our own food through our agricultural history, a self-sufficiency in the face of natural disasters and a pride in being a part of a diverse community.

As we pull from our past, we look towards the future we wish to create: a valley prepared for the slate of changes that climate change will bring; a valley that can support a diverse population—of different races and vocations and income levels; a valley unafraid of change because it is willing to adapt and move in the direction it has envisioned.

As the Methow Valley changes, MVCC will change with it. We will recognize the reality that environmental issues exist within a larger social framework that must incorporate equity and inclusion. This requires us to expand our sphere of work to include issues such as affordable housing that supports the multi-layered community fabric we value. We will also reflect on the history of this landscape, especially all we can learn from the indigenous history. And we will continue the essential work you rely on us for: an ear to the ground and an eye ahead — both focused on creating a thriving Valley together.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jasmine Minbashian". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Jasmine Minbashian, Executive Director

“EVENTUALLY, ALL THINGS MERGE INTO ONE, AND
A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT”

—Norman Maclean



Perspectives on our changing relationship with water

BY LORAH SUPER, PROGRAM DIRECTOR

In the beginning, geologic phenomena created the valley more or less as we see it today. Mountain building, the advance and retreat of glaciers, Missoula Floods, volcanic eruptions and the seasonal ebb and flow of snowmelt shaped the valley's

iconic benches and the layers of rock and soil beneath. These layers were subsequently carved by the Methow River and its tributaries into our watershed, flowing from the headwaters to the Columbia. Other natural events — droughts, floods and wildfires — further shaped the valley, built (and destroyed) forests and vegetation, and made distinct habitats

that allowed wildlife to thrive here, without humans, for centuries. Rivers and streams were central to life in this place. They still are.

The First People were the Methow People. The Methow People held a relationship with the landscape and wildlife based on sustainability and reverence for all parts as interdependent members of a community. The Methow People depended on the river and streams, the wildlife and vegetation, for every part of their lives. They understood the seasons and cycles of their home intimately, maintaining communication with the landscape and meeting every need with what the land offered in a way that is difficult for modern people to understand.

Gold was discovered near the Methow in 1862; in 1886, the Moses Columbia Indian Reservation boundaries changed and the valley opened to settlement by white homesteaders. The first families arrived by foot, on horseback, and by horse-drawn wagon. Miners, farmers and stockmen saw opportunity in the landscape and set about altering it to meet their needs. They used horses and hand tools to construct massive irrigation systems to move water from the river and streams to orchards and hayfields. The irrigation ditches became mini ecosystems, extending the green of the valley floor up to the benches. The settlers built bridges across the river, hauling freight and people to growing towns on an expanding network of roads. With few exceptions, the Methow People were excluded, banished to the Colville Reservation across the Okanogan River.

Adversity in the Methow Valley has often presented itself in the form of too much or not enough water. In the spring of 1894, the largest flood ever recorded in the Columbia Basin washed away the mining town of Silver. Later, the '48 flood destroyed the valley's bridges, electricity, and phone lines. A prolonged drought that began in 1913 didn't break until 1929, and killed most of the first commercial orchards, spread fires, and drove homesteaders out of the valley after they lost their farms or fortunes for lack of water. The resilient people who stayed rebuilt bridges,

infrastructure, and towns. They carried on.

Time passed, the North Cascades Highway opened, and the world discovered the Methow Valley. Real estate speculation got hot on rumors of a destination ski resort and subdivisions proliferated. People grappled with the valley's future in a new way. The first Basin Plan, released in 1976, recognized and attempted to prioritize the competing interests for the water flowing in the river and beneath the soil. The river kept flowing, getting low in summer and winter, rising in the spring, occasionally flooding.

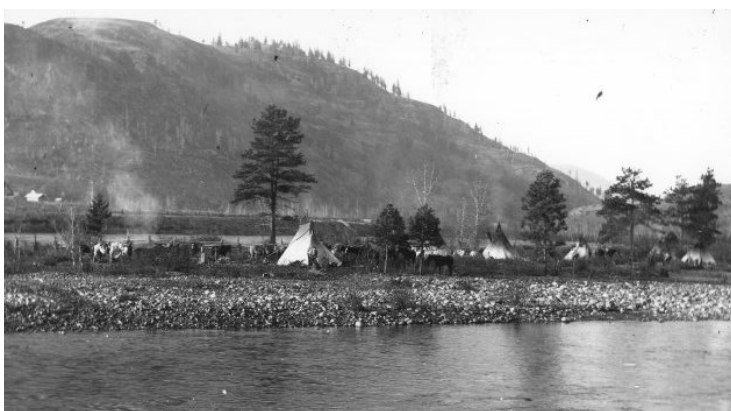
The destination ski resort was defeated after 20 years. Salmon spawned in decreasing numbers while houses sprouted in formerly irrigated fields. Many tributaries were "closed" to further water use, so wells were drilled into bedrock pockets instead. The old irrigation ditches were shut down, one by one, and replaced with wells or pipes — swapping 100-year-old mini ecosystems with the original arid land, now marked by lines of dead trees. Recreation happened, on and off the river. A trail system flourished and attracted more visitors. The state's largest wildfire swept the valley. Water rights speculators tried to sell farm water to far away cities. The valley started new cycles of planning: What do we want the future to look like? How much water do the fish need? Can we sustain ourselves with what we have?

2021. Here we are in the future, still looking forward. The latest planning cycle tells us what we already know: modern people want this to be the same place it was for the settlers, if not what it was for the First People. We want the valley's ancient geologic cycles to coexist harmoniously with our modern fancies. Every drop of water perfectly portioned to meet the needs of salmon, deer, wolves, livestock, small farms, big houses, growing towns, recreators, and the ever-hungry real estate market. Enough for everyone, always.

Climate science tells a different story of the future, one in which the ancient cycles falter, snow melts faster, summers are hotter and ecosystems adjust in unpredictable ways. If we tune in to the message calling to us from this beloved landscape, then we know that it's time to make difficult choices to preserve what's important.

May we know what's important. May we choose well. ♦

Kit McLean and Karen West, *Bound For the Methow*, 2009, Shafer Historical Museum





An Emerging Vision for a Resilient Methow

BY JOSHUA PORTER, CLIMATE PROGRAM MANAGER

What do you picture when you think about the Methow Valley in 20 years? How will the work we do right now allow future generations to thrive?

These are the types of questions that brought together 200 community members for a local climate action planning process called Resilient Methow in December 2020. The meeting highlighted the Methow Valley Climate Task Force's initial findings and recommendations and emphasized the urgency of focused action on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Resilience is the ability to respond, adapt to, and recover from a disruptive event. With local knowledge and expertise, the Climate Task Force is identifying local actions to adapt to climate impacts. A separate mitigation group is identifying ways our communities can reduce human-generated carbon emissions. Together, this strategy will help prepare the Methow Valley for the change that the future holds.

Washington State has committed to having a carbon-neutral electricity grid by 2030 and achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050. What should our goals for reducing local emissions be? What are the

ways we can achieve those goals while simultaneously addressing equity? We can approach aspects of this work such as forest health and air quality with a multi-solving lens in which our climate adaptation and mitigation policies and actions also provide co-benefits in human health, economic vitality, food security, clean water, and disaster resilience.

In her book *Braiding Sweetgrass*, plant ecologist and founding director of the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment, Robin Wall Kimmerer writes, "all flourishing is mutual: what else are we learning now, unless it is the opposite—when we fail to be mutual we cannot flourish. We are only as vibrant, healthy, and alive as the most vulnerable among us." Her words are embodied in multi-solving approaches, and emerge throughout the vision, values, and principles that the Climate Task Force is using to guide the Climate Action Plan. In practice, this involves providing added support to the most vulnerable in our community so that everyone can thrive in the face of change.

The Task Force has defined several core guiding principles and values for the Climate Action Plan. The Action Plan will work to build common ground and create new collaborations and partnerships between organizations, agencies, and citizens. It will also fill gaps in action by identifying what partners are already doing to address climate change and what

projects within the Action Plan need support and leadership. Finally, the Plan will be responsible for the well-being of future generations.

The movement for Climate Justice has made it very clear that our youth are not only the inheritors of problems they will need to solve in the future, they are our leaders today. They show us what it looks like to be responsible to future generations. Youth Director of Earth Guardians, Xiuhtezcatl Martinez, speaks to the immediacy of this work in *We Rise: The Earth Guardians Guide to Building a Movement that Restores the Planet*: “It is in our nature to want to fight for the health of the planet. This life is a gift, and it is our responsibility to respect and protect that which gives us life.” To keep warming to below 1.5 Celsius, we need to keep at least half of all known fossil fuels in the ground. What will that take? Can we reduce emissions by half by 2030? Humans can make radical changes in behavior when motivated. And we can contribute to those solutions at home in this valley.

In an article titled, “Hope in the Age of Climate Consequences,” Kate Davies defines intrinsic hope as doing what needs to be done, regardless of any assured success. Intrinsic hope accepts the facts and acts upon them, believing another world is possible. This is resonant of Rebecca Solnit’s distinction, that “hope is not like a lottery ticket you can sit on the sofa and clutch, feeling lucky...[it] is an ax you break

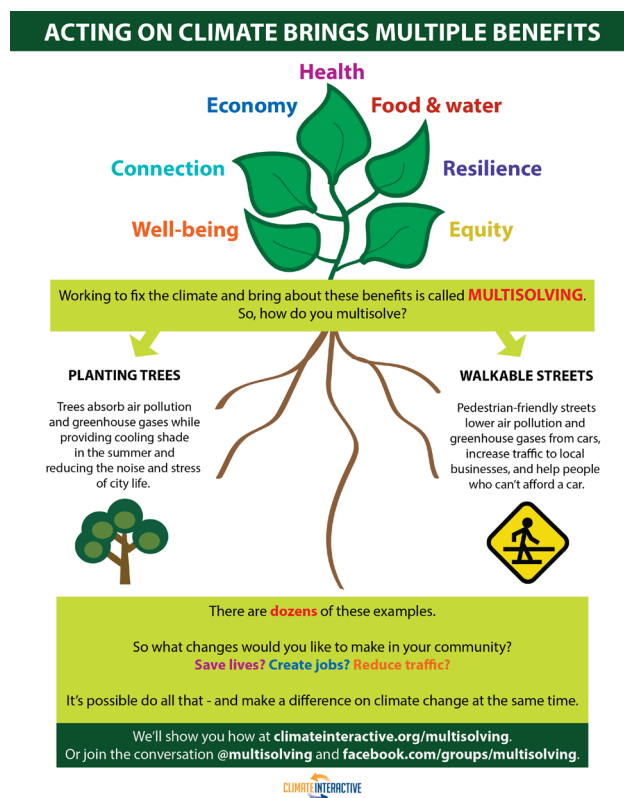
down doors with in an emergency; because hope should shove you out the door.” This is the energy embodied in belonging to and co-creating the future of a more resilient community. It speaks volumes to what kind of ancestors we want to be.

Looking forward to implementation, volunteer-led “action groups” have formed to begin the work of taking the Climate Action Plan’s recommendations and turning them into realities. Action groups are made up of individuals that were involved in the development of the plan, as well as community members, businesses, and town officials who have been inspired by Resilient Methow’s effort and are ready to initiate local

climate solutions. An implementation team is creating a framework to coordinate across groups and keep everyone informed, to identify bills in the legislature that align with priority areas, and to create touch points for the broader community to engage in.

In a recent presentation, Running-Grass, the Director of the Three Circles Center, a multicultural environmental education network, emphasized the opportunity of co-creating the future of our communities as a key characteristic of belonging to a place. This requires making active changes now to create our shared future. Resilient Methow is taking these first steps. If you haven’t yet, you can still become involved in working on a climate action project or attending an event. Visit resilientmethow.org for news and updates. ♦

“Can we reduce emissions by half by 2030? Humans can make radical changes in behavior when motivated. And we can contribute to those solutions at home in this valley.”



Breathe Easy

BUILDING A SMOKE-READY COMMUNITY

As temperatures increased and the landscape dried out last summer amid a global pandemic, the quick-moving September wildfires and plentiful wildfire smoke were both exhausting and traumatic for many of us. As we must anticipate annual smoke from summer wildfires as well as from prescribed burns in the fall and spring, we are urging the community to ask itself “Haven’t we had enough smoke?”

To many of us, it seems imperative that we stop unnecessary burning and work towards improving air quality any — and every — way that we can. Clean Air Methow, a project of MVCC, seeks to do this through community education and developing solutions for a sustainably clean airshed for everybody.

In November 2020, Clean Air Methow in partnership with the Okanogan River Airshed Partnership, the Colville Confederated Tribes, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the US Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, hosted three meetings to discuss air quality issues in Okanogan County. The focus was to identify what we can do to become more “smoke ready” in response to worsening air quality in the region due to wildfires. A few of the priorities included increasing awareness about smoke readiness and air quality data, providing access to clean indoor air for

A Smoke-Ready Community ...

- Knows its sources of air pollution, understands the health risks of smoke, and has access to tools to protect itself.
- Has public spaces and buildings with filtration for smoke.
- Has resources on hand to support vulnerable and underserved residents of the community.

all (with a focus on at-risk populations), decreasing unnecessary outdoor burning and raising awareness of burn bans.

CLEAN AIR AWARE



Clean Air Methow is already taking steps towards making the Methow a “smoke-ready” community, including:

Replacing smoky woodstoves. The

Washington Department of Ecology was one of the founding partners for Clean Air Methow and has been a longstanding resource to our community-based work to

improve air quality. For 2020-2021 they designated \$120,000 for Clean Air Methow to administer a woodstove replacement program with North Valley Lumber as its stove installation partner. Participants will have their old stove removed and replaced with a new, efficient wood stove, pellet stove, or heat pump free of charge. Replacing an old woodburning stove can result in a greater than 10-fold reduction in particulate matter released into our air! The EPA estimates that if all the old wood stoves in the U.S. were replaced with cleaner-burning stoves, \$56 – \$126 billion in

AIR CARE

health benefits per year would be realized. The program will be operating again in 2021 – 2022.

Supporting local ambassadors for clean air and accurate air quality data. Did you know that Clean Air Methow is responsible for one of the largest rural networks of low-cost air quality sensors in the world?! Recently, we were granted an EPA Environmental Justice grant to expand the scale and scope of outreach and education possible through local “Clean Air Ambassadors.” This moniker was originally granted to the hosts of the 25 Purple Air sensors located from Lost River Airport to Pateros, but we have now expanded our pool of clean air enthusiasts embracing the name through an online

pledge. Actions articulated in the pledge include commitment to seeking alternatives to outdoor burning; observing and promoting air quality burn bans; learning about sources of air pollution in our community and air quality data; and respectfully engaging in conversation with family, friends and neighbors about ways to improve our air quality. The EPA grant also funds enable outreach to Spanish speakers in our community and the development of materials that addresses their air quality questions and concerns.

If you care about protecting our airshed and want to learn more about Clean Air Methow, please visit our new website: www.cleanairmethow.org. ♦

CLEAN AIR AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT

Eric, Cara, and Colm Goodwin

Cara and Eric live with their six-year-old son Colm approximately 300 feet above the Methow River Valley on lower Studhorse Mountain.

What motivated you to become a Clean Air Ambassador? Well, because of our son Colm’s asthma, we track air quality closely. We previously tried to use our own sensor and relate it to the WA Department of Ecology’s sensor in Winthrop at the library, but it was difficult to compare because Ecology’s didn’t report real-time data.

Is air quality something that impacts your life on a daily basis? Yes, we were already somewhat conscientious but when Colm had breathing problems as a baby (which we later we learned was asthma), it heightened everything. We’re very aware of dust and fire and smoke. We have indoor sensors too and watch how things like cooking affects the air quality inside. We probably track it more than your average person. Having real-time data from a sensor placed right outside our house helps a lot in knowing what might be safe for Colm to do on a given day. Plus, since there are so many sensors to look at, either in the valley or across the whole

state, it informs whether we can go away for the day. For example, this morning we went for a bike ride in Mazama because the air wasn’t very good here. During wildfire season sometimes when the air quality is bad everywhere, it just helps us understand that OK, it’s time to stay indoors. The feature I like the most on the Purple Air displays is how it will show in colored rings around the air quality number what the quality has been in the last 24, 12, and 6 hours.

You mentioned Colm has asthma, putting him in the “sensitive” to poor air quality group. Yes, Colm has asthma, and I feel like Eric and I don’t technically fall into that category but, we notice it, like I get headaches when it starts to get into the orange color. Some days my eyes will burn a little bit, or I’ll feel it in the back of my throat. But Colm thinks he’s going to be a fire fighter when he grows up and I’m like, not with your asthma! I mean obviously some people can handle more smoke because I can’t even imagine how the firefighters do it.

What do you plan on doing with information from the sensor in the



future? It’ll be interesting to watch the numbers. Having the sensor just helps to know because it seems like before we were guessing and I feel like sometimes your nose doesn’t always match up — sometimes you just get used to the smoke smell, sometimes it’s super sensitive. I like having the sensor here to match a reading and number to what I’m experiencing.

We’re so glad to have you as part of this citizen science project and network of ambassadors! Any visions for the future of the ambassador program? I think it’s fantastic. It would be helpful to incorporate elevations of each of the sensors on the Purple Air map. Getting the word out so people can begin to pay attention to the sensors close to where they live, and work is great. It would also be nice to get more up the Chewuch, maybe like Cub Creek. I also hope we can just get more sensors and that the word spreads so that people support this project.

Protect the Best, Restore the Rest



Public Lands Coordinator Sam Israel measures a Douglas fir in the Twisp Restoration Project near Poplar Flat campground. Sam is working closely with the North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative to ensure the project results in healthy, resilient forests.

SAM ISRAEL, PUBLIC LANDS COORDINATOR

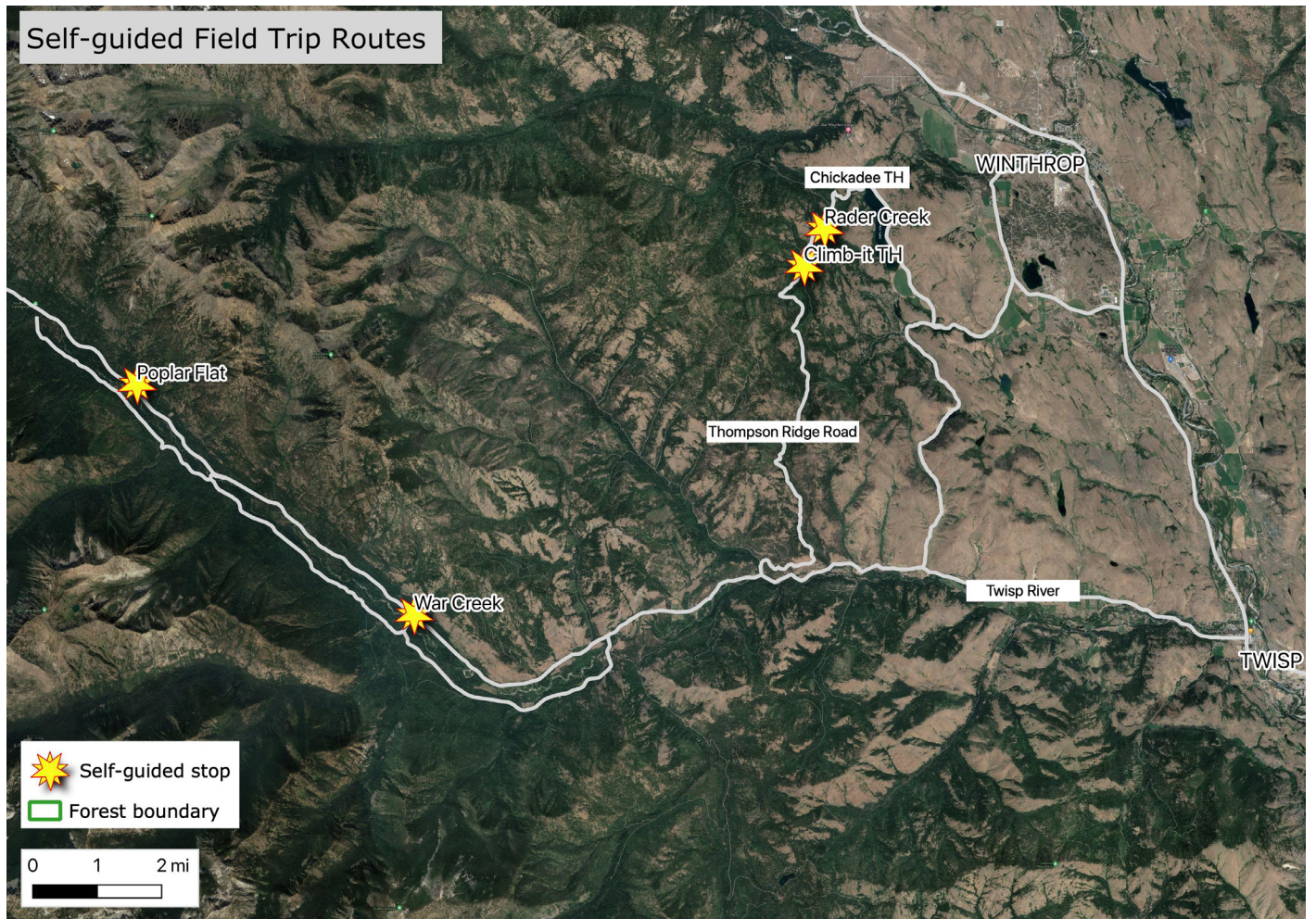
We all care a lot about what's going on in the forests above town, which is why MVCC staff, board members, and members paid a visit to forest stands scheduled for thinning as part of the Mission Restoration Project. The project employs a suite of strategies, including road decommissioning, variable thinning prescriptions and prescribed burns that combine to help heal a departed (outside historic conditions) landscape. We made stops along the way to view the Crescent Mountain Fire's mosaic burn effect and overgrown areas overdue for fuels reduction work.

Another stop at Black Pine Meadows highlighted newly minted beaver dam analogs and wetland protection fencing aimed at managing aquatic habitat restoration objectives of Mission's landscape-scale forest restoration vision. The constructed dam analogs were incorporated into the project through key partnerships between the Colville Confederated Tribes, Trout Unlimited, and the US Forest Service, and are intended to attract beaver back to the area after heavy storms in the 2000's destroyed decades of native beaver habitat.

From these field trip discussions emerged innovative ways to support our community in participating in the Twisp Restoration Project, a massive (77,000 acre) forest treatment plan in up the Twisp River and surrounding drainages. The project is complex and multi-faceted. It will determine forest practices in the area for well over a decade and dramatically alter the landscape.

The Twisp Restoration Project's forest treatment plan has received a lot of attention from the North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative, a diverse group of local stakeholders working together to obtain resources and community support to accelerate landscape-scale forest restoration on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest in Chelan and Okanogan counties. As a member of the Collaborative, MVCC has been working with the Forest Service to improve the project and limit its impact on the ecological and recreation values we all cherish. Demonstrated by MVCC's involvement in the 2019 Virginia Ridge Timber Sale outside of Winthrop, participation and collaboration can contribute to sound ecological outcomes. MVCC is grateful for all the support and comments that the community has already committed to the Twisp Restoration Project, and will continue to keep the public up to date as the Forest Service determines the next steps for this project in 2021.

Beyond the Methow Valley, MVCC is working with regional partners including The Wilderness Society and Conservation Northwest, to assure the forthcoming revision of the comprehensive Northwest Forest Plan, which guides management on federal land in the Pacific Northwest, reflects 21st century values. Coined "the Great Northwest Forest Campaign," we're working together to secure lasting protection and restoration for the 24.5 million acres of federally managed lands in western Oregon, Washington, and northwestern California covered under the Northwest Forest Plan. ♦



Learn Your Forest

A self-guided field trip through the Twisp Restoration Project

As we continue to discuss the Twisp Restoration Project with the Methow Valley Ranger District and the North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative, we wanted to provide a glimpse of what we're looking at on the ground. Many of the proposed thinning prescriptions of the Project can be seen along main forest roads throughout the watershed.

The next time you are going up Twisp River or Thompson Ridge roads, take some time to stop at these sites and see

firsthand the variety and breadth of this project. As you walk beneath the trees, notice how the forest exists within gradations. Forests change their character, structure, and species mix within a couple hundred yards due to water availability, elevation, aspect, soil type, and fire and logging history. Such complexity can make it challenging to implement landscape-scale thinning and burning prescriptions. In an effort to address site specific conditions present in many of the most sensitive habitats, we've encouraged the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest to mark trees slated to be cut so that we can envision the impact prescriptions would have. At each site, we encourage you to imagine a picture of the forest after thinning and ask yourself: Is this what I want it to look like?

POPLAR FLAT CAMPGROUND—THE VERY BEST THE TWISP RIVER OFFERS

As you're driving up Twisp River Road, right around War Creek you'll begin to see a shift in the forest



Looking east from the road north of Poplar Flat. A prime example of a mature Late-Successional Reserve stand. Large, old ponderosas dominant the overstory, trees are widely spaced, and there are multiple age classes.

structure. Ponderosa pines and Douglas firs widen in girth and stretch far into the sky. You are in a mature late-successional forest. While these trees would hardly be considered giants in wet western Cascade climes, on these eastern slopes they are pillars of a healthy forest. Many are 150–200+ years old!

Pull off at the Poplar Flat Campground and find a small, unmarked dirt 2-track across the road (north) from the entrance to the campground. Walk north on this road for about 100 yards to a clearing with a dispersed campsite and fire ring. Look east and you'll see a prime example of a healthy spacing between trees within a Late-Successional Reserve (LSR). Several widely spaced ponderosa tower over a sparse understory. Midsize trees provide canopy structure in clumps. Here the aim is to protect and enhance the conditions of old-growth forest ecosystems.

The thinning prescriptions here vary depending on your distance from the road. Within 200 feet of the road, the LSR Shaded Fuel Break prescription would

keep 20–30 of the largest trees above 10" in diameter. Trees up to 21" in diameter could be cut (unless they were moderately infected by dwarf mistletoe, which creates an exception to cut 25" trees). Beyond the 200' shaded fuel break, to the toe of the slope above, the LSR Risk Reduction Thin would retain an average of 40–50 trees per acre greater than 10" in diameter. In both prescriptions, the forest canopy would be opened significantly. If you look north from the fire ring you'll see examples of closed canopy conditions where smaller trees are crowding a 45" ponderosa and providing ladder fuels for fire to carry into the crown. These trees would be removed to create space for the larger tree.

Now picture how this forest might look with 20–50 of the largest trees (in clumps) per acre. Walk 100 steps into the forest straight in one direction, turn 90 degrees and walk another 100 steps. Repeat twice more until you've completed the square. Estimate the number of trees in your square. In stands of widely-spaced ponderosas, the forest may be close to the desired density. In other areas many trees must be cleared. As you're imagining the future forest, consider these questions: What should a mature forest in this region look like? Would the thinning prescription proposed here help to make the forest more resilient in the face of climate change and improve its ecological function? How would the shaded fuel break look from the road? How would it prepare the forest to fight a wildland fire?

BETWEEN POPLAR FLAT AND WAR CREEK—VARIABILITY IN LATE SUCCESSIONAL FORESTS

On your way back down the Twisp River between Poplar Flat and War Creek, notice how the tree densities change. In some stands, densities might exceed 150–200 trees per acre of mostly small diameter trees. Here it could be beneficial to keep all the 21" trees, even if they have some mistletoe. Large trees are already deficient across these landscapes due to high-grading where the best and biggest were cut and the rest were left. In these dry forests, larger trees take a long time to grow to a size which can withstand disturbances such as fire and drought. The variation present along the road shows us the importance of walking the land and marking the trees.

WAR CREEK—A QUICK STOP IN OWL HABITAT

Pull off at the trailhead to the War Creek campground and walk to the north side of the Twisp River Road. Here you are in an owl habitat improvement area. The aim in these stands is to improve habitat for not only northern spotted owl, but also other late successional



When the canopy is opened up, or after a fire disturbance, Ceanothus can thrive. Unless it is controlled by frequent burning, it can create a fire hazard on the landscape.

species such as white-headed wood pecker, goshawks and marten who prefer old forest with multiple canopy layers. Here trees up to 25" in diameter (if they had some mistletoe) could be removed if they were within 30 to 40 feet of the trunk of a larger tree. Again, whether this is the best prescription varies based on where you are in the forest.

Though clearing an area around a large tree gives room for it to grow, it also increases the amount sun hitting the forest floor. Open canopies can cause a proliferation of brushy understory growth. At War Creek you may notice a waxy-leaved, sweet smelling bush of Ceanothus. This species flourishes in hotter, drier sites with southern exposures. When fire hits it, it bursts into flame like a lit match. It begs the question which is worse: a forest free of ladder fuels or a forest choked with tinder-prone brush? Understory vegetation along with ladder fuels can account for up to 80% of the fire risk in the forest. Ideally, the brush will be cleared out by understory prescribed burning. However, this practice would need to be carried out frequently and could stretch the capacity of the Forest Service.

THOMPSON RIDGE ROAD— ENTER THE MATRIX

The drive between Chickadee Trailhead and Twisp River Road on Thompson Ridge Road provides a prime example of areas within the matrix — a land allocation within the Northwest Forest Plan that allows for more intensive commercial logging. The matrix land base contains the largest amount of overstory thinning prescriptions within the Twisp Restoration Project covering approximately 13,500 acres of forest.



An open ponderosa stand near the Climb-It trailhead off of Thompson Ridge Rd. Though this is what the matrix thin would like to work towards, it will take a long time to get there. The thick trunks here are likely 100–150 years old!

Upon leaving Chickadee Trailhead, you'll notice a marked difference in the forest structure from the Late-Successional Reserve. It is hard to see through the forest in many places—the canopy is closed and light barely filters to the forest floor. Living in the Methow Valley, we are used to being in forests like these—many of them surround our prime recreation corridors. However, closed canopy forests lie outside the historical range of conditions for the eastern slope of the Cascades, where low to moderate intensity fires would often clear out the understory and leave only the largest trees. With the Matrix Thin, the Restoration Project is attempting to return the forest to a park-like ponderosa pine dominant system.

Just before Rader Creek, walk just off the road to see an example of where thinning the understory of small Douglas firs could benefit the growth of the few moderately-sized trees. Many trees between 15–21" might be kept here to maintain the prescription of 20–40 trees per acre greater than 10" in diameter.

Further up the road, you can pullout at the junction for the Climb-It mountain bike/hiking trail. Look uphill to see an opening in the forest where legacy ponderosas dwarf nearby trees. This illustrates the structure which the Restoration Project would like to eventually create here. Trees take a long time to grow and such a prescription may not look natural for some time. Can we adjust our expectation of what a "natural" forest should look like in our recreation areas while we wait for the forest to grow? ♦

As the challenges shift, we adapt ...

As our community changes, preserving and protecting our environment requires new approaches to how we work. In the last year, we have been able to expand our staff to meet the demands of where our issues require us to be. To make sure your voice is heard on the public lands which surround us, we brought on a Public Lands Coordinator. We also stepped up our involvement in preparing our valley for climate change by bringing on a Climate Program Manager to lead Resilient Methow and represent your voice in the Climate Action Plan. With work across many spheres, we recognized, more than ever, the importance of keeping you informed, up to date and actively involved in our work which has prompted us to hire an Engagement Coordinator and Communications Manager. With our new staffing structure, we are more prepared to meet the evolving set of challenges our valley faces. The membership meeting on July 8 is a great time to stop by our office to meet new and old staff and talk with them about their work. ♦

MEET & GREET

Nick Littman, Communications Manager

Nick joins MVCC following a decade in Missoula, MT. After earning a MSc in Environmental Studies from University of Montana, he led experiential college field courses for the Wild Rockies Field Institute, taught poetry to 4th graders in schools around rural Montana, and was an active board member of the Great Burn Conservation Alliance.

Nick has published nonfiction essays and poetry widely. He loves to use writing to explore the intricacies of place by telling stories of landscapes and the people who live upon them. He feels fortunate to attune his listening, learning, and communicating to the Methow Valley. Lately, he's using his free time to wander the forest with his toddler and build a very small home.

Nick looks forward to hearing your stories about what you value in this special place. Email him at nick@mvcitizens.org.



say' ay' John Sirois, New MVCC Board Member

say' ay' is a father of two beautiful girls, a husband and a committed citizen of the Colville Reservation. An enrolled citizen of the Okanagan, Methow and Wenatchi Tribes of those Confederated Tribes, he was born and raised on the Colville Indian Reservation in Omak. Mr. Sirois carries cultural education from his grandmother and extended family that ties him to the land and water. He completed a degree at Dartmouth College (BA History, Minor Native American Studies) and a Master of Public Administration at the University of Washington.

Working for over 20 years in the Colville Tribes' government, he was able to work on tribal lands, cultural preservation and revitalization, economic development, renewable energy project development, policy development, and governance. Mr. Sirois promotes the rights of sovereign Indigenous Peoples and Nations to ensure that those rights are fully respected and upheld. He currently serves as the Committee Coordinator for the Upper Columbia United Tribes to assist the collaboration of those Tribes' work on reintroduction of salmon, wildlife habitat, water, forestry and addressing climate change impacts. Mr. Sirois seeks to build a better future for all for generations to come. You can find say'ay' camping, hunting, hiking, reading and salmon fishing with his family.



CITIZEN'S SPOTLIGHT Julie Palm

How long does one need to live in the Methow to be considered “a local?” 3 years? 5 years? 10 years? While it very much depends on who you ask, there is no doubt that Julie Palm, a longtime MVCC member and one of the newest MVCC board members, is a bona fide local.



Julie's family history in the Methow Valley can be traced back four generations to the 1880s when her great grandfather came to the valley and started a cattle ranch in Twisp. This same ranch, started over 120 years ago, is the same ranch Julie grew up on and co-manages with her father, husband, and two children to this day.

In addition to Julie's generational connection to the Methow Valley ranching community she also has childhood memories of listening to her mom, Pat Christianson, talking about the early MVCC days: “I can remember growing up and my mom was always going to so many meetings: meetings about zoning, meetings about keeping the valley rural, meetings about clustering development in Twisp as well as the other towns.” Pat, along with MVCC co-founder's Maggie Coon and Vicky Welch, were part of the “original MVCC crew” that organized the community in

opposition to the Aspen Corporation's plans to develop a resort in Mazama in the 1970s.

“It's unreal to see that so much of what my mom and others fought for in the 70s, in terms of zoning laws and planning priorities, is essentially still in effect today. I don't think they ever imagined how much of an impact they would have on this place. The thing that they never anticipated was that people would want to — and actually be able to — build homes on the steep hills around the valley!”

When asked what makes her most hopeful about the future of the Methow Valley, Julie's answer could not have resonated more with MVCC's own thoughts about what it takes to preserve rural livelihoods and our natural surroundings: “I'm hopeful that people are starting to rely on available science to understand the impact that certain activities — grazing, restoration, thinning, and fire—are having on our landscape, and that more and more solutions seem to be informed by holistic ways of thinking. It feels like an awakening of sorts and it's exciting.”

In her short time on the MVCC Board, Julie has already found ways to get engaged, including joining a forestry field trip up Buttermilk Creek as well as providing the staff and board with a list of must-see environmental documentary films to watch. Check out Julie's film recommendations in our News and Events below. ♦

NEWS & EVENTS

MVCC SIDEYARD SHINDIG: 2021 ANNUAL MEMBERS MEETING

*Thursday July 8th 2021 3-6pm @
MVCC Side Yard*

Join MVCC staff, board and members for a long-awaited face-to-face catch-up on the many issues we've been tirelessly working on throughout the pandemic. Stop by MVCC's side yard at our office in Twisp from 3–6 p.m. to chat with our program staff about our current programs and projects. At 5 p.m., Executive Director Jasmine

Minbashian will review the last year and speak to opportunities for engagement in the coming year. We hope you'll join us in celebrating everything we've accomplished over the last year!

METHOW VALLEY WATERSHED PHOTO CONTEST

Whether you are a professional photographer or just like to snap photos with your phone, the Methow Valley Citizens Council wants to experience the Methow through YOUR lens. MVCC

is calling on all local and visiting photography enthusiasts to participate in our photo contest. The contest will launch in June and stay open until fall 2021. Stay tuned for details of the contest on our website and social media.

DOCUMENTARY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM NEW MVCC BOARD MEMBER JULIE PALM

Kiss the Ground, Public Trust, DamNation, The Biggest Little Farm, Chasing Ice, Chasing Coral, and The Social Dilemma.



*Raising a strong
community voice
since 1976.*

PO BOX 774
TWISP, WA 98856



*“Legacy. What is a legacy?
It’s planting seeds in a
garden you never get to see.”*

— Lin-Manuel Miranda

You can support MVCC’s work far into the future by adding us to your estate or will. Talk to Jasmine Minbashian (jasmine@mvcitizens.org) today about how this simple bequest can ensure the Methow thrives for generations to come.

Photo courtesy of Mark Armstrong