

METHOW VALLEY CITIZENS COUNCIL



# **VALLEY VOICE**

FALL/WINTER 2022

**Pulse of the River:  
Interview with  
Mark Miller**

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**Encounters with  
the Similkameen**

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# METHOW VALLEY CITIZENS COUNCIL

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*“When we eat a tomato out of our garden, part of that Methow dirt’s in that tomato and that tomato becomes part of us. Well, the same exact thing happens with the water. So the water that nourishes those plants and animals and people, when we ingest those, that becomes part of who we are. That to me is the difference in the waters. The waters for different rivers and springs become part of us spiritually. It’s not just water as a biological means, it’s really water becoming part of you.”*

— Mark Miller

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# Letter from the Executive Director

**Winter.** The deep silence of the season offers a chance to reflect and renew. Many traditions and cultures center the winter holidays around feasts, family, and celebration — an opportunity to give gratitude for all that we have and strengthen the relationships we have with each other.

For many, however, the season brings with it a considerable amount of self-induced stress — in large part created by a society focused on material wealth and consumerism. How would the season look if we let go of buying and selling more “stuff” and instead indulged in what makes us happy: the people we love and the natural world that supports and inspires us?

This winter season provides the perfect opportunity to re-examine what is essential—and elemental—in our lives. Water is fundamental to every living being’s existence. The Methow River and its tributaries sustain our precarious life in this dry mountain valley. Can we shift from treating our water simply as a commodity or a resource to be divvied up and traded and instead honor it as a spiritual life force to be treated with care and respect, like an ancestor? Methow descendant, Mark Miller, reminds us of our elemental relationship with water on p. 4.

How do we reconcile different world views when they arrive in the form of our friends and neighbors? As Lorah Super articulates in “Encounters with the Similkameen” on p. 8, often the best connections are made when decision-makers immerse into the

elements themselves — feet wet, necks sweaty, paddling together, downstream.

As we bring more focus to caring for our water, we must recognize that we have not been good stewards of our river. For too long, the salmon — a barometer of the river’s health — have been on life support, sustained by hatcheries. “If salmon imprint on their hatching stream forever/and every stream has a memory/what do these waters say about us?” Easton Branam asks us in her beautiful and incisive poem on p. 16.

It is an incredible time to be involved in conservation work. The work ahead is simultaneously complex and challenging, inspiring and hopeful. MVCC is energized by the innovative approaches to our work (“The Hazy Way Forward,” p.11), the potential for the reintroduction of a native species to the North Cascades (p. 14) and the new faces on our team (p. 18).

This success of this work requires full community participation. My hope in 2023 is that you will get your feet wet with us, and maybe even dive in.

Be well,



Jasmine Minbashian  
*Executive Director*





**PULSE OF THE RIVER:**  
**AN INTERVIEW WITH**  
**METHOW DESCENDANT**  
**MARK MILLER**

*In* July, we sat down to talk with and film Mark Miller, a Methow descendant, about his connection with the Methow River. We visited Mark at his home perched on a bench above the Methow River just north of Pateros. From his front yard, we could see the last mile of the Methow as it slowed and swelled (the effect of Wells Dam) and entered the Columbia. Growing up on this property, Mark's love of the Methow river started early. At age 10, he first felt that "feeling of connection with the river as an entity enveloping you," when he would swim a few miles down the Methow alongside his cousin with scuba masks on. "[We'd] swim headfirst downstream," he recalls, "all the things you're not supposed to do."

In college, Mark bought a canoe and taught himself how to paddle on the unforgiving Methow River: "It was literally the school of hard knocks and near drownings." From his origins running Black Canyon, Mark became an accomplished whitewater canoeist, eventually pioneering new paddling techniques and becoming a sought-after instructor. Canoe instruction took him to rivers all over the country and the world (in Chile he successfully dropped over a 30-foot waterfall in an open canoe) and consolidated his spiritual connection with the river: "When you have a canoe and you're gliding across the river and you stick the blade in with no load, it's just lined up the direction the boat's flowing. There's a spiritual pulse of the river."

We spoke with Mark about this spiritual pulse of the river, the coming water battles, the significance of living where he does, the joy of having his family move back, and much more. Before leaving, we took a canoe down to the river to watch him paddle. His control of the craft was remarkable; his strokes were strong and precise. He could move the canoe exactly where he wanted it to go—upstream, downstream, or cross-current. Our conversation with Mark reminded us how vital the river is, how important it is to welcome the Methow People back to their homelands, and how small we are when we look at the thrust of human history in this place. We have excerpted highlights from the interview here.

Mark Miller has been swimming, paddling or snorkeling the Methow River for most of his life. The extended Miller family are some of the only Methow descendants still living in the Methow Valley. Photo: Nick Littman

## "THE LAST PIECE OF INDIAN PROPERTY ON THE METHOW"

I'm Mark Miller and we live here on the mouth of the Methow, and our family is really the last piece of Indian property on the Methow that's still owned by Indians. I was charged with protection of this land when I was 12 by my grandfather—this land was important, it was important to safeguard it. When my dad gave me part of the property, that's when I realized that the land was deeded in 1872 in the Oregon territories. That's how long we've actually been the "owners" of this land, if you can "own" it. And then part of the Methow people is who we are, and that date goes back about 13,000 years.

From here, a couple miles up the valley and a couple miles down the valley were basically all Indian lands. People were allotted land to stay here because they didn't want to move to the Colville Reservation per se. And most of those lands were scammed away by a banker, lawyer, and a crooked Indian agent. This is the last piece of land that wasn't scammed and that's why it was so important, why my grandfather instructed me that I was responsible for making sure it stayed whole. My two brothers, two of my daughters and now a granddaughter have all moved here. My family lives here, there's seven homes of us here on this little bitty reservation. It's not within the boundaries [of the Colville Reservation], it's offset, it's on the mouth of the Methow, and I've always been kind of proud of that fact.

### CAN WE OWN THE WATER?

My grandfather would say that the white man figured out how to own the land and make you pay for it. He'd charge you taxes and if you didn't pay the taxes, it really wasn't your land anyways. This actually kind of makes sense, because it's not your land anyways. He knew the next issue was going to be water. He said, "They're going to figure out how to own the water and make you pay for it." And he said, "Then the last thing they're going to work on is ownership of the air." So we've kind of gotten indoctrinated and we are living through ownership of the land, which is still pretty hard for a lot of Indian people.

The next big battle... that big gorilla sitting in the room is the water issue—it's coming. The water rights... I want to say it was probably seven or eight years ago a group approached this family about



buying our water rights — to buy the Indian water rights on the Methow — that number was a million and a half dollars. Two to three years ago, that offer's now five million.

If we as an Indian people join the fray and start commercializing water, then I think that really takes the spiritualistic value out of it, we become less spiritually. And so the idea of selling water really was put to rest early because from a spiritual perspective it was wrong.

### **WATER BATTLES ARE COMING**

These water issues are coming. The water is more valuable than people realize. These offers [to buy water rights] came from a winery on the mid-Columbia. They wanted these water rights to grow grapes. They have nothing to do with this valley. The issues about water conservation and water banking, all these water solutions and how many developments there are going to be and how many wells there are going to be... there's a finite amount of water and if there's a finite amount of water unfortunately you have to have a finite number of usages for it. And how that gets divided up is going to be a battle, a decades battle.

### **THE METHOW PEOPLE RETURNING TO THEIR TRADITIONAL LANDS**

We talk about the salmon coming back. I smile because the Methows are coming back and that's a unique situation that I think is probably only about 20 years old. The Indians were driven out of this country by the army, no real treaty, just driven out. And when I was a child 60 years ago, we would fish up the Methow River for salmon and pick berries and harvest roots and we never were really welcomed back in the Methow and that was my perception as a small boy. In the last 20 years, that's totally changed 180 degrees now and there are people in the Methow that want Indian people back in the Methow. They have questions about culture and the environment and so the opportunity to speak to those is actually

Mark Miller is an accomplished whitewater canoeist who has instructed all over the country, and run rivers all over the world. In Chile, he successfully dropped over a 30 foot waterfall in an open canoe (a different waterfall drop is pictured here). Photo courtesy of Mark Miller

really fun, but the whole demographic in the upper Methow's changed.

So people have that curiosity and want to know that knowledge and that's probably been what I've done a lot in the last five years was to speak to groups about the cultural significance of Indian belief systems and the inspirations and the relationships...An Anglo system tends to kind of put people up this really vertical, narrow tree and people are at the top and ruling this issue. And I think the concept that more people are comfortable with is if you think about an Indian belief system — it's more horizontal. So there's people but there's land, it has a spiritual entity, the water has a spiritual entity, the air has a spiritual entity, the plants, the animals.

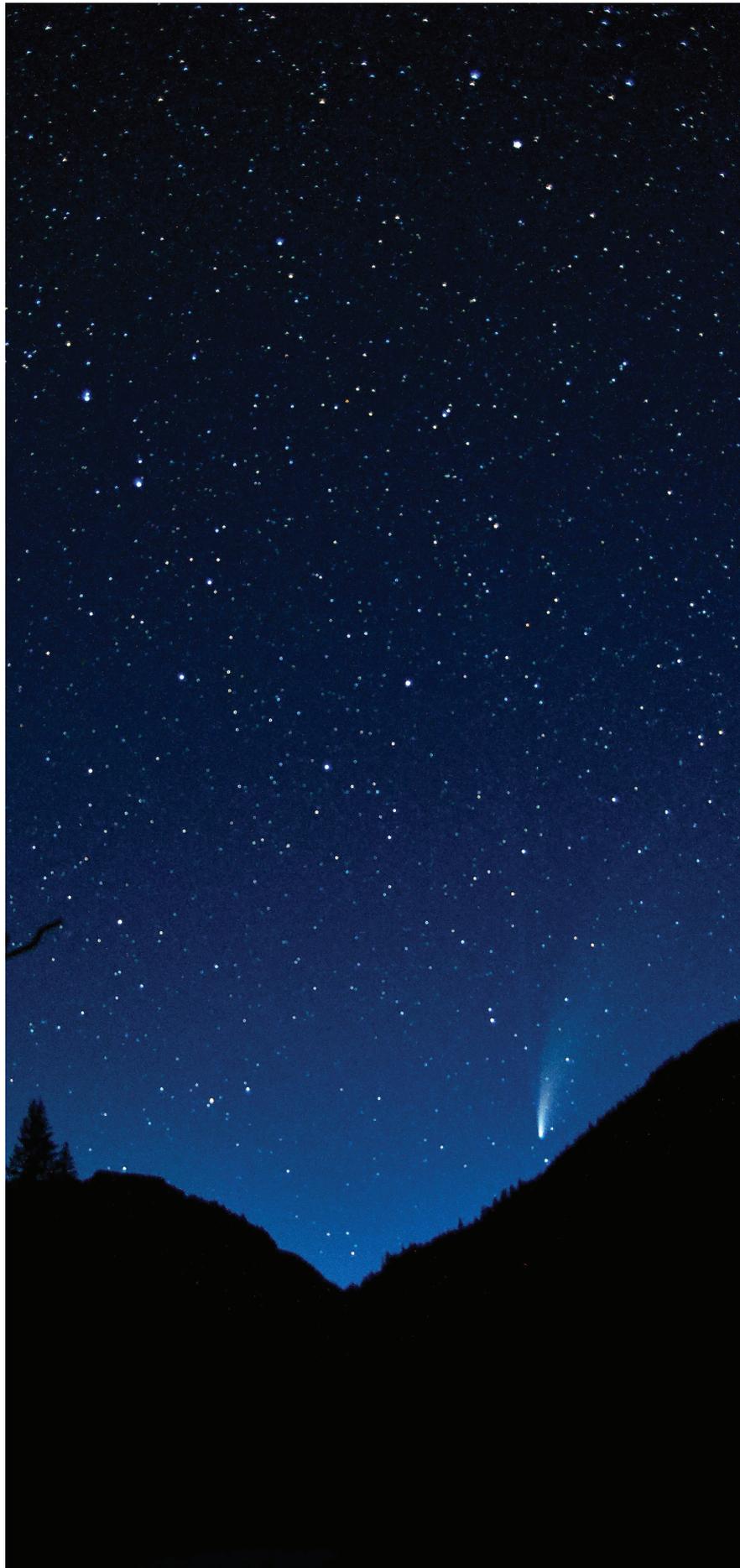
### A DEEP-SEATED THEOLOGY

I tell people that I love it when the power goes out. I have faith in the power company that they're going to get it back on in a reasonable time so nothing bad is going to happen, but I for one enjoy it when everything's black. And I come out of the house and I come out here and I just sit and look at it all. And I think that's the uniqueness of how long you can be bonded to a place. It's way different than the 150 years that most of us can think of our families being here. A hundred years. A thousand years. Three thousand years. Ten thousand years? Thirteen thousand years? That's a long time. That's a long time to develop a theology and a spiritualism. The prayers to thank the animals, thank the water, to thank the earth, to thank the sky are real in Indian people's existence because human beings are pretty frail. ♦

*Mark Miller is one of the voices featured in our Living River films, a series of short films featuring knowledge-holders and experts speaking about why the Methow River is unique, what threatens it, and why we must come together to protect it. Watch them all at [www.mvcitizens.org/livingriver](http://www.mvcitizens.org/livingriver)*



The Methow people have a history in this valley that stretches back over 13,000 years. Photo: Matthew Kennedy



# Encounters with the Similkameen



The Similkameen River flows from southern British Columbia to its confluence with the Okanogan River near Oroville. Enloe Dam sits just eight miles above the confluence and blocks fish passage to over 340 miles of cold-water habitat. Photo: David Lukas

LORAH SUPER, PROGRAM DIRECTOR

*Looked* at from afar we were a group of fourteen — mostly strangers to each other — pushing three rafts and two kayaks into the Similkameen River on a stifling mid-August day. If you came closer and listened to the quiet conversations on the sand, you'd find we all shared a common interest: we cared about the fate of this river and the dam that was blocking it. Although we each carried our own knowledge, thoughts and opinions about what should happen to Enloe Dam, this day was not built around arguing or planning—it was all about connecting. Everyone here had accepted the invitation from MVCC to spend an afternoon experiencing the Similkameen River together. Besides our guide team from Methow Rafting — Brandon, Dylan and Cam — passengers included the Mayor of Oroville, a state Senator, representatives of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, staff from the

Okanogan Nation Alliance in British Columbia, the Stewardship Director for American Whitewater, community members from Oroville, Tonasket, Omak and Okanogan, a reporter from the Methow Valley News, two photographers, and me.

As a former outfitter-guide having organized and participated in a lot of “field tours” for various conservation efforts, I’m passionate about the power of getting people together in the place at the heart of the matter. From there we can see the situation firsthand and connect around complex and otherwise abstract issues in a way that doesn’t happen in meetings. Outside, the elements work on us the way they do best, grounding us into different ways of relating and being present. Often, ideas and connections percolate from these informal encounters when we let our guard down, see each other as regular people, and consider the river flowing beneath our feet.

Before we set out on the river, we shared what

our interest was in the Similkameen and what we hoped to get out of the day. The Colville Tribes' biologist talked about the significance of water temperature in the life cycle of salmon, and how the Similkameen could be instrumental to the survival of steelhead in the Okanogan Basin. The Mayor of Oroville admitted he was interested in seeing what "the other side" was saying about the dam, since he interacts with many community members who are in favor of leaving it in place. The dam is admittedly a beautiful sight, the man-made waterfall cascading down, rainbows in the spray, surrounded by rocky cliffs and a wide vista of mountains and orchards. Some folks have known only this view, and don't want it to change.

Only a handful of us had ever actually been in a boat on the Similkameen, but everyone possessed a strong interest in the river's future, either personally or professionally. I invited subject matter experts, who could answer our questions and inform discussion with their access to the most current studies associated with the fate of Enloe dam.

The dam — that attractive concrete blockage that has sat unused for 55 years — was the subtext underlying all conversations. What is the composition and chemistry of the tons of sediment piled up behind the concrete? How viable are the falls below the Enloe for fish passage? How suitable are the hundreds of miles of habitat upstream? These questions could be answered by some of the people now dipping their paddles into the river.

As far as I was concerned, everyone on the trip was a subject matter expert in their own right, capable of educating everyone else about their experience with the river and the dam's influence on local communities, indigenous culture, regional

economics, recreational opportunities and quality of life. I waited to let conversations bubble up organically, and they did.

Sliding our boats into the river was a relief. The temperature was climbing — even in the shade of the big pines by the river, the sun was already prickling our skin. As we dipped our paddles into the shallow water, a light breeze pushed cool air off the river towards us. On my raft and others,



Shanker's Bend where the Similkameen River begins to slow and back up in a reservoir for 1.6 miles above Enloe Dam. Photo: David Lukas

I heard fragments of discussion on history, landmarks, local politics, recreation, mining, wildlife. Midway through the float we stopped for lunch at a sandy beach with a deep swimming hole. We lounged and swam and carried on our conversations: subject matter experts learning from each other while enjoying local treats and a dip to cool off. After lunch, we swapped into different boats so we could interact with new people on the second half of the trip. Passengers started joking with each other. We were having fun.

Coming to a well-known landmark at Shanker's



Time on the river (and some good grub) gives everyone the opportunity to get to know each other as people. As citizens and stakeholders, they make vital connections, build trust, and consider the river flowing beneath them. Photo: David Lukas

Bend — a deep green gooseneck in the river marked by steep cliffs where chukar could be heard from crevices above — we stopped to hear several participants share stories of earlier efforts to build a second dam at this very location. This led to more conversations. I noticed that everyone was simultaneously paying rapt attention, fully engaged and lolling about in the sand, completely relaxed. The Senator razzed the Mayor of Oroville, asking him if he had changed his mind yet. The Mayor leaned back and grinned behind his sunglasses. As we got back in the boats for the final short paddle to the takeout, the guides pointed to the river — it appeared to have stopped moving. We had reached the head of the 1.6-mile reservoir backed up behind Enloe Dam. The river was no longer running free.

Some of us looked longingly upstream at the little rapid coming off the last bedrock shelf and noticed the glassy quality of the water where we sat. The paddling became harder without the current. In the stillness, the heat of the day found us, and a stifling

headwind pushed at our boats. Conversation on my raft turned to the massive mound of sediment beneath us, how deep it must be, what it would be like if the canyon were exhumed so the river could breathe. I recalled the previous week when we scouted the river, how Cam stood next to his boat in ankle deep water in the middle of the reservoir, standing on a hundred years of built-up sediment. What would a free river look like in this canyon?

At the take out, we all cooperated to strip the gear from the boats and haul everything up the bank and into the waiting Methow Rafting bus. Boats were strapped to the trailer, and we were shuttled back to our vehicles. I asked everyone — was this worthwhile? Did we accomplish what you wanted to get out of this trip? Should we do it again? Who else needs to do this? There was resounding enthusiasm from all parties to do it again and involve as many different perspectives as possible. Methow Rafting is eager to put the Similkameen on their trip list for next year. Who wants to go for a float? ♦

# THE HAZY WAY FORWARD

## Fire and Smoke We Can Learn to Live With

ELIZABETH WALKER, PHD  
STRATEGIC ADVISOR, CLEAN AIR METHOW

*The* summer after I volunteered to lead the Clean Air Project, the Carlton Complex Fire roared through the Methow Valley. Skies became apocalyptic billows of smoke, ash settled on our homes and the air became dangerous to breathe. As we know now, Carlton was the beginning of many more megafires to come — Twisp River, Crescent Mountain, Diamond Creek, Cold Springs Canyon, Cedar Creek, and Cub Creek all burned through thousands of acres and had prolonged smoke impacts. After Carlton Complex, the Clean Air Project (what would become Clean Air Methow) began asking: How can our community be prepared for annual severe wildfire smoke? To protect public health from an environmental hazard, you can either get rid of or decrease the hazard (i.e. less smoke), or you can prevent exposure (e.g. filtered indoor air spaces or N95 masks). While we can't control the smoke drifting into the Methow Valley from other places, we can think about how we can decrease the severity and smoke production of our local wildfires in the long-term through forest treatment and prescribed burning. And we can definitely reduce our exposure by having more safe spaces to live and gather in.



Prescribed burning can play a prominent role in decreasing the severity and smoke production of our local wildfires. Pictured is local fire ecologist Susan Pritchard at a Indigenous Women's Prescribed Fire training last summer. Photo courtesy of Susan Pritchard

I'm often asked, "Is smoke really that bad for me?" As a toxicologist, I'm all too aware of all the things that can make us sick. Having clean air is fundamental to our health, right there alongside the cornerstones of wellness we've pushed for years — eating a nutritious diet, lowering stress, getting enough sleep, nurturing supportive relationships. The indisputable evidence is that air pollution is the largest environmental health threat we face globally, responsible for seven million excess deaths per year, according to recent World Health Organizations calculations. This pollution isn't just in developing nations like China and India — places we typically think of as having terrible air quality. A recent study reported that in the U.S.,



wildfire smoke has now erased the fifty years of air quality gains achieved through the 1970 Clean Air Act. And for places in the U.S. like Okanogan County, surrounded by public lands and forests, wildfire smoke severity — both intensity and duration — is predicted to increase by two to three fold by 2050.

Personally, I'm not too responsive to news headlines describing all the things that can kill us. But I do care about my ability to take a deep breath to calm myself down. I want this for everyone. When I put my kids to bed in August with gratitude for the air purifiers running next to their beds, I think about our neighbors who live in spaces where the smoke is nearly as severe inside as it is outside. I think about those who make most of their annual income working long days outdoors in the summer. I think about people I know with asthma, emphysema, heart conditions. Those who are pregnant. Those who are worried.

### WHAT CAN BE DONE?

In an audiovisual project supported by our collaborators at the University of Washington called “The Fifth Season,” Cody Desautel of the Colville Tribes speaks eloquently about post-colonial changes in

how we live on the land and manage forest health, and the differences between smoke from wildfire and prescribed fire. There is growing appreciation for how indigenous people routinely used fire to help manage landscapes on a large scale. Programs such as the Department of Natural Resources’ 20-year Forest Health Strategic Plan and the Central Washington Initiative describe how increased prescribed fire can restore forest health and reduce the risk of damaging wildfires that threaten communities and burn more harshly than is beneficial. While the smoke from wildfires is unpredictable in its severity and duration, prescribed fires are only initiated under strict environmental conditions that support safe burning and good ventilation of smoke into the atmosphere and away from nearby communities. The practice is tightly regulated by the state’s Smoke Management Plan. I’ve observed firsthand how careful and thoughtful many of our local land stewards at the Forest Service and Department of Fish and Wildlife are towards minimizing smoke impacts by avoiding burning on weekends during outdoor events such as the rodeo or trail races. Despite our sophisticated models, weather is changeable, and the complexity of intentional landscape level burning means that some smoke for

Prescribed fire is fire and smoke we have control over. This “good fire” can be used to manage landscapes on a large scale, making our communities safer and our forests healthier. Photo: Getty Images





Clean Air Coordinator, Anna Mounsey, cleans out a Purple Air sensor on a smoky day this summer. A network of low-cost air quality sensors like this are an integral part of creating a “smoke-ready” community that knows its sources of air pollution, understands the health risks of smoke, and has access to tools to protect itself. Photo: Anna Mounsey

people nearby may be inevitable. However, even the largest planned burn produces far less smoke than most wildfires. I can get behind the slogan of “good fire” but even a “good fire” will produce smoke that is not healthy for us. Will our future just be hazy?

This past summer, I was inspired by reading and listening to the marine biologist, policy maker, and climate leader Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson. Dr. Johnson insists that we must shift our collective focus to describing the vision we are drawn towards, rather than spend our efforts describing in ever-expanding detail exactly how and just how badly we are screwed (paraphrasing here). I love this.

The way forward to live safely with smoke is not actually hazy at all. In my vision, I see us using fire to simultaneously benefit our landscape and reduce our long-term wildfire smoke. I see Indigenous land stewards working alongside land management agencies to incorporate traditional burning practices. I see non-burning techniques such as grinding or chipping used for slash disposal whenever possible. I see a prescribed burn team that has all the resources

to burn at the right times with clear communication to the public throughout the whole process. I see an active landowner-scale prescribed burn program that supports safe burning on private lands to benefit the forest. I see people responsible for firefighting, prescribed burning, and air quality, continuing to strengthen coordination and appreciation for each other’s work in support of healthy forests and communities. I see all of this being supported by a community who wants to see our wildfires and smoke reduced.

An integral part of this vision is changing systems and behaviors to reduce unnecessary smoke at every opportunity and being able to still live with the smoke when it does arrive. A Methow Valley and Okanogan County that is “smoke-ready” includes: a landscape with hundreds of low-cost air quality sensors that provide information about all of our communities and capture air quality in neighborhoods and areas currently unseen to ensure they are not overlooked; robust public and environmental health programs to monitor that air quality data carefully; opportunities for non-burning disposal of organic waste such as municipal scale composting and biochar generated by techniques that produce minimal smoke; a built environment where ALL buildings — homes, businesses, government and public spaces — have a robust, energy-efficient building envelope and the ability to filter indoor air to ensure safe shelter when it is smoky outdoors; and accessible community spaces for people to gather, recreate, socialize, and learn indoors.

Ayana Elizabeth Johnson urges us to find the climate work that energizes us, and simply start. And do it together. For me, immersion in air quality work and daily attention to the changeable nature of weather and smoke has necessitated a dedicated practice of staying present, and accepting what is. I check in on my compulsion to look at air quality possibly more frequently than needed, and I try harder to get outside at least for a few minutes on every single blue-sky day (which for an air quality nerd like me is actually a “green day” according to the color-coded AQI). With increasing wildfires and a critical need to ramp up prescribed burning, how bad will the smoke get? I honestly don’t know, but it’s a sunny and gorgeous October day today, and I’m coordinating two vegetation chipping drives and delivering 20 more box-fan filter kits to Family Health Centers. By my calculations, we only have about 27,850 to go until we can all breathe safely inside every Okanogan County home. ♦



Grizzlies roamed the North Cascades for thousands of years, until they were hunted to local extinction in the mid-20th century. We now have an opportunity to restore them to their native habitat through a slow and carefully monitored restoration process. Photo: Getty Images

# Welcoming Back Grizzlies

JASMINE MINBASHIAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Living in the Methow is not for the faint of heart. This is rugged, mountainous country, with the elements constantly reminding us of the power of the natural world. Our backyard — the North Cascades — is one of the largest and most remote intact wild places left in the lower 48. Consisting of over 9,500 square miles of contiguous wild lands, the North Cascades Ecosystem is anchored by the North Cascades National Park and several large Wilderness areas. We love living here because close connections to nature support our quality of life. But living near this beautiful landscape comes with a responsibility to be good stewards — a responsibility to share these lands with native wildlife of all shapes and sizes, including grizzly bears.

Grizzly bears once roamed throughout the western states from Canada to Mexico. As settlers moved across the country beginning in the

mid-19th century, grizzlies were actively shot and trapped and their habitat was severely fragmented. By the mid-20th century, only 700 bears remained south of the Canadian border. The last legally killed grizzly bear in Washington was taken from an area near Washington Pass in 1967 (grizzly bears were listed as endangered species in 1973). Today, the North Cascades is one of the few remaining places suitable for grizzlies. Due to their isolation from other grizzly habitat in British Columbia and a very low reproductive rate, grizzlies will not recover in this ecosystem on their own. They need our help.

The North Cascades contains some of the best habitat for the bears in the lower 48. Grizzlies are opportunistic omnivores who rely mostly on plant foods such as roots and berries (when grizzlies eat meat, it is usually grubs and moths or scavenged dead animals). When biologists were evaluating potential food sources for bears in the North

Cascades, they looked at the available research on bear diets and developed a list of 124 plant species they feed on. They found that 100 of the 124 species of plants that are bear foods occur in the North Cascades.

The National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced on November 9th that they are relaunching a process to return grizzlies to their native habitat in the North Cascades. Restoration proposals under the proposed plan would be slow and carefully monitored: approximately three to seven bears per year over five to ten years, with the initial goal of restoring a population of 25 grizzly bears in the 9,500 square mile grizzly recovery zone (that's one bear every 400 square miles!). Biologists estimate that it could take up to a century to fully recover grizzly bears to a population of 200 bears in the North Cascades Ecosystem. In contrast, we already live alongside an estimated 25,000 black bears in Washington state.

The agencies are proposing to designate the reintroduced bears as an “experimental population” under section 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act. 10(j) was designed to relieve landowner concerns that reintroductions could restrict use of private, tribal, or public land. This important provision allows the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to provide greater management flexibility (e.g., relocation or removal) in the event of human-grizzly bear conflict situations.

The slow, carefully managed restoration that is proposed for the North Cascades has been successful in the Cabinet-Yaak mountains of northwest Montana. In that ecosystem, state and federal bear managers have worked for three decades to re-establish a sustainable grizzly

population. Since 1990, 22 bears without any conflict history have been brought in to boost the population.

With support from our elected and community leaders, the National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as public education and outreach, we are fully capable of coexisting with grizzlies as neighbors. Coexistence occurs on a daily basis in areas like Yellowstone and



At 9,500 square miles, the North Cascades Ecosystem would provide some of the best habitat in the lower 48 for grizzly bears. This ecosystem is one of the only remaining large, wild, unfragmented landscapes where the bears can establish a stable population.

Glacier National Parks — both with far higher concentrations of grizzlies and humans. Whether you are a hiker, hunter, or farmer, there are simple, effective tools to successfully minimize conflicts between bears and people. ♦

*The scoping comment period for grizzly restoration finished on December 14th but there will be another opportunity for comments on the draft Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in the spring of 2023. Stay informed of the latest grizzly news at [www.mvcitizens.org/wildlife](http://www.mvcitizens.org/wildlife)*

# Pausing by the fish ponds

A POEM IN TWO VOICES

BY EASTON BRANAM

I pause by the hatchery: placid ponds  
concrete and chain link.

This culture's idea of nursery, of nest  
is now the beginning, the birthplace of Chinook.  
River-beings man-handled into existence.  
If Salmon imprint on their hatching stream forever  
and every stream has a memory  
what do these waters say about us?

*Hatchery production benefits the industry:  
consistent supply—an important market requirement—  
genetic modification to improve quality and yield;  
desirable specimens for sportsmen.*

I swim beside exhausted fish  
in a river swollen with golden aspen leaves, October snow.  
They smelled one drop of home water  
in 250 gallons of sea — we tested that.  
They learned the earth's magnetic field  
always sensing the direction of return.  
They memorized these currents, length of these days,  
qualities of sunlight.  
They heard the songs of their origin waters  
with six bony spheres, embedded  
in fluid-filled chambers in their heads.

*Olfactory cues are important  
so river water is piped to rearing cells.  
When hatchery fish return to their natal rivers  
they are diverted  
by weir or fish ladder  
into holding pens, where they wait  
until we are ready to harvest;  
herd them into  
the egg-taking facilities.*

What of a mother digging her riffle redd nest?  
Standing guard with the tattered father  
until their deaths.  
Then it's the river who tends those glistening stones  
breathless with anticipation.

*The females are sliced open, eggs removed.  
The male's milt is squeezed into the bucket  
of eggs. The fertilized eggs are disinfected,  
placed into incubation trays where a continuous flow  
of (well oxygenated) water cycles past the eggs.  
Babies made in this way  
are mass-marked  
by cutting off the small fin near the end  
of their tail.*

Our madness becomes method  
necessary managing of damage.  
Our Science denies the magic  
of celestial navigation  
counts fish instead.

*Four wild salmon named extinct  
were found a mile above sea level  
in the mountains of Idaho.  
They swam 900 miles from the Pacific  
to Redfish Lake.  
Agencies conferred, then herded them  
into captivity.*

After generations of this  
will any of us remember  
that we live in a world of Rivers waiting  
for their children forever dreaming of home? ♦



Photo: Drew Katz

# MEET THE NEW COUNTY COMMISSIONER

*Jon Neal was elected as the new District 3 county commissioner, replacing a retiring Jim DeTro. Neal has lived in Oroville his whole life and has served as Oroville's mayor for the last six years. MVCC is looking forward to working with Neal on land, air, water and climate issues that impact all of Okanogan County.*

*Before the election, Neal answered some questions from the 501c(4) MVCC Action Fund (MVCCAF) about his stances on environmental issues. A selection of his responses are included below. To see the full responses visit: [www.methowaction.org/2022\\_candidate\\_questionnaire](http://www.methowaction.org/2022_candidate_questionnaire)*

**MVCCAF:** In your view, what are three biggest issues affecting the land, air and water in Okanogan County. If elected, what actions do you propose to take to address them?

**Neal:** 1. Water rights — keeping them in the county, looking at and encouraging possible water leasing, water banking, etc. 2. Keeping as much land in private and county ownership. 3. Forest management to minimize extensive wildfires. Advocating and/or lobbying to make the best (right) decisions and outcomes for the entire county.

**MVCCAF:** Okanogan County is seeing an increase in catastrophic wildfires, extended and more frequent drought, and extreme weather days. If elected, how do you plan to respond to the impacts of our changing climate in Okanogan County?

**Neal:** I would strongly promote fire ready living (landscaping, greenspace etc.) I would lobby for more local management control for the Forest Service and DNR. I would research and promote climate appropriate agriculture.

**MVCCAF:** How would you ensure that disadvantaged communities in Okanogan County do not suffer a disproportionate impact from climate change and environmental problems?

**Neal:** I would make sure the proper equipment (air purifiers, filters, PPE etc.) is available to all that need it.

**MVCCAF:** How would you work with the community to improve air quality in Okanogan County?

**Neal:** Promote alternative heat sources, look to abate nuisance dust issues, improve forest management, promote increasing composting.



**MVCCAF:** What is your approach to ensuring affordable housing for a variety of residents?

**Neal:** I would support local developers by helping with infrastructure and funding grants etc. I would prefer not creating a tax burden.

**MVCCAF:** If elected, will you support retention of water rights in the Methow Valley through tools such as water banking? Will you also strongly oppose efforts to transfer water rights out of the valley?

**Neal:** A strong yes to both.

**MVCCAF:** If elected, will you support implementing policies and practices to protect in-stream flows as precipitation patterns change?

**Neal:** Yes, water is probably our greatest resource.

**MVCCAF:** Will you support initiating flood and drought planning in the Methow Valley, including mapping high-risk areas?

**Neal:** Yes.

**MVCCAF:** Will you support protecting aquifers and surface water through zoning in the Methow Valley that is based on water availability?

**Neal:** Yes. ♦

## HAWK'S CALL

# Leki Albright



*What inspired you to join MVCC as a Junior Board Member?*

I've been inspired by past students' engagement for years, and being part of a youth climate action group as a Freshman helped spark my interest in participating in legislative advocacy. I think it's so wonderful that MVCC

values younger perspectives in their work and I feel lucky to be part of it.

*What are the biggest takeaways from your short time on the board so far? Is there a project or program that you are particularly excited about?*

This is my first board experience and it's definitely a new perspective! It has been fascinating to see a window into how climate-focused nonprofits work. I've been thoroughly impressed with all the moving pieces and projects that are happening at once. This fall I learned a lot about the Methow River as a valuable and vulnerable natural resource — largely through the Living River Film Series — and looking to the future, I'm particularly excited about climate advocacy in the legislative session.

*What advice would you give to other high school students who are passionate about environmental issues and want to get engaged on the local level?*

Environmental issues are extremely multifaceted — there's so much to be done, so finding an area that you're particularly passionate about and searching for opportunities there is the best advice I can give. The Methow Valley is a great place for this as we have so many nonprofit organizations focused on different forms of environmental activism and protection, so there's no shortage of ways to engage!

*Welcome Leki!*

*MVCC is currently looking to add another Junior Board Member. If you would like to apply, or know someone that would be a great candidate, please let us know! Email: [jasmine@mvcitizens.org](mailto:jasmine@mvcitizens.org)*

## MEET & GREET

# Nancy McKinney Milstead, Deputy Director



Nancy fell in love with the Methow Valley as a teenager on a camping trip. She knew it was time to move out of Seattle when her husband began "sharecropping" on the neighbor's parking strip. Since moving to the Methow in 2014, Nancy has gotten to know a wide cross-section of the Valley

while doing bookkeeping/contract management for many organizations including: the Winthrop Ice Rink, Methow Valley Nordic Team, Jamie's Place, Twisp Works, Room One and Methow Valley Chamber Music Festival. Over the past five years, Nancy has been the CFO/Controller for Sun Mountain Lodge. She has years of experience in the not-for-profit sector serving in roles including Volunteer Management, Accountant, Executive Director and Board Member. Nancy will be spearheading fundraising and engagement efforts as MVCC continues to grow and build strong collaborative partnerships in the community.

# Anna Sand, Digital and Social Media Coordinator

Anna came to the valley five years ago by way of Vermont, and she's found it hard to leave ever since! She brings experience in photography, videography, and digital outreach via her roles as the Field Correspondent for the Northwest Outward Bound School and the Program Manager for the Winthrop Rink. She is excited to create fresh content to engage a wide demographic of Methow Valley-lovers and MVCC supporters. Check out MVCC on Facebook and Instagram, if you haven't already!



# Thank you, Drew!

Drew Katz has been an invaluable part of our organization over the last few years, helping us to grow our membership and engage with our community. As he moves on from MVCC, we wish him the best in his next ventures!



Photo courtesy of Methow Rafting

## MVCC BUSINESS SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT

### METHOW RAFTING

*"By working on the river, I learn how much the river gives to us: drinking water to survive, cool temperatures to relieve our bodies when it is too hot elsewhere, the camaraderie and joy of crashing through whitewater, a revitalization of spirit when a busy world beckons us, and a gentle reminder that the little things are what matter most (e.g., an afternoon family river trip). And that is just what the river gives to humans. It is my wonderful job to pass these gifts from the river to others. I see just how much the river gives and we must show our thanks and give back, not take the free handout, otherwise the river will no longer be able to give. Giving is reciprocal otherwise it will not last."*

-Brandon Bertelson, co-owner of Methow Rafting

As an advocacy organization dedicated to protecting our rivers, it's crucial that MVCC builds strong relationships with people and businesses that rely on and are intimately connected to the Methow River. MVCC is thrilled to welcome Methow Rafting as one of our newest Business Sponsors! As owner-operators of Methow Rafting, Dylan Marks and Brandon Bertelsen are on the river as much as anyone else out there.

Methow Rafting was instrumental in helping MVCC pull off a first-of-its-kind trip down the Similkameen this summer. Not only did they take the time to advance scout the river, but their curiosity and passion for the river was contagious to the rest of the group.

MVCC is looking forward to collaborating with Methow Rafting again in 2023 and beyond. Check out Methow Rafting's website [www.methowrafting.com](http://www.methowrafting.com) and follow them on Instagram @methowrafting.

# 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)

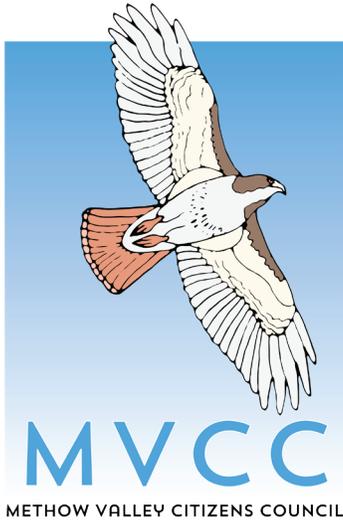
## GOLD



## SILVER



To learn about our upcoming events, visit [www.mvcitizens.org/events/](http://www.mvcitizens.org/events/)



*Raising a strong  
community voice  
since 1976.*

PO BOX 774  
TWISP, WA 98856



*Will there be enough water in the Methow  
River one generation from now?  
How about five?*

You can support MVCC's work to protect the Methow watershed and the life it supports far into the future by adding us to your estate or will. Talk to Nancy McKinney Milsteadt ([nancy@mvcitizens.org](mailto:nancy@mvcitizens.org)) today about how a simple bequest can ensure the Methow River thrives for generations to come.

*Photo: Anna Sand*