

Methow Valley Citizens Council

December 2019

Dear friends,

The last five years have presented an extraordinary test for our valley. Enduring intense fires, months of smoke, flash floods and droughts, we've had a difficult few years. But out of the ashes has emerged something beautiful: a chance for people in this valley to come together around a common vision, a common cause. We are more than victims: we are resilient and we can impact the course of our own future. At the same time, the Methow, like the rest of our planet, is facing some of the most serious challenges we have ever known.

The Methow Valley Citizens Council is more motivated than ever to take on these challenges. This past year we've mobilized our community to tackle some big issues: large-scale development, an open-pit copper mine, and protection of our precious water supply. In this year's edition of our Valley Voice newsletter, you'll read about the many ways the Methow Valley Citizens Council is working to protect our land, air, water, and wildlife.

In 2020, we're gearing up to take on the biggest test yet: climate change. With the reprieve from fires we were blessed with this year, we are taking the opportunity to be proactive and plan for the changes ahead. But this effort is bigger than any one organization or entity can accomplish on its own.

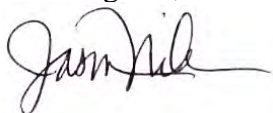
So in 2019, we convened a watershed-wide Climate Action Task Force, with members from Mazama to Pateros. Composed of business, non-profit, government, and community leaders – this group of twenty-five represents a broad cross section of our community. The Task Force is guided by important basic principles of cooperation, inclusivity, and equity. Using these principles, we've asked the Task Force to guide the process, dig deeply into the impacts and solutions, and ensure robust public engagement and input. **We are coming together around some serious common ground: our shared future.** This is just the

beginning. And we want you to be part of it! We're excited to take bold action in the coming year and we ask for your support.

If you haven't had a chance to contribute, please consider doubling up on your support this year at the level that feels right for you. **Whether you are "living lightly" and give at the \$10 level or become a major donor at the \$1000 level, your contribution is extremely important to our success.** More than 80% of our budget comes from individuals like you. You can use the reply envelope enclosed or you can give online by visiting our website and clicking on the donate button.

Please join us in creating a path for meaningful climate action in the Methow. Thank you for being a part of this incredible community of people who care.

Kind Regards,



Jasmine Minbashian
Executive Director



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WINTER 2020



VALLEY VOICE

Newsletter of the
Methow Valley
Citizens Council

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Raising a strong community voice for protection of the Methow Valley's natural environment and rural character since 1976

Land

MVCC engages our members, volunteers, and the community at large in land use planning - from Okanogan County's regulatory framework to state and federal policies affecting our public lands.

Air

The Methow frequently tops the charts of worst air quality in the state throughout the year. To tackle these issues, Methow Valley Citizens Council facilitates the volunteer-led Clean Air Methow.

Water

MVCC is committed to protecting our waterways from pollution and over-development. We work to ensure there is enough clean, cold, clear water for all fish, animals and people throughout the year.

Climate

Over the next decade, changes in our climate will have a profound effect on our community. We are inspiring our youth and community leaders to develop a climate action plan for the Methow.

The Value of Visioning Together

by Lorah Super, Program Director

2019 has been the 'Year of The Vision.' From the Comprehensive Plan, begun in January, to TwispWorks' ten year "listening sessions," Methow Trails' Community Outreach Survey, the MVCC-convened Climate Action Task Force and the Methow Watershed Council's Water 2066 process in the fall - every non-profit, town and agency in the county is asking our community:

What do you want to see in this valley's future?



Mark Wolf-Armstrong

Small farms are part of our community's future vision.

The importance of asking and answering this question, even repeatedly, together, cannot be overstated. Our answers must be informed by local knowledge and current data about what kind of place we inhabit now and the trends that influence our future direction. These answers will form the baseline for critical decisions that impact every aspect of our lives, the lives of our children and those of our neighbors and local business owners.

It's an honor to be asked such a question. And it's a profound responsibility to respond to every call for community vision with an open mind and all of the experience and skill we can bring to bear on answering correctly. **Let's seize the opportunity and raise a strong community voice, together!**



After Methow Headwaters

by Hannah Dewey, Public Lands Organizer

Let me start off by saying THANK YOU to all of you who spoke up, came out and supported the Methow Headwaters effort over the years in a myriad of ways.

Because of you, 340,079 acres of U.S. Forest Service public land in the upper Methow Headwaters are now off-limits, forever, from the risk of industrial-scale mining. Wow and thank you! We could not have achieved permanent protection through legislative action without your strong and unified voice of support and tireless advocacy.

Where do we go from here?! Methow Valley Citizens Council has taken on an exciting new role in advocating for an updated Northwest Forest Plan that reflects 21st century public land values and strengthens the local and regional framework of the plan through the revision process. We're thrilled to be partnering with other regional conservation organizations - many of whom assisted the Headwaters campaign - to take on this important conservation issue. It plays a significant role in how our beloved national forests and public lands are managed locally and in the broader Northwest region.

For over 20 years, national forests and BLM lands in western Washington, western Oregon, and northwestern California have been governed by the Northwest Forest Plan, a groundbreaking agreement that has been hailed as one of the landmark conservation plans of the 20th century. The plan shifted management of national forests in the western Cascades away from a focus primarily on timber extraction and toward a scientifically-based ecosystem approach. Today, the Plan covers 24 million acres of public forests, including the western half of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. The Northwest Forest Plan is an excellent, science-based regional plan that has successfully helped safeguard the region's remaining mature and old-growth forests and watersheds. Changes to the plan could significantly change the way our forests are managed, and the way critical wildlife habitat is protected, for the next two decades.

We'll be in touch soon with more ways you can support this effort – we know you have a lot to say regarding these lands you love, live and recreate in. Thank you for trusting us to advocate for public land management policies and practices that are rooted in modern science and representative of community values.



340,079 acres of U.S. Forest Service public land in the upper Methow Headwaters are now off-limits, forever, from the risk of industrial-scale mining.

Climate in Crisis: Our greatest opportunity for a better world

by Raechel Youngberg, Climate Program Coordinator

The climate crisis is the biggest threat humanity has ever faced - and our greatest opportunity to build a better world. Here at the Methow Valley Citizens Council we are viewing the climate crisis as an opportunity to improve our relationship with our environment and to strengthen our community response. Over the past year a group of concerned local leaders - comprising the health, economic, infrastructure, natural systems, and agriculture sectors of our valley - have joined together to form a Climate Action Task Force.

This fall, over 250 community members from Mazama to Pateros gathered at the Methow Valley Community Center to identify climate impacts and vulnerabilities and rank which they are most concerned about. The Task Force is compiling and digesting all findings from the November meeting and identifying priorities to highlight in a climate action plan.

This winter the Task Force is assisting in a watershed wide study of local carbon emissions being prepared by an experienced, independent contractor. In the spring, the community will gather again to review and weigh in on the findings of the emissions study. With further community input, this effort will culminate in a Methow Climate Action Plan that will serve as a blueprint for our future and will help our community build a better future together.

Washington State Legislative Support Services



Junior MVCC board member Lena Nelson discusses climate policy with State Senator Brad Hawkins

Predicted Impacts of Climate Change in the Methow Valley by the 2080's...

- Decreasing snowpack and changes in water availability and timing
- Increased wildfire risk and severity
- Heavy early spring rainfall and late summer drought

What can we do to prepare the Methow Valley for the changes ahead?

Room to Breathe: Clean Air Methow seeks a cleaner airshed

by Liz Walker, PhD, Air Program Director



In late 2019, the Methow received a significant boost to efforts to improve air quality. Methow Valley Citizens Council, the sponsor of Clean Air Methow (formally the Methow Valley Clean Air Project), has received support from the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Ecology to address air quality issues in the valley. Clean Air Methow seeks to create solutions for a clean airshed and “breathing room” for everybody.

Started in the winter of 2015 to address poor air quality during the home-heating season when wood smoke and weather inversions trap bad air close to the valley floor, the program’s scope has expanded in response to further concerns about smoke from wildfires, prescribed burning, and residential and agricultural burning. During the winter, parts of the Methow Valley experience some of the worst air pollution in the northwest. Small particulate matter in air from smoke being the pollutant of greatest prevalence and concern.

Year-round exposures to small particulates from sources such as wood smoke, outdoor burning, and wildfire combined with strong evidence of health effects add urgency to the need to address air quality in the Methow. With new funding, Clean Air Methow will be able to directly improve air quality through a wood stove replacement program funded by Department of Ecology. Support from the EPA will help us continue to monitor and build awareness around air quality impacts through a network of clean air monitors, known as the “Clean Air Ambassador” program.

2019: Here's what your membership was able to accomplish

- Led the Methow Headwaters Campaign, a successful coalition effort that **gained permanent legislative protection from mining for over 340,000 acres** in the upper Methow watershed.
- **Defeated harmful legislation in the state legislature which would expand unauthorized motorized recreation. Supported groundbreaking state climate legislation** to reduce carbon emissions and transition to electric alternatives.
- **Worked with state and federal agencies to consider community values and employ the best available science in public projects and plans.** These include the Forest Service's Mission and Twisp River Restoration projects and the DNR's Virginia Ridge Timber Sale, and land bank exchange.
- **Advocated for the protection of critical wildlife habitat and endangered species recovery**, facilitating thoughtful conversations around challenging issues such North Cascades grizzly bear recovery.
- **Advised the community to generate over 150 comments on a draft county comprehensive plan** and voiced strong support for addressing issues around population growth and climate change, such as water shortages and increased risk of fire.
- **Monitored legal ads and other public notices to identify and engage in emerging issues**, such as water rights transfers, proposed gravel pits and large subdivisions.
- Facilitated the Enloe Working Group and **continued advocacy for the removal of Enloe Dam.**
- In partnership with the Department of Ecology, **launched a \$120,000 stove buyback program for the Town of Twisp** to reduce the detrimental impacts of wood smoke and improve local air quality.
- Monitored the Valley's air quality and educated valley residents through our **Clean Air Ambassador Network.**
- Convened the **Methow Climate Action Task Force to evaluate climate vulnerability and local carbon emissions** and develop a set of climate action priorities for the Methow Valley.
- Supported a **youth-led climate initiative** for the valley, facilitating meetings between Liberty High School students and elected officials through one-on-one meetings and a **youth climate lobby trip** to Olympia.

Below: A strong turnout from the next generation at the Twisp 4th of July parade brought us joy.

