

METHOW VALLEY CITIZENS COUNCIL



VALLEY VOICE

FALL/WINTER 2021

**Speaking the
Language of Animacy**

**It's No Accident
the Methow Looks
Like it Does**



METHOW VALLEY CITIZENS COUNCIL

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“The animacy of the world is something we already know. But, the language of animacy teeters on extinction, not just for native peoples but for everyone.”

From *Learning the Grammar of Animacy*
by Robin Wall-Kimmerer

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Letter from the Executive Director

We are being called to redefine our relationships—with the land and water and air, with our language, and with the people who surround us.

We are being called to build a new societal paradigm from one that is actually very old. For millennia, indigenous cultures have recognized that everything is interconnected and that everything we do has an impact on our children and next generations. It is past time to honor this deep wisdom of the ages, and redefine our modern relationship to the land, water and air that give us life.

As humans with enlarged prefrontal cortexes, we hold a deep and sacred responsibility to take care of this stunning place we call home — some of us have been residents for just a few months and others have roots that go back thousands of years. Regardless of how long you've been connected to this valley, we all have something very important in common: the molecules of the Methow's carbon, oxygen, and hydrogen are infused in our blood. The way we show up and care for this place is inextricably tied to our own health and happiness — as individuals and as a society.

This summer's record heat, drought, and large fires sent a strong message from our natural world: it's time to respect our limits. These events serve as stark reminders that we need to make some big changes — and quickly.

What does this redefinition look like in action? It starts with the language we use. Words matter. Our words convey the worldview we embrace. Do the words we choose daily promote a reciprocal, balanced, and interconnected future or do they thoughtlessly promote our colonial, exploitative past? I invite you to explore this idea with us on p. 4.

Redefining our relationship with the natural world also means using our words to speak up when witnessing injustice. It means listening to your neighbor — the one with whom you might not agree or have prejudged. Work to understand the path they've

walked, respect your differences, but keep talking. Dive into your own roots, then learn about another culture that is being underrepresented or disrespected in our community.

Action begins with a cultivation of hope. Start by watching the thought-provoking film "2040: The

Regeneration" to envision a positive version of what the world could look like in 20 years. Read the persuasive book *Active Hope* by Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone and join our book club this winter to get motivated (p. 19). Learn about how we can build a restoration economy to restore our forests (p. 8) and a forward-thinking plan to equitably share our water (p. 10). Read (skim or deep dive) the Methow Valley Climate Action Plan (pg. 14). You'll be moved by the strategy that our community has developed and

rallied around together. Pick one of the dozens of actions presented in the plan that you are passionate about and help make it happen. If you don't think you have enough experience or skills to be helpful: think again or reach out and let's brainstorm together.

Redefining requires us to create new daily habits—we share a ride instead of take it alone, we fix something before buying it new, we explore a beautiful local place instead of traveling to a far off one. Quickly, these habits become as regular to us as brushing our teeth, eating healthy, or even drinking water. They are not chores at all, but opportunities to create a world that is thriving and equitable, a world that heals the injustices of the past and present and provides a stable future for those who will be here long after we are gone.

Whatever you choose, start today.

For our future,



Jasmine Minbashian,
Executive Director



Photo: Nick Littman

Speaking the Language of Animacy

NICK LITTMAN, COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

I find myself using hollow words all the time. These words have no physical basis—you poke at them and they fall apart immediately, like a cheap toy. They are euphemisms and academic parlance, words invented or co-opted to speak in detached, objective ways. “Water” and “resources” are two words I put together frequently in my work. They bundle together snowmelt and steelhead, hatching mayfly and sonorous riffle, pulsing torrent and starved trickle into one neat package for our use and allocation. Convenient—yes. But not real.

If we wish to protect the forests, rivers and shrub steppes, salmon and bears, penstemon and trillium we must begin to speak of these entities with the animacy they deserve. Our language isn’t set up to do this. Botanist, professor and member of the

Citizen Potawatomi Nation, Robin Wall-Kimmerer has written and spoken extensively about relearning a “grammar of animacy.” In English, Kimmerer explains, the only way to be animate is to be human. All other animals, all other living things, are given the same pronoun as those that are non-living—*it*. In the Potawatomi language, and in many Indigenous languages, living things are verbs instead of objects. *Wiikegama* in Potawatomi is “to be a bay.” As Kimmerer writes,

When bay is a noun it is defined by humans, trapped between its shores, and contained by the word. But wiikegama, to be a bay, the verb releases the water from bondage and lets it live. ‘To be a bay’ holds the wonder that for this moment, the living water has decided to shelter itself between these shores, conversing

with cedar roots and a flock of baby mergansers. Because it could do otherwise—become a stream or an ocean or a waterfall—and there are verbs for that, too. To be a hill, to be a sandy beach, to be a Saturday ... all are possible as verbs only in a world where everything is alive.

Learning to restore animacy to our language doesn't require us to learn a new language, or even to begin referring to a living *it* with a new pronoun—*ki*—as Kimmerer has proposed. It does ask us to be more specific, to try to avoid the exploitive abstractions and reductionistic terms that make their way into the language we use to describe our natural surroundings. A “resource,” whether it is applied to water, land, forest or oil is defined in the dictionary as “something that a country has and can use to increase its wealth” or “a place or thing that provides something useful.” Both definitions reduce the entity—the forest, the water, the land, the oil—into something that is solely of use and value to humans. If we wish to “redefine our relationships with the living world—to move from seeing land as private property that is available for exploitation and extraction to understanding land as flow and nourishment” as Indigenous author Melissa Nelson writes in a recent article for *Sierra*, we must speak less of the abstract whole and more of the specific, tactile kin (the plural of *ki*) behind it.

On the back page of this issue, we match words we frequently use to speak of our work in the natural world (including ones used in this very issue) with expanded, more animate definitions. Within this way of speaking and writing, “a Late-Succesional Reserve” could become “an old, healthy forest with large ponderosa pines and Douglas fir that are several centuries old, inhabited by owls and woodpeckers and covered in lichens and mosses — a forest which provides shade, cover and moisture for wandering newts and browse for mule deer and black bear ...” Still, this only begins to describe the complexity of a Late-Succesional Reserve.

Clearly, for the sake of clear communication and brevity we cannot always use the full process-filled description. But can we teach ourselves to avoid reducing trees into “fuel” and enough water for salmon to spawn into “minimum instream flow?” Over time, a change in how we use our language can begin to change how we think about the chinook, the beaver, the lady slipper and the aspen. They become included in our world and we recognize, intimately, that our decisions affect them.



What are ways we could speak of this kestrel as a verb instead of an inanimate *it*? Photo: John Kienast

The language we use today is built around and perpetuates the settler colonial system—of displacing people and taking all the land's resources for our use. Melissa Nelson reminds us that simply using new words can't by itself decolonize this system, only returning land and “deconstruct[ing] the worldview that commodifies land and living processes” can accomplish that. However, changing our language can help us collectively acknowledge that other animals, living beings, and people—those who hold the Indigenous Way of Knowing—have an incredible amount to teach us. As Kimmerer writes, by speaking with this grammar of animacy, we begin to hear “water trickling over rock, nuthatch tapping, chipmunks digging, beechnut falling, mosquito in my ear” and we are “Remind[ed] of the capacity of others as our teachers, as holders of knowledge, as guides.” ♦

To read more about “The Grammar of Animacy” pick up Robin Wall Kimmerer's wonderful book *Braiding Sweetgrass*. To learn about the many landscape-specific words lost to English read Robert Macfarlane's *Landmarks* (one of my favorites is *hot-spong*: “the sudden power of heat felt when the sun comes from under a wind-shifted cloud”). To learn about the craft of making new words, read local naturalist David Lukas' *Language Making Nature*.

FORTY-FIVE YEARS AND COUNTING

It is no accident the Methow Valley looks the way it does today

MAGGIE COON, BOARD
PRESIDENT & CO-FOUNDER

It was 1976. The North Cascades Highway had just opened a few years prior and the outside world was awakening to the stunning beauty of the



Co-founders of MVCC Maggie Coon and Vicky Welch in 2010. Vicky died in 2013 leaving behind a legacy of conservation work that has helped shape the Methow Valley we see today.

Methow Valley. The Aspen Corporation had proposed a Whistler-sized downhill ski resort to bring 10,000 skiers a day to a valley with only a few thousand year round residents. We could picture what the valley would become if the resort went in—an Aspen, a Vail—an unaffordable Western mountain town that had lost its essential character.

And so in 1976, Vicky Welch and I founded the Methow Valley Citizens Council (MVCC). We began as an advocacy organization, dedicated to protecting the natural environment and rural character of the Methow Valley. We were launched on the idea that the voices of people who live here should matter most in shaping the character and destiny of this place. We knew we would need to speak out forcefully, even if it was difficult and unpopular to do so.

The Methow Valley we see today is not an accident. The actions and vision of 45 years ago laid the groundwork for a culture of advocacy that has profoundly shaped how the Methow has grown and developed.

From the start we had several important realizations, which remain very relevant today. First, we saw that we needed to learn the rules of the game—how and when decisions are made and how to influence them. Knowing the rules and how to appeal and work the process allowed us to take the ski resort case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1980s, helping to pave the way for ultimate victory.

We also recognized that, regardless of what happened with the downhill resort, decisions made by Okanogan County about private land use would have a huge influence on the Methow Valley's future. Thus, MVCC developed an in-depth expertise on county land use: comprehensive planning, zoning, shoreline and critical area management. For decades, we have put this knowledge to use by advocating and defending zoning for the Methow Valley which is far more protective than the rest of Okanogan County.

Another early realization was the importance of

A recent subdivision above Lake Chelan on the outskirts of town. By pushing to adopt strict zoning rules for the Methow Valley including minimum lots sizes we have avoided these type of developments and maintained rural character. However, with limited affordable housing options, the Methow community will need to invest in more dense growth within our towns and cities in the future. Photo: Ric Iribarren



bringing together diverse interests. From the start, MVCC has welcomed newcomers and old timers, farmers and ranchers, and people from many trades and businesses. We are committed to finding consensus and to representing the diversity of people who love the Methow Valley.

A final strength was, and still is—vigilance. Ask an MVCC member for one word to describe us and they will probably say “tenacity” or “determination.” In the mantra of one of my personal heroes, longtime activist Brock Evans, “Endless pressure, endlessly applied” is required.

MVCC had to apply endless pressure for 25 years before the ski resort and subsequent Arrowleaf Development proposal were resolved. More recently, our community rallied for five years to close the door on the potential for an open pit copper mine near the Methow River headwaters.

Today, more than a generation after we started, we live in a world which seems infinitely more complex. The issues we face are larger in scope, more nuanced, and more numerous: unprecedented growth pressures and resulting implications on land and recreational use; our changing climate and diminishing river flows; and an ever-increasing

demand for use (and misuse) of our precious land and water.

More than ever, we are required to know the rules and work nimbly at the local, county, state and even federal level. It's like playing multiple chess games and moving rapidly from one board to another. In response to our shifting challenges, MVCC is currently working on a

new organizational strategic plan. We're looking at key variables such as our geography, diversity and capacity. We're considering how we can maintain the natural environment and rural character of the Methow Valley while being inclusive—of varying races, incomes, and professions. We recognize that we live on the land of the Methow People and will involve Indigenous voices in the decision-making process.

The Methow Valley we see today was formed through decades of committed work by citizens of this valley. The future of this place will unfold through the actions we take

today and in the years to come. Your strong advocacy voice is more important than ever.

Thank you for your vote of confidence over so many years and for your commitment to the bright future we can create together. ♦

It's like playing multiple chess games and moving rapidly from one board to another.

A VISION OF ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION

A prescribed burn to improve wildlife habitat in the Methow Wildlife Area in October of 2021. Photo: Sam Israel

What if we approached forest management with the primary goals of restoration and resilience?

SAM ISRAEL, PUBLIC LANDS COORDINATOR

Can you paint a picture of a pre-colonial Methow Valley forest? First wipe the slate clean by eliminating nearly every other tree you see. Notice the massive fir and towering yellow-hued pines dotting the upland. Most of the pines are 100-500 years old. The landscape is open — you can see through the forest up to the snow-capped mountains. There's lush native bunch grasses and abundant huckleberry. It is easy to walk through this forest — less dead wood and brush clutters the forest floor.

As we set out a forest restoration vision, we must first acknowledge and examine the conditions that have shaped these forests. For millennia, frequent lightning-started fires, burning through the same stretch of forest every 16 – 20 years, have provided the natural disturbance necessary to renew forests and encourage species diversity. Alongside natural fire, Indigenous People of the area purposely lit fires to



C6 Forest to Farm is turning small-diameter trees into biochar, a valuable addition to soil that boosts crop productivity by retaining water and nutrients. Biochar sequesters the carbon of trees that otherwise might burn in megafires into a stable form that can sit in the soil for thousands of years! Photo: C6 Forest to Farm

clear underbrush, open up land for crops, promote growth of edible and medicinal plants, and prevent

larger fires. The era of fire on the landscape changed abruptly in the late 19th century when settlers forced the Methow People off their land. Fire was stamped out and excluded from forests. Today, we live in fire starved forests that only burn when megafires grow beyond our control. Douglas fir have proliferated across our forests, choking out ponderosa pine and leaving a lot of dead and dying wood—prime tinder—in our understories.

To move towards healthier, fire-adapted forests we need to prioritize ecological objectives—as outlined in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest’s 2012 Forest Restoration Strategy—over solely economic ones. Our forests can be managed as part of a restoration economy instead of a resource-based economy. As a result of almost a century of fire exclusion, there are a tremendous number of small trees stressing our forests. These trees are not currently economical; they must be trucked a minimum of 100 miles (to Darrington or Colville, Washington) to be milled.

Rural forested communities across the West are beginning to form innovative public-private-nonprofit partnerships to increase forest health and resilience and provide local employment. One example is the Ashland Forest Resiliency Master Stewardship Agreement, a partnership between the U.S. Forest Service, City of Ashland, Oregon, Lomakatsi Restoration Project, and The Nature Conservancy to thin almost 8,000 acres in the Ashland Municipal Watershed and adjacent public lands. The goals for this partnership are to protect water quality, old forest habitat, human life and property, and ecosystem sustainability by creating forest conditions that are more resilient to wildland fires. This process has helped Ashland establish a restoration economy; they have trained and employed over 200 forest workers, contractors and logging operators through stewardship contracts and agreements.

With the limited budgets that local land management agencies have for restoration, our community must begin taking initiative in creating a restoration economy. C6 Forest to Farm, a local pilot project in the Methow Valley, is working on turning small diameter trees and slash generated from projects like the proposed Twisp Restoration Project into valuable biochar for agricultural use. Alongside biochar production, a restoration economy could include a nimble and adaptive local mill that would accommodate a range of tree diameters, especially those small-diameter fire-prone trees currently in our forests. Such a mill would depend on a workforce



An ecologically-focused restoration strategy would remove these small trees to give this ponderosa pine more water and create a fire resilient system in the process. Right now, restoration projects removing only the small understory trees are limited because they aren’t profitable for logging companies. Photo: Jasmine Minbashian

composed of members from local and tribal communities and could work with agency partners to incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge into ecosystem restoration projects. A project like this could begin to align ecological resiliency with community resiliency.

Small initiatives like this have the potential to get off the ground much faster with state and national funding. It is vital that Congress and the Washington State Legislature prioritize funds for restoration projects that are ecologically driven rather than economically focused. Putting momentum behind these projects can help us to shift our paradigm from seeing a forest that is full of resources and fuel to seeing a forest that is full of resilient life. ♦

FINDING THE FLOW

Reflections on the
Methow Rule and
our Water Future



LORAH SUPER, PROGRAM DIRECTOR

In mid-August, after a summer of drought and unprecedented heat, the Methow River was shallow and warm. My daughter and I slipped and slid on slimy, algae-covered rocks as we tried to find places deep enough for a swim. The kayaks and tubes were beached — it was too bony to float.

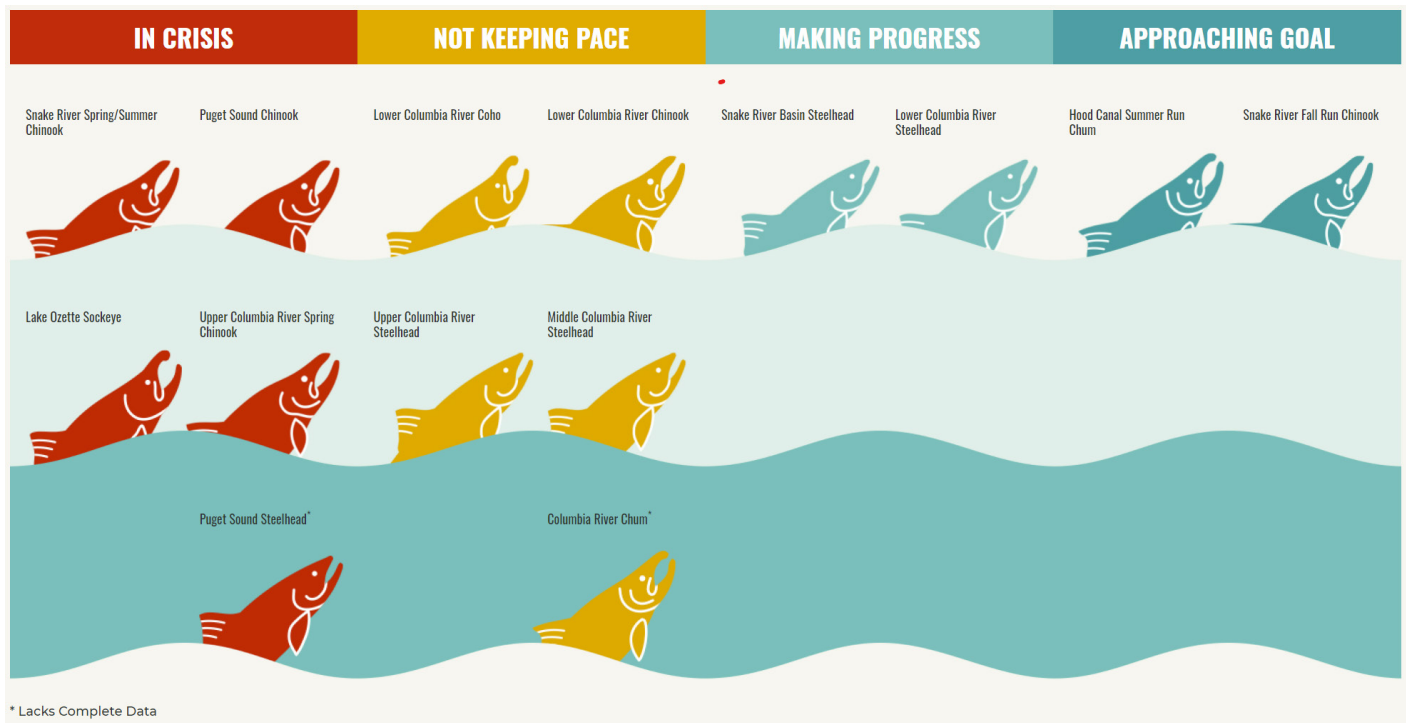
My email and voicemail were full of messages from people concerned about water use in the Methow Valley. They were concerned about wells drying up, or new wells being drilled. They wondered whether the sprinklers watering the fields and lawns were tied to legal rights; they worried about the state of native cutthroat trout and salmon; they inquired about riverfront property owners clearing the riparian vegetation that cools water temperatures. A few citizens had concerns about the building moratorium and how it

Left: Program Director Lorah Super's daughter paddleboarding on the Methow River under smoky skies. By early August this year, the river was too low to float. Junior irrigation water rights are frequently turned off in August now to prevent instream flows from getting too low. Photo: Lorah Super

began. To answer concerns and move towards mutual solutions it is important to examine how we got to this place. To begin, we must revisit the foundational Methow Rule.

In the Methow watershed, rules for water use have always been guided by a combination of science, law, and vision. In 1976, the Methow Instream Flow Rule — also called the “Methow Rule” — was enacted. At that time, with the North Cascades Highway recently opened and plans for a ski resort driving change, locals were concerned about encroaching subdivisions and wanted to protect the water for existing residents and agriculture.

As part of the Methow Rule, the “2 cubic feet per second (cfs) reserve” allowed water to be drawn from exempt wells (wells for which a permit from Department of Ecology was not required). Single domestic (one house on one lot) and stock water use were prioritized for these exemptions. If water levels dropped below the base flow levels set by the Rule, Reserve users and instream flows would not be interrupted. During the low flows in late summer and winter all other lower priority uses, including irrigation by junior water rights holders, commercial, industrial and group domestic (subdivision) use could be shut off. By requiring that group uses have their own



The Methow Rule helps to protect the instream flow. The spring chinook and steelhead of the Upper Columbia and tributaries are already in crisis or not keeping pace. Water banking could not only help to mitigate some of the current water issues but also add instream flow to the Methow River at critical times of year.

Photo: State of the Salmon Report



In the 1990s, many exempt wells were dug and approved by Okanogan County for subdivisions, a practice that undermined the Methow Rule. Photo: Trevor Waldner

permitted, uninterruptible water right (state law forbids building homes with interruptible water), the Methow Rule negated the use of exempt wells for subdivisions.

That is the rule. Unfortunately, the interpretation and enforcement of it has not been so clean cut. Initially, subdivisions were created as intended, with their own permitted water rights. But later, Okanogan County started approving subdivisions that did not have water rights, allowing them to access water from exempt wells in the Reserves despite the limitations outlined in the Methow Rule. During this period subdivided lots proliferated with unknown impacts to the river and to existing well users. Many people bought property, subdivided it, and made plans to develop in the future, not realizing that they might be lacking legal water.

In 2002, a Supreme Court ruling in the Campbell and Gwinn case clarified that “the development of a residential subdivision constitutes a group domestic use.” Despite this ruling, Okanogan County continued to give subdivisions the same priority access to water from the Reserves as single domestic users. When MVCC and Futurewise appealed the 2014 Comprehensive Plan, a major contention was the county’s failure to account for the Methow Rule, by planning for more subdivisions without acknowledging the limitations on available water. In 2016, the Supreme Court weighed in again in the Hirst ruling, finding that counties are ultimately responsible to ensure that water is legally available (compliant with state and local laws,

including the Methow Rule) when making planning and permitting decisions. MVCC wrote more than a dozen letters after the Hirst decision, imploring the county to at least notify property owners that their subdivided lots may lack legal access to the Reserves for building.

From the time between the Campbell and Gwinn and Hirst decisions, other counties in the state made the news as they grappled with overallocated water supplies, leading to moratoriums and lawsuits. Eventually, conflict gave way to problem-solving, and today there are several case studies to draw from as we contemplate how to resolve our own situation.

And so we come to 2021 in the Methow where the county, state and other interested parties are working to end the practice of “illegal subdivision” that has been going on for decades and find solutions for lots created without legal water. The practice of approving illegal group use had become so routine that when the Rule began to be enforced starting in 2019 with a moratorium on new subdivisions, followed by a moratorium on some building permits in 2021, hundreds of landowners were caught without access to exempt wells that never should have been promised. Finding solutions for those caught in the middle involves accepting the limitations of the Methow Rule and developing a mitigation program that balances

FLOW continued on page 16

The county, state and other interested parties are working to end the practice of “illegal subdivision” that has been going on for decades and find solutions for lots created without legal water.

ADVOCATING FOR WATER SOLUTIONS

In the spirit of moving forward, Methow Valley Citizens Council (MVCC) has proposed a two-step plan toward collectively resolving our water challenges and addressing the needs of people who have been unfairly stranded — without legal water — while the dispute about who has access to the Reserve has played out in arenas beyond their control.

STEP 1: WATER BANKING

Help is available — it's time to use it. Thanks to strong legislative advocacy by MVCC and others to protect our water from becoming a commodity, the state has invested \$14 million over the next two years, with \$2 million earmarked for the Methow watershed, to help communities set up public water banks. Water banking is an important tool that can be used to augment instream flow, address the issue of out-of-basin transfers, and create a mitigation program that makes water available to allow for a legal way to resume building. Through water banking, valid existing water rights are acquired from current users who agree to no longer use their water. The water rights are transferred to the bank and can then be used within our watershed for instream flow, irrigation and mitigation, for new development.

We propose that now is the time to redirect the county's limited resources used for challenging the state through legal action and instead make use of expertise from the Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE) and others who have been down this path. As a matter of accountability and fairness, people who were led to believe they had legal water — and who invested in infrastructure to build prior to the moratorium — should be prioritized for mitigation

Flows are low on the Methow River in winter as well as late summer. Water Banking provides a solution to transfer water between those domestic and agricultural users who are no longer using water rights and those who need water rights and is one part of a long-term solution to equitably share water.

water. While it is true that water rights appropriate for year-round use are hard to come by in this watershed, they do exist. Wall Street is still counting on us to get this wrong, waste time fighting amongst ourselves, and lose the competitive advantage the state is offering. Unless we act soon to take advantage of this opportunity to purchase and bank water rights for local use, many will be sold downstream and lost forever.

STEP 2: WATERSHED PLANNING

We need to accept the reality of limited water and directly address the brewing conflict over which uses get priority for limited future supplies. Having a final Comprehensive Plan in place that directs most growth toward incorporated towns can help with this. However, we are also urging Okanogan County to participate with stakeholders in a new watershed planning process that clarifies our choices about the use of our water, educates all of us about our options, and creates consensus about the best path forward.

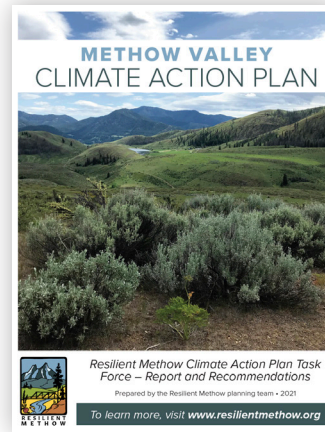
Our community has repeatedly — from the institution of the Methow Rule in 1976 to today — put forth a consistent vision for our future, emphasizing the desire to live in a thriving rural place with open spaces, healthy fish and wildlife populations, locally grown food, and friendly communities. Climate resilience is a new and pressing priority we have all recently agreed to pursue together. Part of that resilience is finding new ways to manage water and adapt to changing conditions. ♦

HOMEGROWN CLIMATE ACTION

JOSHUA PORTER, CLIMATE
PROGRAM MANAGER

The Methow Valley Climate Action Plan (CAP) was released and celebrated on the fall equinox, September 22nd. This was the culmination of two years of dedicated work by 40 task force members and input from hundreds of community members. The release of the CAP represents a beginning: a vision and a roadmap which our community can use to prepare for the impacts of climate change and reduce our local greenhouse gas emissions.

The CAP was created through a groundswell of community members taking responsibility — and agency — for building a resilient future. Climate action plans are often developed and implemented



The Climate Action Plan can be accessed electronically via the Resilient Methow website (www.resilientmethow.org), read in local libraries, or ordered from Riverside Printing & Design.

by municipalities. Having a plan that comes from the community shows how engaged the people and organizations of the Methow Valley are. It also recognizes that a community cannot be resilient if some people

within that community are left behind; equity is a critical value embedded into the plan.

The process for creating the CAP was initiated by the Methow Valley Citizens Council (MVCC) in response to the overwhelming community trauma from repeat wildfires and mounting concern about global climate trends. Out of the collaborative effort led by the Task Force, Resilient Methow formed as a community-driven initiative to guide the Plan into its implementation phase. Resilient Methow is currently being sponsored as a project of MVCC as a shared leadership structure and broader coalition is established.

A solutions mindset is at the heart of Resilient Methow. We are reminded again and again how much stronger we are as a network. Together we can create new self-organized structures that build resilience and share knowledge and innovation. ♦



When Governor Inslee visited the Methow in October he was presented with a copy of the Climate Action Plan. Western Washington student Zoe Hemez, who worked with Methow Trails this summer, had a chance to share with the Governor how impactful it was to experience the climate consequences we did through the heat wave and the wildfire evacuations, and then watch how the community responded in a supportive way.

Now comes the action! Where do you fit in?

The table below outlines the seven priority strategies of the Climate Action Plan (CAP). Each strategy has many immediate and long-term actions that will turn the CAP vision into a reality. To successfully become a climate-ready, resilient community requires action from everyone. This includes everything from small changes in personal habits (driving less, consuming less, reusing more) to systemic changes we will solve together (e.g. how to prepare for a diminished water supply). Many

of these actions are already being implemented by local organizations, governments and individuals. Look closely at this table. Where do your interests, skills, and abilities match up with an action? Are you passionate about reducing our community's emissions? Ninety-two percent of these emissions occur in the transportation sector! You can become involved in ongoing efforts to redefine how we transport ourselves through the Valley including building new electric vehicle

charging stations, expanding public transit and constructing a Twisp to Winthrop community trail. Once you've looked at this table, we encourage you to visit Resilient Methow's website and click "Get Involved" where you will be directed to a survey that can link your interests with ongoing actions. Together, through our collective knowledge and innovation, we can re-imagine how we live in the Methow and be prepared for the changes that will come our way.

STRATEGY	IMMEDIATE/NEAR-TERM ACTIONS	ONGOING/LONGER-TERM ACTIONS
Ensure resilient, healthy natural systems	Foster alignment and advocate for funding to accelerate the pace and scale of forest treatments	Protect & restore existing habitats for ecosystems health and biodiversity
Prepare for Changing Water Availability	Retain water rights in the valley through advocacy and legal action	Ensure towns have adequate water rights to meet current and future demand Plan for/implement water conservation, efficient delivery & storage solutions
Advance the Methow Valley as a fire-adapted community	Implement the Smoke-Ready Initiative Expand Firewise principles to community scale with a focus on equity, prioritizing vulnerable, in-need households	Adopt wildland-urban interface building codes
Invest in community and economic resiliency	Increase investment in and funding for affordable "green" housing Diversify the Methow economy, emphasizing local, climate friendly, and circular economy solutions Support funding and policies to enable affordable, equitable access to high-speed broadband	Use projected climate impacts to inform land use, water, & growth management planning and decisions Manage growth by concentrating development in and near town centers and by encouraging clustering in rural areas, including walkable routes and commuter trails Adapt existing and develop new recreation facilities to meet emerging community needs and sustain a low-impact tourism sector
Support a Resilient Agricultural Community	Create a Resiliency Fund to help farmers adapt to climate change; explore the feasibility of a local carbon offset market as a source of funding	Work with farmland owners to permanently protect agricultural lands from development through conservation easements Increase markets for local agricultural products Highlight the ongoing work of local farmers and ranchers to care for the land and the climate
Reduce Emissions	Organize an initiative to advance electric vehicles, public transit, ride-sharing, and active transport Establish a community composting facility	Expand weatherization and energy assistance to low and moderate income households Expand the reuse/sharing/zero waste economy Prepare for electrification of vehicles and buildings
Advocate, Engage, and Educate	Advocate at the state and federal levels for policies, programs and funding to reduce emissions and increase resiliency; secure resources for local initiatives Create a Resilient Methow website; develop and distribute educational brochures, presentations, and a survey instrument	Foster and nurture a local 'Methow conservation ethic' and collaborative, community problem solving in the face of climate change

A place for all to call home

MVCC's collaborative work to find affordable housing solutions

At the heart of our mission is maintaining the natural environment and rural character of the Methow Valley. But smart land use is inextricably linked to social issues such as affordable housing and economic justice. We cannot effectively succeed in our mission without ensuring that the fabric of our community stays intact with equitable access to affordable housing and basic needs.

Recognizing that the local housing crisis in the Methow Valley is dire and complex, Methow Valley Citizens Council (MVCC) is pleased to be working with a group of nonprofit leaders to find housing solutions that can work here. Since October 2020, the directors of the Methow Housing Trust, Room One, MVCC and TwispWorks have been exploring what other rural, mountain communities have

been doing to address affordable housing for locals. In February 2021, the group added Sarah Brooks from the Methow Conservancy to aid in facilitation.

The collaboration, now calling itself Methow Housing Solutions Network, is grounded in a straightforward mission statement: "We believe that all local community members should have a stable place to call home. We acknowledge that this is not the case right now and we recognize that if we do not address housing in the Methow Valley soon, the valley we love may be lost."

The group has convened several focus group sessions, collecting ideas from a variety of perspectives. Participation has included planners, developers, non-profits, tenants, home buyers, homebuilders, real-estate agents, and public officials. Through this process, the group has identified 26 strategies and solutions to address the local housing crisis. MVCC has volunteered to facilitate the advocacy subcommittee to advance policies to address the problem. ♦

To learn more about the strategies the Methow Housing Solutions Network has identified and is advocating for visit: www.mvcitizens.org/housing-solutions

FLOW from page 8

competing priorities and changing conditions within the watershed.

Climate impacts to our water supply are already apparent: less snow in the lowlands, rapid melt of high mountain snowpack, blistering hot summers, low river levels and warmer water. Junior water right owners are getting their irrigation cut off earlier and wells are mysteriously going dry up and down the valley. People's lives are being disrupted and we are collectively coming to recognize that more hard decisions need to be made about where we will use our limited water in this valley.

Irrigators with senior water rights have for many years been subjected to various efforts to reduce their

impact on the river — meters, new equipment, piped ditches and other conservation programs that put saved water back in the river. During this time, despite a growing number of lots incorrectly approved to use the Reserves, there have been no efforts to acknowledge or mitigate the impacts that new wells may have on the river, on nearby wells, or on other water users in the Methow Valley.

To move forward into a drier future we need to come up with long-term solutions to prioritize and share our water. The challenges brought by the temporary moratorium on some building permits pale in comparison to the critical problems we will collectively experience when our water begins to run out. I have hope that our community would rather climb the mountain—arduous as it may be — to find solutions, than trek across the desert we might inadvertently create. ♦



A Breath of Clean Air

As the Cedar Creek and Cub Creek 2 Fires blanketed the valley with smoke, residents came to rely on Clean Air Methow's Purple Air sensor network.
Photo: Drew Katz

DREW KATZ, COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR

The aim of Clean Air Methow, a program of The Methow Valley Citizens Council (MVCC), is to improve air quality where possible and protect health where necessary. When the Cedar Creek and Cub Creek 2 fires ignited this summer and air quality soared to hazardous levels, Clean Air Methow was ready to respond.

Even before the fires hit, Clean Air Methow met with its amazing network of Clean Air Ambassadors to make sure their Purple Air sensors were up and running so the public could track particulate matter levels when the air quality began to deteriorate in July.

To address community concerns and questions about air quality, Clean Air Methow staff tabled at the Twisp Farmer's Market, coordinated with Wildfire Incident Command to provide smoke updates at community fire meetings, and stocked N-95 masks and educational materials at fire public information boards throughout the valley.

By August, we had some of the worst air quality in the country and maintaining healthy indoor air quality became a challenge for most households. Clean Air Methow responded by coordinating the

distribution of over 25 box fan filter kits and 2,000 HEPA air purifiers to residents throughout the valley. By partnering with Room One, AeroMethow, Methow at Home, the Cove, Family Health Centers, school districts and other organizations, hundreds of children, the elderly, people with underlying health conditions and low-income households were finally able to breathe clean air in their homes.

With more frequent and larger wildfires likely to burn in our forests in the years to come and increased prescribed fire needed to bring our forests back to health, MVCC will continue to support Clean Air Methow's initiatives to improve our local air quality wherever possible, such as replacing old smoky woodstoves and providing alternatives to outdoor burning.

Help Clean Air Methow make the Methow Valley a Smoke-Ready Community:

- **Did you purchase an outdoor or indoor Purple Air monitor this summer? We want to hear from you! Email cleanair@mvcitizens.org to learn how you can join our expanding network of Clean Air Ambassadors.**
- **Give the gift of healthy indoor air by donating an air purifier to a household in need through the Clean Air For All Campaign: www.cleanairmethow.org/cleanairforallcampaign ♦**

HAWK'S CALL

Jack Stanford

MVCC is built around our members who sustain us, inspire us and constantly engage in the work we do.

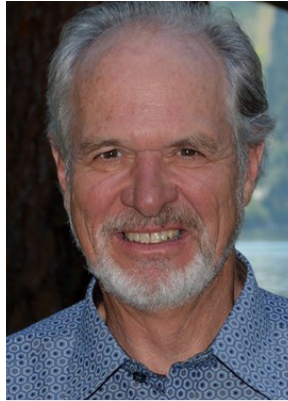
Over the course of a 15-minute chat with Methow Valley Citizens Council (MVCC) member Jack Stanford, he rattled off the names of rivers he had researched as if they were common house-

hold names: the Kamchatka (Russian Far East), the Nushagak and Karluk (Alaska), and the Flathead (Montana), to name a few. Jack has dedicated his life's work to researching aquatic food web dynamics and the ecology of Pacific Rim salmon rivers. He was the director and a professor at the Flathead Lake Biological Station, outside of Glacier National Park, between 1980 and 2016.

When Jack retired from the station, one thing was clear: he wanted to live on a river. For someone who has traveled the globe studying near-pristine rivers and floodplains, picking a "home river" wasn't the easiest decision.

In the end, Jack and his wife Bonnie decided to relocate to the Methow Valley and now have a place along the Twisp River. While the Methow River may no longer be truly pristine, it is still a "a really special little mountain river with a nice floodplain area — a wonderful microcosm of what an intact mountain tributary of a greater river [the Columbia] can be...." While the Methow and its many tributaries were certainly a draw to the area, what ultimately sealed the deal was that their friends — and long-time valley residents — the Naney's (also MVCC members) told them about the work and mission of the Methow Valley Citizens Council. "After learning that there was strong community support around conservation and people were organized around these issues, we were sold."

Jack recently wrote a description of the Methow River to be included in the forthcoming second volume of the encyclopedic *Rivers of North America* book. ♦



MEET & GREET

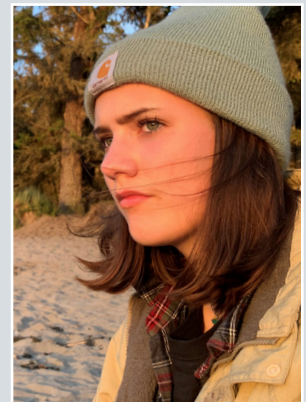
Easton Branam, Board Member

Easton is a full-time resident of the Twisp River flats, living on shared land with her partner Caitlin and their two cats. She is an Army Veteran committed to building a future that honors our connection to the natural world. She was raised working class in rural Montana and knows how unusual and valuable it is to have an organization like MVCC working hard to keep this valley alive and well-tended. She currently works as a strategic planner and brings her skills in communications, facilitation, project management, and scenario planning to the MVCC team.



Stella Gitchos, Junior Board Member

Stella is a senior at Liberty Bell High School. She was born in the Methow and has spent her childhood hiking in the Cascades and exploring the valley's beautiful outdoors. Stella leads the Liberty Bell Youth Climate Action Group and has become involved with many avenues of climate action, both Valley and state-wide. As her childhood in the Methow comes to a close, she is working to leave a positive legacy of sustainability, climate action, and youth leadership.



OKANOGAN COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IN THE HOME STRETCH

Okanogan County is at long last finalizing a Comprehensive Plan — a blueprint for future growth and development of the county — that has been more than seven years in the making.

In the spring of 2021, the people of the Methow Valley flooded the planning department with verbal testimony and written comments supporting policies to protect our water, open spaces, wildlife and dark night skies. We have been eagerly waiting to find out how everyone's feedback will be translated into a new plan that meets our needs. At long last, the wait appears to be over: after negotiating with the Yakama Nation for a new deadline and re-tooling the plan with assistance from an outside law firm, the county has released a new Comprehensive Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for a final round of public review.

The current Comprehensive Plan and DEIS are available on the Okanogan County Planning Department's website. For a breakdown of important changes and issues emerging in the newest version of the Plan, check out our comment guide at www.mvcitizens.org

Important Upcoming Dates:

November 22, 2021 Planning commission to take verbal comment at public hearing on Comp Plan & DEIS. Currently, this is the only public hearing scheduled

December 8, 2021 Written comment deadline.

December 27, 2021 Special meeting of Planning Commission to consider public comments and vote on a recommendation to the county commissioners.

December 29, 2021 County Commissioners Meeting on final Comp Plan & DEIS. Open public meeting, but not a public hearing. Commissioners will deliberate upon the recommendations passed on to them from the Planning Commission. It is anticipated they will vote upon a Final Comp Plan and Final EIS in order to meet a legal deadline. ♦

ACTIVE HOPE BOOK CLUB

To rekindle our hope as a community and give us inspiration and energy towards implementing our Climate Action Plan, this winter we'll be reading and discussing the book *Active Hope*. Sign up at www.mvcitizens.org ♦



Photo: Craig Barfoot

LEAVE YOUR MARK ON THE METHOW

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 Valley thrives for generations to come.



*Raising a strong
community voice
since 1976.*

PO BOX 774
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Our definitions matter

What happens if we show the complex reality behind our words? Explore this idea in *Speaking the Language of Animacy* on p. 4.

Climate Mitigation

The actions required to restore equilibrium to the planet and prevent warming that is rapidly upending natural systems that all life depends on.

Forest Restoration

Human intervention to restore the ecological structure and function of fire-starved, human-impacted habitats.

Water Resources

The source of life. Water sustains everything: cottonwood, lynx, steelhead, humans. Water grows our food and quenches our thirst. This source of life is sometimes viewed as a private property right, rather than a public trust.

Photo credit: Dana Golden