

METHOW VALLEY CITIZENS COUNCIL



# VALLEY VOICE

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SPRING/SUMMER 2022



**Practicing  
Interdependence**

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**The Cultural  
Significance of  
Removing Enloe Dam**

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*“The Indigenous Peoples of the world have a gift to give that the world needs desperately, this reminder that we are made for harmony, for interdependence. If we are ever truly to prosper, it will be only together.”*

— Desmond Tutu

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# Letter from the Executive Director



*What* is one key lesson I’ve learned from the pandemic? We’re far more dependent on each other than we might like to think.

We are dependent on the trucks winding their way up the Methow River delivering food to Hank’s and Glover and Thriftway. Those trucks are dependent on domestic and global supply chains to bring us all the food we’ve come to expect. Sometimes those supply chains are disrupted, and shelves are bare.

We are dependent on the people who work at these businesses. A business cannot stay open without employees. Employees rely on finding housing that is affordable enough to be able to live here.

All of this—this tenuous human settlement—is dependent on the land we live upon, a land cared for and held sacred by the Methow People for millennia. Not too long ago, they were forcibly removed from this land after living in a relationship of interdependence with it. In the ways we draw too much from our rivers and streams, fragment our habitat, contaminate our air, and warm our planet, we are pretending we are independent from the place in which we live when, in fact, we are highly dependent on it all.

As MVCC has engaged in a strategic planning process over the last six months, consistent themes and messages have emerged from board, staff and member surveys: our role as advocates for our water, land, air and climate is valued; conservation and stewardship of public lands and forests is crucial; affordable housing is sorely needed. In each of these spheres of work, we have come to recognize that human and natural systems are not as separate as we thought they were.

To live here we must learn to live interdependently—relying on our neighbors and our environment and in turn giving back to it in reciprocal relationship. Program Director Lorah Super reflects on what it means to practice interdependence on page 4. To maintain the rural character we value, we need a rural workforce to support it. A rural workforce can be supported in part by a restoration economy, an idea Sam Israel explores on page 11.

To acknowledge the interdependence between natural and human systems our tactics must shift. Emergent programs will need to increase in priority and capacity, such as addressing the growing pressures on wildlife habitat coming from climate change, an expanding human footprint, and an increasing demand for recreation. We may need to consider supporting completely new programs over the next three years, such as local and indigenous food sovereignty, agriculture as a climate solution, and climate-related energy and transportation issues.

One of the most important steps we can take as an organization is to formally honor and reconcile that we are on the ancestral lands of Indigenous People who were forcibly removed from their homeland and repeatedly delivered broken promises. These Indigenous People are still here and we have much to learn from them including how to live in an interdependent way upon the land. Emily Olguin-Abrahamson, an Indigenous elder, shares her knowledge about Indigenous culture, history and worldview on page 6. Environmental advocacy today and into the future must include Indigenous voices. Read about a powerful effort led by Aboriginal Outfitters to remove Enloe Dam on page 9.

In addition to engaging with tribes, there is considerable opportunity to build stronger alliances with a greater diversity of people in our community. This includes strengthening relationships geographically throughout Okanogan County and forging connections with other cultural and racial groups such as the Latino community. These partnerships can unite a diversity of people in our county under the shared goals of forest restoration, climate resilience, improved smoke readiness and air quality.

If the path of interdependence teaches us anything, it is that we are only as strong as our most vulnerable links. As we move forward in this place, I am excited to learn about how we can support each other and flourish together.

Jasmine Minbashian  
Executive Director





# PRACTICING INTERDEPENDENCE

French Creek continues to recover seven years after the Carlton Complex fire. Living through wildfire and other experiences on the landscape have taught the author and her neighbors a thing or two about interdependence. Photo: Lorah Super

LORAH SUPER, PROGRAM DIRECTOR

As a young college graduate raised in the suburbs outside of Detroit, Michigan, I dreamed of a self-sufficient life in the mountains of the American West. It was a bit of a stretch at the time, because aside from a solid four-year education in ecology and natural resource management, I had no practical skills to be self-sufficient. I was just tired of people!

By the time I graduated, I had witnessed an endless conversion of the Midwest landscape of my childhood from farms and woodlands to subdivisions, shopping centers and roads, attended by ever-increasing numbers of people. It broke my heart to see my favorite wild places fragmented and diminished to rows of houses. I naively determined that the most responsible thing I could do would be to move to the country, and live as simply as possible, as far away from the trappings of human expansion as I could get. Sound familiar?

When I moved my 28-year-old self to the Methow Valley in 2001, I had learned the basics of how to subsist frugally in a variety of wild and remote settings. I had also gained an awareness, thanks to early intervention by one of my first mentors, that as a pilgrim to this land, my fantasy of buying vacant land and building a home made me “part of the problem,” contributing to the fragmentation of the landscape and the displacement of wildlife. I couldn’t let go of my fantasy, so I revised it to include something already divided and built, which I could occupy and steward.

I cobbled together funds and signed a land contract on 40 acres at the end of a dirt road, far from the electric grid, with a run-down house, a good well, and a handful of solar panels that let me run an extension cord to power a couple lights in the house. It was a dream come true! Now I only had to learn how to grow a garden, put up food, build corrals, fix the plumbing, wire the house for electricity, get the driveway plowed and figure out how to keep the fussy old generator running.

Accomplishing those things and achieving my self-sufficiency goals took the better part of the past 20 years. Ironically, considering my original dream, I didn’t do it alone – I had a LOT of helpers. Family, friends, neighbors and complete strangers all contributed to my ability to thrive and eventually raise a family “off the grid.”

Even neighbors with whom I struggled to forge a cordial connection became part of my community of misfits, out of necessity. We shared skills, produce, garden tips, generator parts. We pulled each other out of ditches in the winter, and put out fires together in spring and summer. We didn’t always get along, but we needed each other. The elements around me—wildfires, floods, droughts, big winds and deep freezes forced me to become more attuned to the environment around me. I adapted and became more resilient because of the pressures put upon me.

It turns out that the further we go from the systems and infrastructure provided by cities, the more we actually depend on our surrounding community to be whole – not just kind people and beautiful scenery, but bugs and wind and wildfire too. The more independent we want to be, the more we ultimately need to recognize that we are interdependent within the ecosystem we occupy.

The Methow Valley has a long history of self-sufficiency held together by the glue of interdependence. To the Methow People, whose homeland encompasses the entire watershed, surviving and thriving as communities in reciprocal relationship with the plants, animals, elements and seasons is not a romantic concept, but rather a core part of cultural identity and heritage. Interdependence is the necessary way of living.

The settler colonists who came after to start new lives as homesteaders learned that self-sufficiency required adapting to natural rhythms as well as cooperation with other settlers. I’m thinking of the irrigation ditches painstakingly carved with shovels, horses and slip scrapers, that allowed water diverted from the river to flow at a measured pace, traversing many miles across the landscape, greening more than just fields and farms

as the water fed shallow aquifers and created new places for plants and animals to flourish.

Human choices less in tune with the harmonies of nature have had more disruptive consequences: years of harvesting the biggest trees, suppressing wildfires and draining aquifers at scales that outpace the Earth’s ability to replace critical resources has contributed to the dilemmas we face today around extreme wildfires and limited water available to meet ever-growing demands.

For several decades of the valley’s recent history, different groups of community members have planned together toward a goal of human enterprise at a scale that is “sustainable,” including our approaches to forest management, water use and agriculture. One prescient study in 2012 focused on whether we have what it takes to grow our own food supply in the event of future supply chain disruptions. That report concluded that the Methow Valley did have adequate fertile land available to supply a healthy year-round diet for every full-time resident at the time. However, to be fully sustainable—feeding ourselves from this landscape in a way that replenishes healthy soil and supports biodiversity—would require a shift away from the highly individualistic way we do things now, to say the least.

Today, the realities of imminent, extreme climate effects on all natural systems loom over us like dark clouds. As we work to adapt human systems and infrastructure to be resilient in the face

of great change, awareness of the interrelatedness of all parts of the natural world – soil, water, vegetation, wildlife – must make us carefully consider the ripple effects of our collective choices. The dream of self-sufficiency in this context needs a radical update.

If we are to embrace being interdependent with one another and with the place we call home we must consider how to reframe our goals for self-sufficiency into a language of reciprocity. It is not enough to only avoid or minimize harm, or aim to be “sustainable.” The question we need to answer now in our quest for coexistence is how we can give back, and how we can restore the same resilience we desire for ourselves to the many systems—natural and human—that give us life. ♦



The author’s daughter has taught her a lot about accepting radical change in their home environment by finding adventure and joy in the changing seasons. Photo: Lorah Super





“Let us understand one another”

Indigenous People have hunted, fished and lived in the Methow Valley since time immemorial. To successfully protect this place, it is vital that we understand and respect their history here. Photo: Alex Farrell

Elder Emily Olguin-  
Abrahamson speaks  
of Native American  
heritage, worldview  
and history and why  
it is important for us  
all to take the time  
to understand it.

EMILY OLGUIN-ABRAHAMSON, ABORIGINAL  
OUTFITTERS BOARD CHAIR

*Last fall, elder Emily Olguin-Abrahamson, the board chairman of Aboriginal Outfitters, drafted an open letter for Native American Heritage month. As MVCC works to elevate Indigenous voices and ensure that the Indigenous people of the Methow and Okanogan are included in policy discussions and decisions made about their land, we thought it important to pass on these words from Emily which remind us that the existing history and knowledge in this shrub-steppe landscape is deep rooted and still alive. MVCC staff has been actively working to understand this history and knowledge while recognizing that we have a great deal more learning and listening to do. With Emily's permission the letter has been edited for length.*

.way' ʔast sʔəlʔalt! Hello, good day! My name is Emily Olguin-Abrahamson. My Indian name is Northern Light (spaxʔawlx). I am an enrolled member of the Pueblo of Isleta (shur-wip-xʔum), Keepers of the

arrowheads. I have made my home on the Colville Indian Reservation for the last 43 years. In 2019, I retired from the Omak School district after thirty-two years of employment. I have immersed myself in the Northern and Southern Okanogan language and traditions, finding many seamless commonalities to my Tewa upbringing. I am honored to have been accepted into the community to serve the children and the families.

I am currently a board member with a local nonprofit organization called Aboriginal Outfitters. Our mission is to focus on and bring attention to local Indigenous history, culture, language revitalization, community, and the restoration of Indian land. My goal is to be a liaison and a voice to bring an understanding of our mission to organizations, businesses, and communities on and off the reservation, “Let us understand one another” (t'əxʔ mi kʔu nsuxʔnaʔəəm ənwiʔ)

I want to share some facts and information that are general to all Tribes and specific to the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation. (Please visit the official website [colvilletribes.com](http://colvilletribes.com) for detailed information regarding the Colville Tribes.)

Native American, Native, American Indian, Indian, First Peoples, First Nations, Indigenous, and Aboriginal. These are terms that both Native and non-Native people use to describe the original inhabitants of this Continent and are often used interchangeably. The best term is always what each individual or tribal community uses to describe themselves. Replicate the terminology they use or ask what terms they prefer.

Most Native people prefer to be identified by their specific tribal name. For example, the tribal name for the Southern Okanogan Indians is sənq'ayitkʔ. The name sənq'ayitkʔ means “water that does not freeze.”

Understand that being Native means different things to every person. Find out who owns the land you are on and honor it. Native people are aware of the history of how U.S. land was acquired illegally. That is the

substance that organizations need to understand as they begin working with Tribal people and entities.

Native American Indian tribes come from cultures that value balance and strive to live in a way that respects and preserves it. When things become unbalanced, sickness, unhappiness, and confusion follow as a result. From there, it becomes the human responsibility to take steps (including conducting ceremonies) to restore the balance and harmony necessary for the appropriate functioning, not only of humans, but also of all things. Like all people, Native tribes have traditionally obtained food, clothing, tools, transportation, homes,



The Similkameen River in the Okanogan Valley is a culturally significant river to the Colville Tribes. A now-defunct Enloe Dam has blocked salmon passage on this river for over 100 years. Photo: Greg Shine

and medicines from the environment in which they have lived. However, because Native tribes are tied philosophically and spiritually to their resources, they treat them with respect. Thus, native tribes express veneration in ceremonies and through the careful management of certain resources.

Before the arrival of Europeans, many Native tribes used their knowledge of the environment in the practice of agriculture. With fire and tools, they cleared trees and brush to make room for fields of corn, beans and squashes. Companion-planting the three crops helped rejuvenate the nitrogen in the soil, keep insect



infestation down and maintain moisture in the soil.

According to the USDA Forest Service report issued in 2013, Native tribes across North America also cleared vast tracts of land with fire: “Native Americans used fire for diverse purposes, ranging from cultivation of plants for food, medicine, and basketry to the extensive modification of landscapes for game management or travel.”

Presently, many Native tribes continue to feel these traditional connections to the earth. Communities still practice their traditional arts, agriculture, and ceremonies related to the environment. In response to modern challenges, many tribal governments are addressing environmental issues that affect their communities.

The Colville Tribes is one of many that have fought and continue to fight to preserve salmon runs in the rivers of the Northwest. Power generating dams built in the mid-twentieth century severely depleted salmon runs. That encroachment not only interrupted the ancient cultural connection to the salmon but also affected the diet of tribal members, such as epidemics of obesity, heart disease, and early-onset diabetes.



In the early 1980s, Colville Tribal members rejected an opportunity to open a molybdenum (a metal used to harden steel and dye plastics) mine on their reservation. While the mine would have offered some economic opportunities, it was rejected because of its impact on the reservation environment and traditional culture. Tribal elders, families, and concerned people met with Tribal leaders to voice their concerns on the impact this mine would have on future generations. With perseverance, many prayers were answered!

The boarding school experience has had a prolonged and long-lasting effect on many of the descendants of at least three generations back from our great-great grandparents, great grandparents, and grandparents, who were subjected to this horrific time in our history.

The first government-run boarding school for Native Americans was in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Carlisle was founded in 1879 by Captain Richard Henry Pratt; whose stated philosophy was: “Kill the Indian, save the man.” Under his administration, the school was set to break spirits, to destroy traditional extended families and cultures, to obliterate memories and languages, and especially to make the children deny their Indianness inside and out.

During this period, Native people were confined to reservations and not allowed to leave without permission of the government-appointed Indian agent assigned to their reservations. Many parents were coerced into sending their children to these early schools. Many children were kidnapped and sent far away to schools where they were kept for years on end. Children died at the school, died running away from the schools, and they were beaten and worse for speaking their Native languages.

Physical and emotional abuse is well documented in the stories of survivors of boarding schools in the United States and Canada. It is so important to share this information about this time in our history so our community partners understand that Native people are seeking ways to continue to heal from this experience by having activities, ceremonies and cultural education that includes elders, families and, most importantly, children.

Thank you (lilmt-x) for letting me share this information with you all. ♦

Fire has been used extensively by Native tribes over centuries to clear and rejuvenate the land. Photo: Nick Littman



Joy Abrahamson and Emily Olguin-Abrahamson in front of Enloe Dam. Photo: Thomas O’Keefe and Rie Yamazaki

# THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF REMOVING ENLOE DAM

*“It’s a big issue because it’s just sitting there blocking the river with no purpose, and so many people are turning a blind eye to that. It’s making a big impact for me and future generations. By letting it sit there, you’re forcing the younger generations to deal with the decisions that have created the problems we have today. I feel that there are so many decisions made about the rivers that benefit people with no regard to what that means to the future or Mother Earth.”*

— Joy Abrahamson, Co-founder, Aboriginal Outfitters

Joy Abrahamson and her aunt, Emily Olguin-Abrahamson, are leading a powerful Indigenous effort to remove Enloe Dam

LORAH SUPER, PROGRAM DIRECTOR

In the spring of 2020, Joy Abrahamson was at her home on the Colville Indian Reservation



thinking about how to promote land and water stewardship and connect with the teachings of her ancestors. While taking remote classes at Eastern Washington University, she launched a social media page which quickly gained followers. When she heard about efforts to remove Enloe Dam and restore the Similkameen River, she started a petition for dam removal which has since gained over 1100 signatures. Her efforts have blossomed into a non-profit organization, Aboriginal Outfitters.

In 2021, Aboriginal Outfitters launched their *siwtkw prutəktər* “water caretaker” program that is working to protect the Columbia River watershed and all its tributaries. Their *sic cwix* “new river” campaign is focused on bringing attention to the cultural significance of removing Enloe Dam and restoring the Similkameen River.

*“Our responsibility is the water and the river because water is life. It’s deep, and it hurts us and the land. For me, it’s really personal. Water has always played a leading role in rituals and sacred practices, ‘Since Time Immemorial.’ As Indigenous peoples, First Nations recognize the sacredness of protecting water from pollution, drought, and waste. Water is the giver of life, and without water, life will perish. Water has been used to communicate the sacred value of life, the spiritual dimension of purification, protection, and healing. Dam removal would restore the health of the river and bring balance back to the land, the people and to our hearts. .way’ limləmtx yayaŋt l nqsilxw (Thank-you, All my relatives.)”*

— Emily Olguin-Abrahamson, Board Chair, Aboriginal Outfitters

The Similkameen River is the largest tributary of the Okanogan River, contributing 70% of its flow. The Similkameen flows hundreds of miles through southern British Columbia before entering the U.S. and backing up in a shallow reservoir behind Enloe Dam a few miles above the town of Oroville. The river is culturally and historically significant to the Colville Confederated Tribes, as well as the Lower Similkameen Indian Band and Upper Similkameen Indian Band in British Columbia. All three tribal entities have passed resolutions calling for Enloe’s removal and the restoration of the river to its natural state.

For the last 63 years, Enloe Dam has not produced power. It currently fulfills no function. Recent studies reinforce prior estimates indicating that dam removal would open hundreds of miles of accessible and critically important cool water habitat for threatened Steelhead and Spring Chinook.

In 2017, MVCC joined the Enloe Dam Working Group, a loose-knit association of local, regional and national NGOs, Tribes and interested parties who are coordinating strategies and sharing information to support the removal of Enloe Dam. MVCC is supportive of efforts to protect water and salmon. All water connects us in Okanogan County.

MVCC welcomes the powerful work of Aboriginal Outfitters, which unites the voices of Indigenous youth and elders in collective efforts to remove Enloe Dam and restore the Similkameen River. We believe that the cultural values and knowledge of First People need to be honored and upheld in all natural resource management decisions. ♦

Enloe Dam spans the Similkameen River northwest of Oroville. Photo: Mikaela Williams



Brothers Fire LLC is a local contractor that works to thin forests and light prescribed burns on private and public lands. A robust restoration economy would rely on many companies like this to restore forest health and fire resiliency through thinning. Small diameter logs could be made into value-added wood products. Photo: Saul Labanauskas

# What Does a Restoration Economy Look Like?

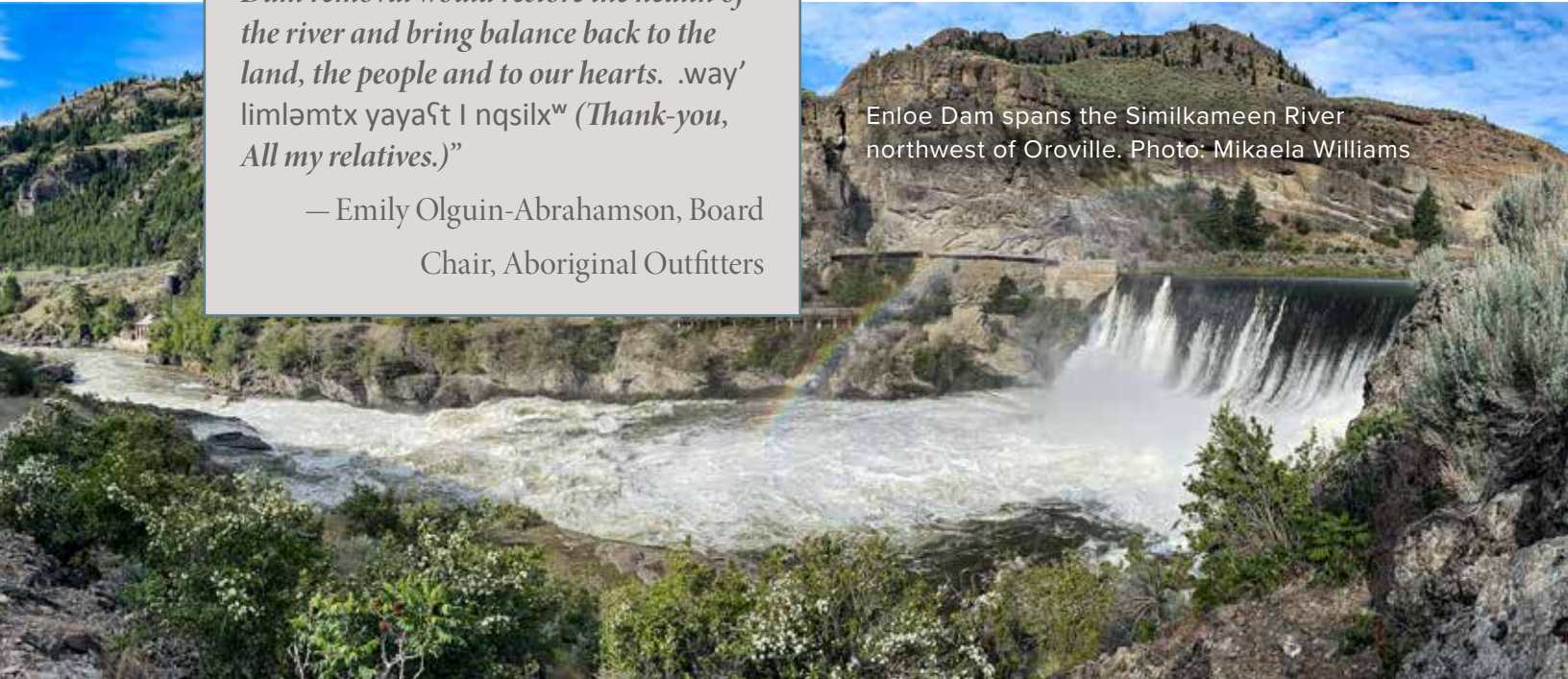
SAM ISRAEL, PUBLIC LANDS COORDINATOR

“A rural landscape takes an agricultural and rural workforce to maintain it.” This was a response from landscape architect, MVCC member, and local newspaper columnist Sarah Schrock when asked: “What does rural character look like?” Reading Sarah’s comment reminded me of a stark disconnect here in the Methow Valley: according to the TwispWorks Comprehensive Economic Study, more than 60% of people living here view rural character as an important value and yet only 2% of Methow Valley jobs are connected to agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting. In other words: we desire a landscape that is currently not supported by our economy. How do we begin to fix that?

If you’ve lived in the Methow Valley for a time, you’ve noticed that our local economy is ailing. If you’re looking for a job, they are plentiful, but mostly pay service wages

that are inadequate for affording housing. Looking for employees? Good luck. Once you dig into the TwispWorks Economic Study, you’ll find the economy here is neither diverse, resilient, nor sustainable into the future—three measures of health it should aspire to. According to the study, in 2021 thirty-one percent of the population was based around retail, entertainment, recreation and accommodations while nine percent was based around construction. This means a full forty percent of the economy is dependent on two main outside inputs: tourists visiting the Valley and people deciding to move here and build new homes. To thrive into the future, the Methow needs a homegrown economy that will restore and regenerate its forests, rivers and farms rather than an economy built largely around development and tourist visitation.

There are models in the Northwest of how this restoration economy could start to take shape. Many of them exist as nonprofits that are working to incorporate environmental





stewardship into long-term economic prosperity and climate resiliency. As we build a vision of a restoration economy in the Methow Valley, it is helpful to examine what is working well for these organizations, where improvements can be made, and what could be successful in this place.

To incorporate a restoration economy into our own local economy we must start by strengthening partnerships and forming new relationships. An important takeaway from these case studies is that for our economy to change in a significant way, the private business sector needs to be involved. The Forest Service and Department of Natural Resources already work with logging contractors to carry out restoration projects. What if these public-private partnerships were expanded? One contractor could cut the small diameter trees and bring them to a log yard. Others could process them in different ways—as orchard poles or siding or built into small sheds. Contracted prescribed burning crews could also be a part of these restoration efforts. And we haven’t even started talking about employment opportunities connected to watershed restoration, soil restoration and wildlife recovery!

Hundreds of thousands of acres around the Methow Valley need to be restored and stewarded to create healthy, resilient forests that can withstand an increasing threat from climate change fueled wildfire. Let’s begin to pair this restoration work with our economy so that both our environment and the people living here can thrive together. ♦



Trees marked for cutting (blue) and keeping (orange) on the Mission Restoration Project. Small diameter trees on thousands of acres of forest surrounding the Methow Valley need to be thinned to improve forest health and fire resiliency. Through innovative public-private partnerships, these trees can be brought to market instead of being burned in slash piles. Photo: Peter Bauer

CASE STUDY

MT. ADAMS RESOURCE STEWARDS (MARS) GLENWOOD, WA

In 2011, Mt. Adams Resource Stewards established Washington’s first non-profit-owned, working community forest. This forest has had several additions since then and is now 1,006 acres. MARS’s forest management strategy balances maintaining high-quality habitat and wildfire risk reduction with sustainable management of the forest as a renewable source of wood products and jobs. This healthy working forest maintains public access and allows fishing, hunting and firewood gathering.

MARS Executive Director Jay McLaughlin shares, “The community forest has been one of the most impactful things we have accomplished. Beyond immediate benefits from the acres we own and manage on behalf of the community, the effort anchors our ability to grow capacity around land stewardship and

restoration work that also is applied on adjacent state, federal and private lands. As a result, we currently employ 17 field staff that bring local knowledge, technical skills and a passion for land stewardship to bear on projects that benefit local communities and the Mt. Adams landscape.”

As part of a separate program, MARS has sought to connect and create markets for restoration-derived small diameter logs. In 2008, in partnership with Klickitat County, the US Forest Service, USDA and WA Department of Natural Resources, MARS launched a log utilization center which stored logs and had access to manufacturing equipment to process the logs. The center has served as a business incubator and hosted several start-up companies including post and pole manufacturing and commercial firewood production. While this has been one of the most challenging projects for MARS, they continue to hold out hope that the right mix of entrepreneurial partners can provide an important and economically viable link between well-designed forest treatments and products sourced from the small diameter logs that are harvested as part of these treatments. ♦

CASE STUDY

WALLOWA RESOURCES ENTERPRISE, OREGON

Nils Christoffersen, the executive director of Wallowa Resources, recognizes that many rural places across the West “have lost their identity and essential value to the modern economy.” As Christoffersen views it, these rural communities have “experienced declining populations, declining demand for local products, and general economic decline. Some resorted to industry hunting, others to transforming to retirement or recreation communities. Jobs, any kind at any cost, seemed to be the primary objective. Many of these efforts lacked any geographic foundation or grounding in the values of place, the natural resources, or the knowledge, skills and passion of the local workforce.”

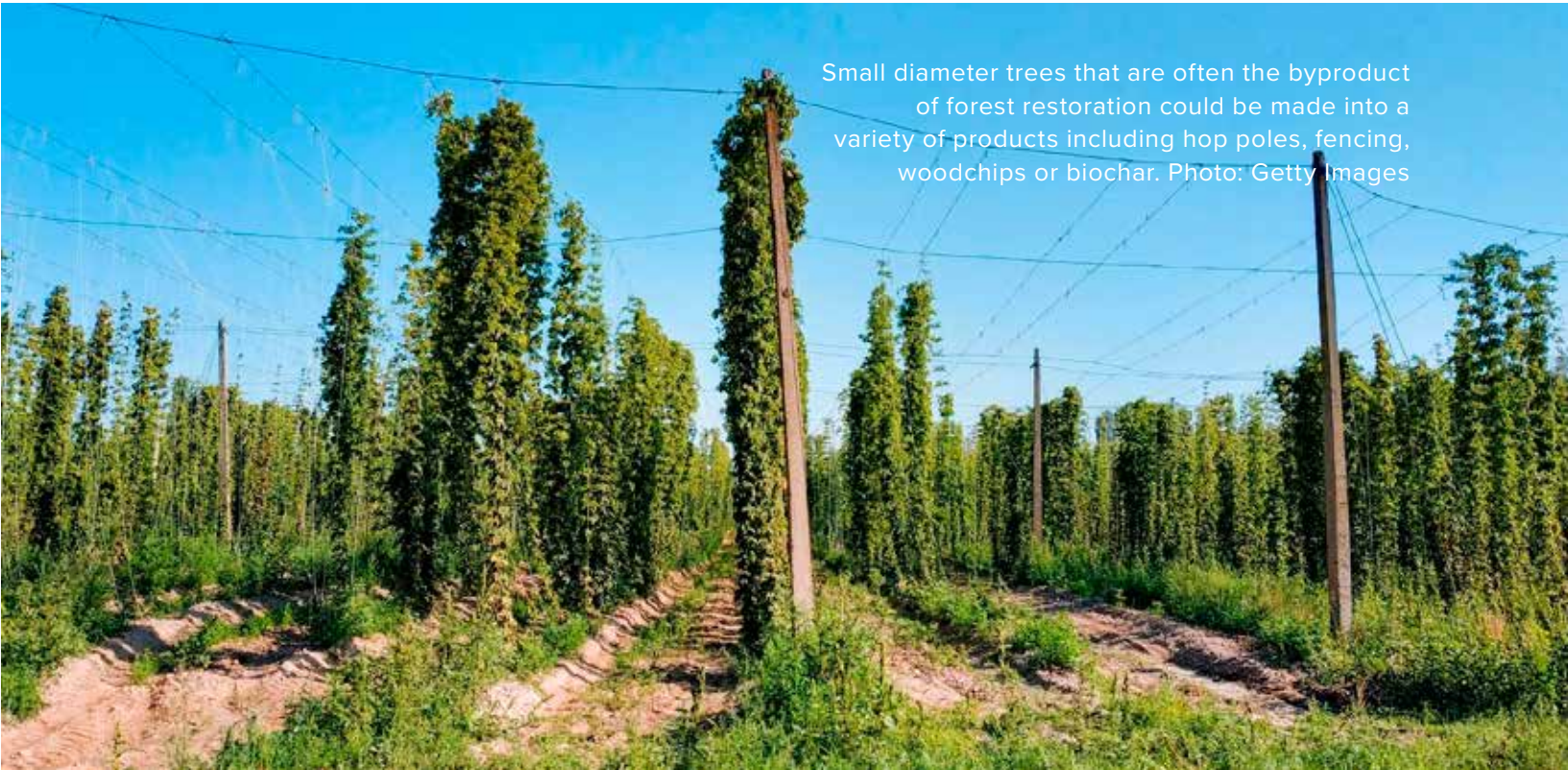
When Wallowa Resources began in 1996, Wallowa County was in a steep decline—several local mills had closed down and their unemployment levels were the highest in the state of Oregon. The organization’s aim was to create both a strong economy and a healthy landscape. Christoffersen describes their vision of the stewardship economy as “centered on the unique values, responsibilities, and opportunities of place—it’s an economy grounded by the need, and the responsibility, to manage for the sustainability of both land and community. The ecological and political landscape of the rural west is primed for innovation. Not the kind that is brought in from afar. It is emerging from the knowledge, skills, passion, and vision

of community leaders, entrepreneurs and local organizations.”

Wallowa Resources has fostered the creation of this stewardship economy through a number of avenues including working with the Forest Service on active restoration of forests and streambeds, installing renewable energy, and starting education programs that connect youth with their surrounding landscape.

Wallowa Resources is also exploring innovative options to process forest restoration byproducts: “Since much of this restoration involves the removal of small diameter trees, we’ve explored a lot of different options,” Christoffersen explains. This includes thermal energy—biomass energy heating systems that use hog fuel, wood chips, pellets or firewood; log chips that are converted into particle board or pulp; different post and pole products including hop poles and agricultural and residential fencing systems; and feedstock for pellet production. All these wood products provide a market for trees that would otherwise be burned as slash in forest restoration efforts. In the process, they provide jobs for local forestry workers and bring a local product to market.

Wallowa Resources has begun experimenting with biochar production to create viable “forest to farm” restoration. Local Methow Valley biomass company C6 Forest to Farm is developing a similar model here in the Methow Valley. Biochar could be a promising byproduct of forest restoration that reduces our fire risk, restores forest health and boosts the health of our agricultural soils. ♦



Small diameter trees that are often the byproduct of forest restoration could be made into a variety of products including hop poles, fencing, woodchips or biochar. Photo: Getty Images





## Homegrown Climate Action: Methow Valley Foodshed

DANA GOLDEN, RESILIENT METHOW

*One* of the Methow Valley Climate Action Plan's key strategies and actions is to "Support a Resilient Agricultural Community." Eating locally grown food reduces CO2 emissions by reducing food miles — the distance food travels from farm to consumer. The average piece of produce in the U.S. travels 1,500 miles, while local food may only travel 100 miles (or less), according to researchers at the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University. Additionally, as unexpected weather patterns, disease, and conflict disrupt supply chains, you can count on local farms to help feed our community, rain or shine.

Okanogan County is blessed to have a long and expanding list of small farmers producing beautiful and nutritious food for its community. The Methow Valley Farmer's Market in Twisp has been a hub for such farmers since its inception 44 years ago. And thanks to the Market's board of directors, led by Kelleigh McMillan in partnership with Room One, buying local food just became more accessible to more people in our community. Starting May 28th, the market will be accepting EBT cards for the purchase of locally grown food and food products! Through the US Department of Agriculture's SNAP program, shoppers can now cash in their EBT credit for shopping tokens to spend at the market.

The Farms to Neighbors program, hosted by the Methow Conservancy and The Cove Food Bank, is another great example of local farmers sharing their bounty with more people in our community who would otherwise not have

access to fresh, local, and organic food.

The Methow Valley Foodshed has recently emerged as another pillar in implementing this strategy. The Foodshed provides the opportunity for local farmers to connect directly with local consumers. Food can be ordered online and picked up at a weekly distribution. The Foodshed allows farmers to keep more of the total dollar value of their products in pocket while removing most of the marketing and distribution burden. In this way, it directly helps advance the Climate Plan's goal to "Grow the Financial Sustainability of Farms."

Casey Smith of BCS Livestock spearheaded this effort last year in collaboration with other producers, such as Nettle Grove Farm, Doubletree Farm, Wild Plum Farm, and Twisp River Grain and Mill: "We want it to be easy for farmers to get their products directly to consumers and easy for consumers to get food directly from farms," said Smith. "The Foodshed fosters the growth of an abundant and resilient food system in the Methow Valley by connecting people to local farms."

For more information:

[www.methowvalleyfarmersmarket.com](http://www.methowvalleyfarmersmarket.com)  
[www.methowgrown.org/farms-to-neighbors](http://www.methowgrown.org/farms-to-neighbors)  
[www.mvfoodshed.com](http://www.mvfoodshed.com)

Buy from Methow and Okanogan producers to support thriving local agriculture (and get delicious food at the same time!) ♦

## Improving Year-Round Air Quality by Reducing Outdoor Burning

LIZ WALKER, CLEAN AIR METHOW

*How* do we move away from outdoor burning as a means to dispose of our yard waste? Up until recently, there haven't been many good options in the Methow Valley to reduce the fuel load around our homes without adding smoke to the air. Alternatives do exist however, and for every thinned tree, branch, or bag of pine needles we keep out of our burn piles, our air is cleaner and healthier to breathe.

With support from the Okanogan Conservation District, Clean Air Methow provided two alternatives to outdoor burning this past April. The first event was a curbside chipping event for homes in Twisp. In partnership with Resilient Methow and the Town of Twisp Public Works, Dana Golden (Resilient Methow) and Anna Mounsey (Clean Air Methow) walked door to door to pass out materials about wildfire preparedness and smoke awareness, and to encourage people to chip or compost their yard debris. Ninety-four Twisp households piled up their yard waste on the street for Public Works to chip. Chips were piled in the park for residents to take for free.

Next, in partnership with Okanogan County Solid Waste, Dana, Anna and several fantastic volunteers headed down to the Twisp transfer station for three days of yard debris and green waste collection, brought in by residents up and down the valley. Hundreds of hours of smoke were averted through this event with over 200 loads processed in just a few days! Funding for these events was provided by the Washington Department of Ecology.

Another way that Clean Air Methow is helping keep our air free of human-caused smoke is through its woodstove replacement program. With a renewed contract from the WA Department of Ecology, Clean Air Methow will be able to replace an additional 40 inefficient, smoky woodstoves in the Methow and Okanogan Valleys.

While these initiatives may seem small in scale when compared to the amount of smoke that is produced by wildfires, there is tremendous value for our physical and emotional health by limiting the total number of smoky days we have in a year. Healthy adaptation to living in a fire-adapted ecosystem and becoming "smoke-ready" includes reducing all sources of smoke where we are able, and then preparing ourselves and protecting vulnerable community members from smoke beyond our control.

Clean Air Methow is a project of MVCC. ♦

Over 200 loads of woody debris were brought to the Twisp transfer center during the recent chipping drive averting hundreds of hours of smoke. Photo: Dana Golden





# A CALL FOR STORIES: DOCUMENTING WILDFIRE RECOVERY

DAVID LUKAS, NATURALIST

*Wildfires* are an extraordinarily complex issue. They play many ecological roles, but they also trigger powerful emotions that get in the way of helping us understand fires and how to respond to them.

However, there is no way around the simple fact that forests are stored energy. The stored energy contained in trees cannot be hoarded; it must be passed on, either through decomposition or fire, for ecological systems to keep functioning. In dry areas like the Methow Valley, fires are an essential and beneficial component of healthy ecosystems. These ecosystems have evolved to depend on fires.

At first glance, it seems like fires destroy all the plants over vast areas, but walking the land reveals that fires skip around with different levels of intensity and impact, creating a mosaic of vegetation.

All these areas eventually recover from a fire, but often on different timelines due to different factors, prompting us to ask questions like: What kind of vegetation was already there? How hot did the fire burn? Which seeds and bulbs survived the fire? How has the ecology of the landscape shifted?

The recovery process is fascinating to watch and understand. Flowers, insects, and woodpeckers are some of the species that do especially well after fires but there are countless other changes to look for. Here in the Methow Valley we have a fantastic opportunity to document this miraculous rebirth in all its many forms.

Fire-damaged landscapes need our compassion and understanding. They need us to take the time to notice them, to closely observe and share stories of what regeneration looks like. It is through this process that we can begin to understand the importance of fire in our place and how it is shifting the landscape we love. ♦

*David Lukas is a naturalist living in the Methow Valley. He has written several books and has recently turned his attention to film. Check out his video “A Call for Stories: Speaking for Damaged Places” which can be found on his website [www.lukasguides.com](http://www.lukasguides.com) under “Videos”. We encourage you to share your own post-fire photos, artwork and observations with us. We are collecting them together in a Citizen Fire Journal on our website to document the regeneration and shifts in our landscape over time. Send your observations to our Communications Manager, Nick Littman at [nick@mvcitizens.org](mailto:nick@mvcitizens.org)*



This entire area burned in last summer's Cedar Creek Fire. In the foreground, lomatium, arrowleaf, lupine, ballhead waterleaf and other species are returning in abundance. In the background, almost nothing is emerging around the scorched ponderosa, illustrating how fires burn in different intensities and create mosaics. Photo: Nick Littman



These mating robber flies look like a fire-adapted species with their shiny black colors perfectly matching the burned ponderosa pine bark they are on. Photo: David Lukas



Even in the midst of severe burns small plants are springing to life. Photo: Nick Littman

This portion of the 2014 Carlton Complex fire has grown back with lush vegetation and diverse flowers that attract many insects and nesting birds. Photo: David Lukas





# MVCC LAUNCHES BUSINESS SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

DREW KATZ, COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR

*Maria* Converse and John Hardy, owners of Methownet, have been long time members and generous supporters of MVCC. During MVCC’s annual member event in 2021, Maria approached staff with an idea: launch a sponsorship program so that local businesses can do more to support and align themselves with the organization’s mission and work. As Maria put it, “here in the Methow, we’re all sharing the same dollar around, just holding it for a while. The difference between a for-profit and a non-profit in a rural community is small, and we all need each other.”

Local businesses have always been important stakeholders in MVCC’s work, whether it be speaking out against mining during the Methow Headwaters Campaign, helping to identify economic drivers and priorities in the Climate Action Plan, or providing in-kind donations such as coffee, beer, and other perks at MVCC events.

So much of what we value in the Methow is founded upon the energy and hard work of generations of locally owned businesses and their employees who care deeply about this place. To recognize businesses’ important contribution to our community and forge stronger relationships with business owners, MVCC launched its Business Sponsorship Program in early 2022. If you are a business owner and want to join the growing list of businesses that support MVCC’s mission, visit [www.mvcitizens.org/business](http://www.mvcitizens.org/business).



## MVCC BUSINESS SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT

MARIA CONVERSE  
AND JEFF HARDY  
OWNERS, METHOWNET

“The Methow Valley Citizens Council has long been a reflection of this community, protecting our way of life and giving voice to all of us. With an emphasis on social justice and science, the organization seeks well thought out solutions that serve our long-term common interests. As business owners and long time residents, we proudly support MVCC.” ♦



## Events

To learn more and sign up for these events, visit [www.mvcitizens.org/events/](http://www.mvcitizens.org/events/)

**June 9th 4-6pm – Annual MVCC Member Meeting**  
Come mingle with fellow MVCC members, meet our staff, and hear about our recent work. Held at the MVCC office in Twisp. RSVP requested.

Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative and MVCC. Check website for final details.

**June 15th 8am – Adopt-a-Highway Clean Up**  
Have you seen the Methow Valley Citizens Council highway sign between Winthrop and Mazama? Join fellow volunteers to help keep this beautiful stretch of Highway 20 clean.

**Summer Reading – MVCC Book Club**  
*Ministry for the Future* by Kim Stanley Robinson: Join MVCC and Resilient Methow in a facilitated book club reading of this acclaimed climate fiction novel published in 2020. We'll reflect on what parallels exist between Robinson's perhaps not-so-fictional near future and our present, and look to the Climate Action Plan as a guide for how we as a community can adapt and build climate resiliency. Dates TBD

**June 11th – Clean Air Methow’s “The Fifth Season”**  
A series of audio stories featuring Okanogan community members sharing their coping strategies for wildfire smoke will be featured in the grand opening of the new Winthrop Library at 10:30 a.m.

**MVCC Listening Sessions Summer and Fall 2022**  
While the distance between the upper reaches of Mazama to the town of Pateros may be less than 70 miles, the lived-experiences of each and every person in the watershed is unique. These listening sessions will be informal gatherings where neighbors, families, newcomers and old-timers can come together to share food and their thoughts and concerns about local issues impacting their community and landscape, as well as learn more about MVCC’s advocacy work.

**June 15th – How to Build Smoke-Ready Communities**  
Liz Walker of Clean Air Methow will give a talk and answer questions about how to build smoke-ready communities at the Winthrop Library at 5:30p.m.

**June 28th – Methow Wildlife Area Public Workshop**  
Hosted by WDFW at the Winthrop Barn.

**June 29th – Forest Restoration Strategy “Town Hall”**  
Presentation and Field Tour co-hosted by North

**Want to host an MVCC listening session?**  
Reach out to Community Engagement Coordinator Drew Katz at [drew@mvcitizens.org](mailto:drew@mvcitizens.org)

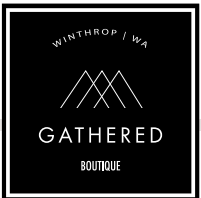
## SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR SILVER AND GOLD BUSINESS SPONSORS FOR YOUR SUPPORT

CHECK OUT A FULL LIST OF SPONSORS AT [WWW.MVCITIZENS.ORG/BUSINESS](http://WWW.MVCITIZENS.ORG/BUSINESS)

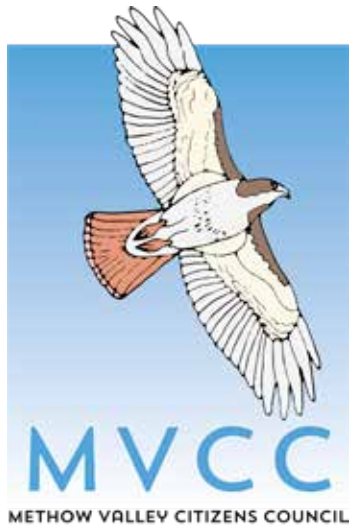
GOLD



SILVER







*Raising a strong  
community voice  
since 1976.*

PO BOX 774  
TWISP, WA 98856



*How can I leave a legacy of care?*

You can support MVCC's work to protect this place and all its inhabitants far into the future by adding us to your estate or will. Talk to Jasmine Minbashian ([jasmine@mvcitizens.org](mailto:jasmine@mvcitizens.org)) today about how a simple bequest can ensure the Methow thrives for generations to come.

*Photo: Pearl Cherrington*