METHOW VALLEY CITIZENS COUNCIL

VALLEY VOICE

WINTER 2025

Winter's Coming. Can We Rest?

Banking Snow for September

METHOW VALLEY CITIZENS COUNCIL

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"A surprising cluster of novels and fairytales are set in the snow. Our knowledge of winter is a fragment of childhood, almost innate. All the careful preparations that animals make to endure the cold, foodless months; hibernation and migration, deciduous trees dropping leaves. This is no accident. The changes that take place in winter are a kind of alchemy, an enchantment performed by ordinary creatures to survive. Dormice laying on fat to hibernate, swallows navigating to South Africa, trees blazing out the final weeks of autumn."

—Katherine May

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WINTER'S COMING. CAN WE REST?

In the liminal space between autumn and winter lies an invitation to enter a time of rest and restoration. Photo: Dana Golden

BY MARY YGLESIA, INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

There is something in the air. I feel it. Do you? It is that liminal space between seasons. Autumn is that space for me, between those big showoff seasons summer and winter. The word liminal comes from the Latin "limen," meaning "threshold" and that is what it feels like to me. Like stepping over the threshold into a new space. From autumn to winter. Years ago, I was gifted with Katherine May's 2020 book *Wintering—The Power of Rest and Retreat in Difficult Times* and I return to it each year around this time because I find it grounding and a reminder of the critical work of rest and restoration.

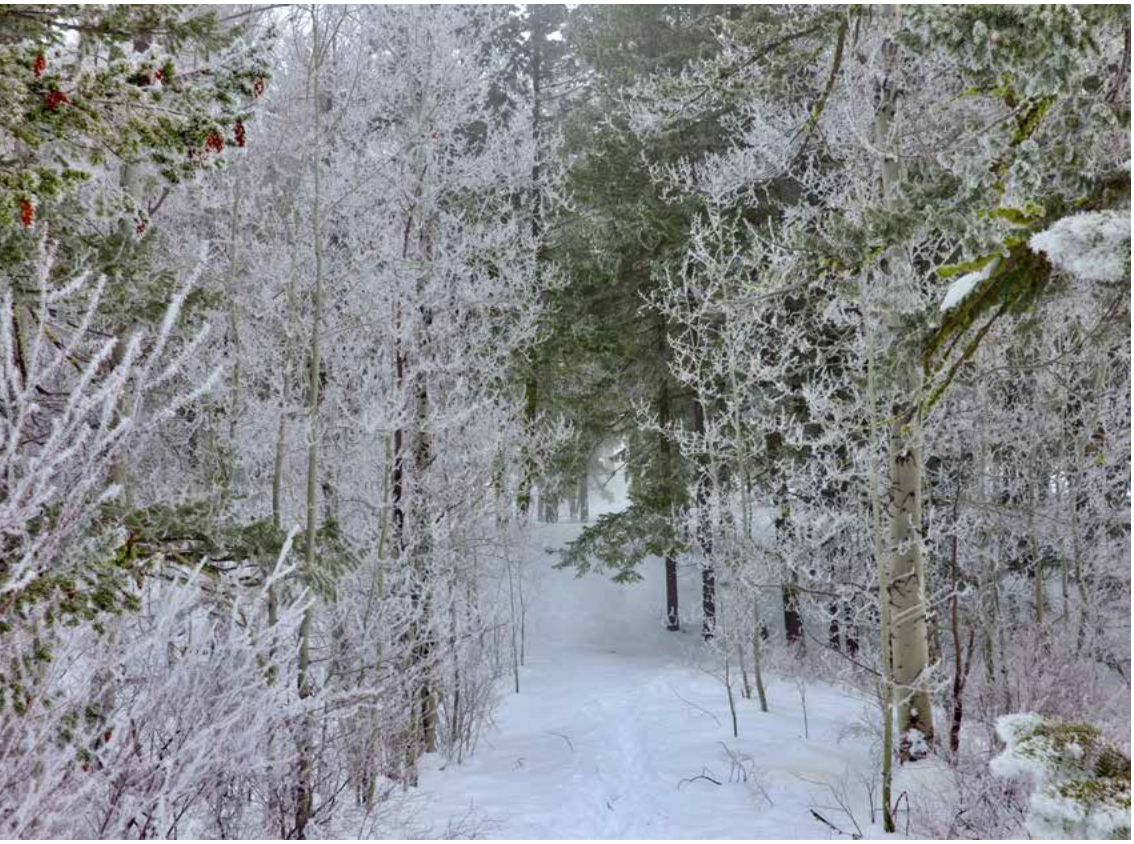
Like many of us, I inherited from my upbringing a very unhealthy relationship to rest and restoration, feeling that it must be earned through illness or extreme productivity. I am a compulsive list maker and get a ridiculous amount of pleasure checking off my accomplishments as if they are a badge of honor or dollars in my bank account of self-worth. I find that with each passing day I am breaking free of these notions and recognizing the essential need to build in rest as a way of recharging to be able to stay in the work of real life. This new awareness has come with age—I leave more space for introspection and see it as an opportunity to "do my work."

There is something in the air. The world is a different place now. No matter where you fall on the political spectrum, these are trying times. How do we protect our families, our communities, our country, and ourselves? Staying in a mindset of compassion, curiosity,

integrity and kindness takes effort every day, every moment of every day. Sometimes I find myself staring into space feeling overwhelmed and wonder how other people are doing it. Are they doing it? I suspect that we are all experiencing moments of overwhelm, that it is all too big, too much and perhaps the key to being able to keep showing up in a way that honors our needs and abilities is the practice of wintering. Katherine May describes wintering as "…a time for reflection and recuperation, for slow replenishment, for putting your house in order. Doing these deeply unfashionable things — slowing down, letting your spare time expand, getting enough sleep, resting — is a radical act now, but it's essential."

Wintering, used as a verb, builds on ancient traditions and metaphors to remind us of our innate connection to the whole of the world around us and beyond us. Take the trees. Through a wildly complex process that to me is nothing short of magical, the tree takes its cues from its environment to prepare for winter by preserving its food and shutting off the growth of leaves. Those leaves perform amazing acts of beauty and then fall to the ground, nourishing the soil as well as the insects and animals who live there. But, usually unnoticed by us humans, are the buds of new leaves that grew in the summer and will sleep through the winter before they awaken as brilliant new green growth in the spring. What if we take our cue from the trees? The metaphor of this process is easy to see in ourselves—the buds of next spring's work are already laid, nourished by the energy of the past long days of light, but which now, have to winter in preparation for their work ahead. To have the energy for the new growth cycle, I have to rest and be introspective now. I am not a machine with a never-ending amount of energy. I am a sentient being that needs and deserves care.

I am consciously trying to take good care, and I invite you to do the same. As we cross off our chores in preparation for winter, let's remember to pause and see ourselves in the rhythms of the natural world. Those rhythms are the same ones in our bodies, and if we allow them to be known, they will lead us to rest—deep, restorative rest. The kind that we need to carry on. As an organization we are in transition and while change can be unsettling, it can also be regenerative if we navigate the path by nurturing each other through kindness and respect. In this way, we can and will continue to show up to raise a strong community voice.



The trees rest when the snow and cold arrive before pushing their buds out in the spring. Could we follow their lead? Photo: Nick Littman

"It is all very well to survive the abundant months of the spring and summer, but in winter, we witness the full glory of nature's flourishing in lean times," writes Katherine May. As I write we are in the liminal space moving from autumn, but as you read this we are hopefully wintering under a blanket of snow — that gift from the sky that slows everything down, makes the air sound dull and covers up all the things we didn't get done. The work of winter is transformation. For now, feed yourself with connection, quiet, reflection and hot beverages. For now, rest. ♦

BANKING SNOW FOR SEPTEMBER

The Methow Valley watershed is highly dependent on a deep mountain snowpack to recharge aquifers and carry the rivers through long, hot summers. But, even with a good winter, the river can be at drought stage in September. Are there ways to slow and store our water to keep it from sweeping out of the valley all at once in the spring? Photo: Ed Stockard

The Vagaries of Water Storage in a Dynamic Watershed

BY NICK LITTMAN,
COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

The storms came early this fall. Great plumes of moisture barreled off the Pacific in the shortening days of October, lashing the coastlands with rain before burying the Cascades with snow. Feet piled up. By the middle of November, the amount of water held in the Hart's Pass snowpack was double that of median year. Following one of the driest springs and summers on record, this deluge was surely helping us out of our drought. The question was, come next September, would the rivers be running any higher? Would there be any possibility of slowing and storing the snow we were receiving now to use it when we needed it most? This is the central challenge of living in a semi-arid western mountain watershed: a large amount of water flows through our system, but it rarely flows at the times we need it the most.

A graph plotting the quantity of water held in the Methow Valley watershed's snowpack looks a bit like a nose — a rather sharp nose. It looks like a mountain too, but mountains can be fairly symmetrical, whereas noses (when viewed on someone lying prone) tend to slope up in a steady way and then precipitously drop back down toward the upper lip. This is the shape the flow of water takes through our eastside valleys.

A water year begins in October. Sometimes, the start is abrupt, other times it's tepid but by December the monster storms usually begin to roll through and the snow piles up. In recent years our droughts have been declared in February. If we have a paltry

snowpack to that point, a forecaster with NOAA or The Washington State Department of Ecology can say with some certainty given our nose-shaped snow water equivalent graph, that we're not going to accumulate enough snow or rain to extend our nose. Our climate doesn't have Pinocchio abilities.

Our stored snowpack usually reaches its peak sometime in April. As the snow begins melting from everywhere at once, the rivers swell. Our water sweeps out of the valley. Ninety-eight percent of our water flows out to the Columbia or evaporates off snow-laden tree branches into the sky. The remaining two percent, we use for everything—center-pivots, toilets, lawn sprinklers, orchards. And of course, we need our water most when our snow—our built-in storage capacity—is all gone.

There are many ways to slow down water. Dams are the most obvious. They are also the most invasive and harmful — and not something our community has ever seriously considered. There is the option to fill up Pearrygin or Patterson lakes a bit higher so their water might last later into the year. Aquifer recharge, the pumping of water during high flows into our underground aquifers so it can return later in the year, can delay some of the flow by three months. But that only gets you higher flows through August. In September, the rivers are still bony.

The question at the root of our storage predicament should be: What do we need more water for? Our towns, even with projected buildouts, currently have enough water. Irrigation is already subject to interruption when instream flows get too low. The answer? *The megadrought.* "Say you had a drought that lasted even five years, let alone a few decades," Greg Knott, local water expert and longtime Methow Watershed Council Member explained, "You could look at the hydrograph and see what's going to happen: the ditches wouldn't have water, the surface intakes would start dropping below the intake level and some of your municipal wells would start going dry…that's the megadrought. It already happened here once."

The last extended drought here was in the 1920s and 1930s. Wells and ditches went dry; farmers left the valley. As Knott sees it, this is the drought we're preparing for. Perhaps we're due for another one. Perhaps climate change will shift our hydrograph enough, with runoff coming earlier and our dry spell lasting for longer, that a drier future will become the new norm. How do we prepare for upland wells to run dry and all the interruptible water rights to cut off?

"If you look worldwide at effective drought mitigation

Our late season streamflow is dependent on the spring recharge of aquifers and the melting of glaciers and permanent snowfields in the mountains. One study predicted that the season after the last permanent snowfield melted in the Cascades, late season streamflow would be reduced by up to 25%. Silver Star Glacier (below) is the last remaining glacier in the Methow watershed. Photo: Dana Golden

plans, you don't manage drought, you mitigate it…you have to be looking 100 years out," Greg Knott says. This is why efforts like the Okanogan County Drought Preparedness Plan, being undertaken now by the Okanogan Conservation District, in partnership with many local and state agencies and partners (including the Methow Watershed Council), are so crucial. As Knott notes, "The worst time to plan for drought is when you're in one." There need to be clear priorities and agreements between the county, towns, agencies, landowners and farmers before a crisis hits.

Can we rely on more storage to get us through a megadrought? Knott maintains that in all studies conducted over the years of all the potential water storage solutions, none of them move the needle much, "If we did all this stuff, we'd keep [the river] running [at higher levels] for about another week." This doesn't mean we shouldn't try to improve our storage capacity, especially through natural solutions. Beavers historically played a significant role in slowing down our water and spreading it onto our floodplains. The work of the Methow-Okanogan Beaver Project and the floodplain reconnection and river restoration projects being conducted by the Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation and local tribes can not only create excellent habitat but also slow water down and allow it to infiltrate into our aquifer. Gouged deep by glaciers and then filled with sands and gravels, our aquifer is more than 1000 feet deep and half a mile wide near Mazama. This great hidden river has been found to contribute up to 57% of the streamflow back to the above ground river during low-flow periods like September.

August through October and the mid-winter months are when our river flows at its lowest. Although the above ground river can entirely disappear at these times of year near Mazama (and Lost River) the deep aquifer beneath continues to hold water and helps maintain flows throughout the fall. Photo: Dana Golden

So how do we bank our snow for September? The truth is, we really can't. Our nose-shaped snow water equivalent graph will only become sharper and as Greg Knott reminded me, "we're not going to put a high arch dam in Lost River." What we can do is learn to use less water during the driest times of year, implement more natural storage solutions and hopefully, through a system of agreements and priorities, have a framework that prepares us for the megadrought (and the frequent "average" droughts beforehand). Of course, we can always hope for more snow. It never hurts to have a good solid winter. ♦

As Winter approaches, many creatures on the landscape are changing their behavior and physiology, including the black bear who left these tracks. Contrary to popular perception, American black bears enter torpor, a less intense version of hibernation where they can still wake when threatened or if an opportunity to feed arises. Photo: Madelyn Hamilton

Slowing Down – a Multi-Species Wintering Practice

BY MADELYN HAMILTON, WILDLIFE AND PUBLIC LANDS PROGRAM MANAGER

November. We wake to bunch grasses bowed down by thick frost. There's a new kind of quiet on the air—the migrators have left. As daylight hours contract, the hibernators are moving towards their winter homes. Temperatures have dropped, the last of the wild berries have shriveled and fallen, and somewhere in the upper foothills a black bear has just settled into a small cavity beneath a few downed trees. The snow is falling quietly as she begins to sleep in the sheltered enclosure of what will be her home for the next five months. In the weeks ahead as ponds begin to freeze over, painted turtles, their cold-blooded metabolism rapidly slowing, will move to the depths where their body temperatures will lower dramatically. When ponds freeze over, they will reside underwater through the winter without surfacing for air. As snow approaches, rhumbas of Western diamondback rattlesnakes are already tucked in to their communal wintering dens — also called *hibernaculum* — some of which have been used for generations. Across the Northern Hemisphere many species who remain here in the cold and deep snow are slowing down for Winter.

During this time of year, I find myself hurriedly processing food and wrapping up outdoor projects, attempting to gather all that I'll need for Winter (not

unlike a small pika harvesting and stashing sedges and wildflowers!), finishing my work with visions of quieter times, shorter days and slower season rest on the horizon. Outside my Methow bubble, however, our world temperature seems to be trending toward the exact opposite — heating up, *escalating*: new threats to public lands announced practically every day; foundational laws and norms undermined across the country; nervous systems collectively on high alert. As advocates for land and wildlife, clean air and climate justice, this onslaught can feel overwhelming and exhausting to navigate. While so much in our culture demands that we keep pushing beyond our limits and past our capacity, Winter may be offering us some wisdom. We reside in animal bodies, after all, bodies evolutionarily tuned to seasons that have coevolved with countless other species and landscapes to flow best with natural rhythms. Perhaps to be our best human selves capable of fighting for and protecting the land and species we love, it's important for us to recognize our need for rest and renewal?

So, here's some food for thought from our more-than-human neighbors on nature's many modes of slowing down during this time of year. May each of us find the right level of rest our bodies need to continue our important work caring for our home places and communities.

TYPES OF WINTER SLEEP

Torpor — A hypometabolic state (slowing metabolism) of decreased physiological activity involving slightly lowering body temperatures and slowing heart rates. Torpor is distinct from hibernation, which is considered prolonged, deep torpor. In torpor, animals can wake up to defend themselves if they sense a threat or feed if an opportunity arises. Methow species that experience torpor include black bears, striped skunks, American badgers, and certain birds at night like black-capped chickadees and golden-crowned kinglets. Between late December and February, female black and grizzly bears will wake up when giving birth to cubs (who are initially the size of teacups!). A mother bear will doze in and out of sleep as they nurse until spring. During this time she will not drink water, eat food or eliminate waste.

What activities might we allow ourselves to temporarily pause during these cold months in order to wake up more rejuvenated and ready when spring arrives?

Hibernation — Prolonged and deep torpor through winter. Triggered by decreasing day length, true hibernators slow down their heart rates and lower their body temperatures significantly (some to even match ambient temperatures!). Very few animals experience true hibernation, and they tend to be small. Methow species that hibernate include animals like chipmunks, deer mice, bumblebees and Townsend's big-eared bats. After eating as much nectar and pollen as possible to build up vital stores of fat, bumblebees hibernate in the soil all winter, as waking up midwinter uses more energy and jeopardizes their chances of survival. They tend to hibernate very near the surface, so be sure to "leave those leaves" in the fall to help increase quality hibernating pollinator habitat.

Though we might wish to go into full hibernation mode beneath a bed of garden leaves, waking up several months later fully refreshed and polished, perhaps it's best that we don't have to do so in order to survive — for one thing, we'd miss the beauty of snow and ice. Plus, winter seems to be an important time to reconnect with our hive of family and friends.

Brumation — A state of torpor for cold-blooded animals (aka *ectotherms*, whose body temperature is dictated by the temperature of the environment). Methow species that experience brumation include rattlesnakes, Northern leopard frogs, painted turtles and other amphibians. Painted turtles can reside underwater in Winter without surfacing for air because of a special process called cloacal respiration. This allows them to absorb oxygen through their cloaca (an organ used for both waste excretion and reproduction). What an unusual and resourceful evolutionary feat! Sometimes we have got to come up with unconventional solutions to navigate changing circumstances. ♦

A Western painted turtle hatchling. Painted turtles employ an incredibly unique strategy to survive Winter, a time when they can reside at the bottom of frozen ponds without surfacing for air for months on end. They can absorb oxygen in the water through their cloaca (an organ used for both waste excretion and reproduction, aka butt!). Photo: Scott Stluka

THE CALM ABOVE THE CHAOS

BY CHRISTINE ESTRADA, DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR

After chaotic days as a communications hub, the night skies at Goat Creek fire lookout can arrive as a calming respite. Photo: Christine Estrada

For five seasons, I've spent my summer staffing the Goat Peak fire lookout, perched 5,000 feet above Mazama and the Valley floor. From the outside, lookout life seems like it must be quiet, lonely, and filled with solitude. While the lookout certainly has those moments, the truth is it's rarely tranquil. Fire season demands constant vigilance, quick attention, and long hours. From this lofty 7,001 foot perch, Goat Peak lookout serves as a critical communication hub for tracking weather, spotting and monitoring smoke and fire, and relaying radio traffic for fire, trails, and even search and rescue crews.

The season at Goat Peak lookout is short and intense. From July through September the radio hums almost nonstop, and nocturnal thunderstorms can interrupt sleep as readily as an urgent radio call. Not a day passes without visitors — several thousand view-seekers make this hike each year. Between it all, true solitude becomes rare.

But then come those few calm evenings, when the wind isn't howling, and the radio fades to silence. With long summer days in a prominent location, full darkness doesn't often arrive at Goat lookout until well after midnight, but when it does, it's worth the wait. That's when the lookout exhales. I step out onto the catwalk, take a deep breath, and watch the first stars appear over the Methow Valley.

On a clear, new-moon night, the darkness up here feels alive. The Milky Way stretches from Gardner Mountain to the Pasayten, so vivid it seems close enough to touch. The northern lights have danced over the Pasayten so brightly, Goat Peak was

illuminated as if it were a full moon night. Sometimes a warm wind drifts up from the Valley, sometimes a cold one spills from the mountains, but always, under that endless sky, the lookout feels still, yet quietly astir. Bats swoop by, the long call of a coyote pierces the darkness, sometimes an elk bugle. Then silence.

That night sky is what keeps me grounded through fire season. No matter how chaotic or smoky the days get, things usually settle at the lookout overnight. And when they do, the stars above shine all the brighter, reminding me to pause, breathe, and remember that I'm part of something vast and enduring.

From the lookout, I can see faint halos of light on the horizon—Omak to the east, Wenatchee to the southwest, even the distant glow of Puget Sound—but over the Methow, it remains exceptionally dark. Wild. Rural. Beautiful.

Nestled between the Pasayten Wilderness, North Cascades National Park, and tall foothills, our valley has a natural shield from not-so-distant light pollution. Our geographic isolation and rural darkness are a gift, and one I hope we never take for granted.

Even after fire season, when I'm back home at my little homestead south of Twisp, looking up at the night sky reminds me that we're all part of something so much bigger. I often think of those evenings up at Goat Peak, after a busy day of radio communications and fire watching, and I look up at the stars and exhale.

As the nights grow longer, I invite everyone in the Valley to step outside, look up, and enjoy the Methow's dark skies. We have a gift here that few others still experience; most people in North America live beneath light-polluted skies where the stars are all but lost. As you ponder the enormity of the universe, consider also asking yourself how you can save the darkness for future generations. Our dark skies are a refuge in an ever-brighter world. Can we keep them that way? ♦

The Northern Lights can put on quite a show outside the lookout. Photos, this page: Christine Estrada

GROUND TRUTHING

Citizen Forest Monitoring in the Twisp Watershed

BY DWIGHT FILER, FOREST MONITORING VOLUNTEER

This September, on a sweltering day with tinder dry forest all around us, we stumbled across the unexpected. After a year of assessing plots in the lower Twisp River Watershed, our monitoring routine was well established: find the center of the plot using GPS, run tape measures out on directional transects, and collect data on trees, litter, vegetation and canopy cover within 1/10th acre plots. On this September afternoon, the center of the plot lay in a shallow ravine. My monitoring partner, Rebekah, was walking out of sight in shoulder-high thimbleberry when I heard her squeal. I hustled downslope to learn what the commotion was about, but soon heard a follow-up exclamation, "Water!" Sure enough, amid the shoulder high thimbleberry and snowberry rose an ice-cold spring bubbling out of the ground, running over the surface then disappearing into the earth. When frogs started to croak, we knew we had stumbled upon an oasis in a dry forest. In one of the driest years on record, very late in the season and far above the valley floor, our discovery was exhilarating.

Dwight Filer (center) shows Forest Service staff, Kerry Kemp and Adam McClelland, the spring he found at a monitoring plot on the Twisp Restoration Project. Photo: Nick Littman

What made it more satisfying was being able to share it with Forest Service personnel later and learn that they were not aware of a spring at this site.

Forest monitoring is far from glorious work. It's mostly hard and tedious. And yet the last year of leading a volunteer monitoring program on behalf of MVCC in partnership with the Forest Service has taught me that as much as we all may agree or disagree about how our forests should be stewarded, we all do care about taking care of our forests. And taking good care of our forests in the long term begins with collecting reliable data.

In the summer of 2024, I reached out to the Forest Service about how we could help with monitoring on the Twisp and Midnight Forest Restoration Projects on the Methow Valley Ranger District. Being short-staffed even before federal layoffs, the Forest Service welcomed our help. The Forest Service is required to do pre- and post-harvest monitoring within the boundaries of the 24,000-acre Twisp Restoration Project and 53,000-acre Midnight Restoration Project, both located in the Twisp River Watershed. The pre-harvest data gives the Forest Service a baseline of information to assess the post-harvest outcomes after logging—data both the Forest Service and MVCC are interested in. We've assembled a stellar group of volunteers, many of whom are former Forest Service employees, and trained them in the inventory protocol that the Washington State DNR and the Forest Service both use to survey fixed radius, random plots within the boundaries of a timber sale. The most important data we collect is about the trees: height, diameter at breast height, species and vigor are all recorded. Special attention is given to collecting data on trees larger than 25"(dbh) within ½ acre plots. All the surveys thus far have been pre-harvest on the Twisp Restoration Project (both projects have not started commercial harvest and Midnight is still at the end of the planning phase).

On the first day that snow squalls touched down in the valleys this fall, October 28th, our group of volunteers, a few MVCC staff and several Forest Service employees drove up into the forest to look at some of our monitoring sites and ask the local staff and District Ecologist some questions. What emerged from this day in the field were three great reminders: how the Forest Service employees are local community members just like us who care about the future of this forest; how challenging the climate has been within the local District and the Agency as a whole to have their life's work and competency questioned; and how much they appreciated our help and our willingness to show up in a spirit of collaboration.

Forest Restoration—the term has come to mean different things to different people and has become a source of tension among citizens in our community, and yet we almost all agree about what we want in our backyard: a vibrant forest that can support our wildlife, protect our clean, clear water, and provide a refuge for our community to visit and enjoy far into the future. Our monitoring efforts are a small but important effort to help forest managers in challenging times while collecting data that can ground truth the effectiveness of our forest restoration strategy in the long-term (the strategy is based on Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest's science-based Dry Forest Restoration Strategy.) Perhaps that spring bubbling from the ground is a sound metaphor for a successful collaboration: a crew of volunteers from the Methow Valley Citizen's Council was able to share a riparian area with the Forest Service that they were unaware of, and, on the same day in the field, our volunteers were able to hear the District's own methodologies in designing and implementing these projects and have our questions answered to prepare us for continuing this work. After a winter hiatus, we'll be back walking plots in the Spring and would welcome anyone new who wants to learn our process and help out! ♦

MVCC volunteers and staff and Forest Service staff walk to a unit on the Twisp Restoration Project. The monitoring being conducted provides an important baseline prior to forest restoration. Photo: Nick Littman

Cozying Up to that Clean Woodstove

Our Woodsmoke Reduction Program is helping improve our winter air quality, one stove at a time

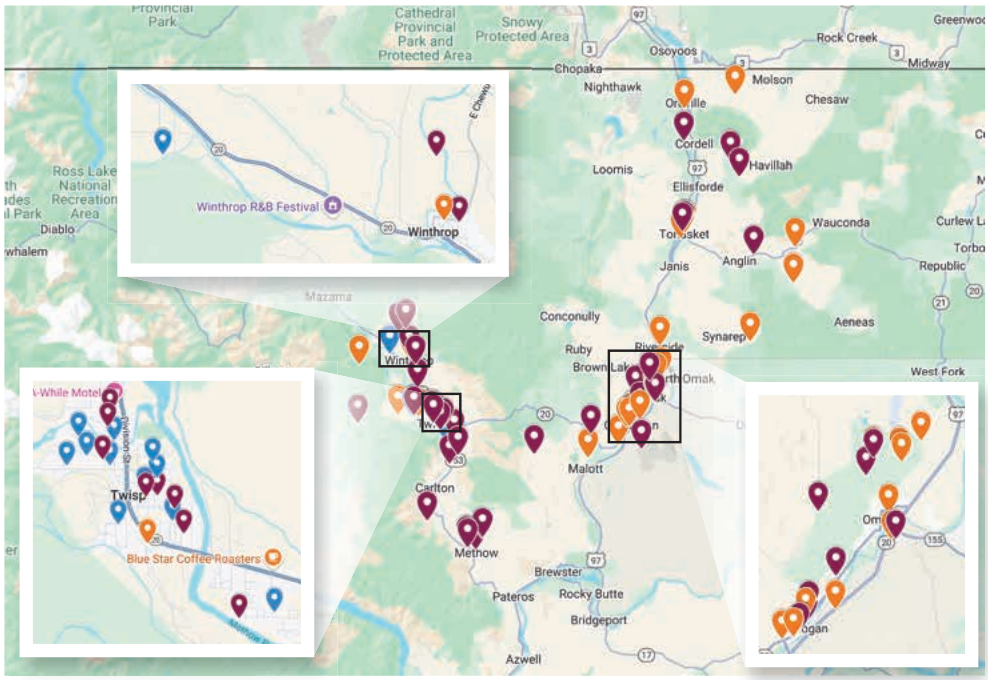
BY DANA GOLDEN, CLEAN AIR AND RESILIENT METHOW PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Photo: Mary Yglesia

Each winter, cold air settles into our valley while warmer air forms a layer above it — a weather pattern known as a temperature inversion. This "lid" of warm air prevents smoke and other pollutants from rising and dispersing, trapping them close to

Methow Valley Citizens Council

WOODSTOVE EXCHANGE PROGRAM



- 2019–2021 grant period exchanged stoves: 15
- 2021–2023 grant period exhanged stoves: 31
- 2023–2025 grant period exchanged stoves: 49

Just 20 old, non-EPA certified woodstoves can emit more than 1 ton of fine particle pollution (PM2.5) during the cold months

Total stoves exchanged: 95

This program has eliminated more than four tons of PM2.5

the ground. The result is a thick haze that lingers, worsening air quality for everyone.

To help reduce this pollution, MVCC's Woodsmoke Reduction Program, funded by the Washington State Department of Ecology, offers financial incentives for residents to replace old woodstoves with cleaner, EPA-certified woodstoves, pellet stoves, and energy-efficient heat pumps.

Since 2019, the program has replaced 95 old stoves, eliminating more than four tons of fine particle pollution (PM2.5). Just 20 old, non-EPA certified woodstoves can emit more than a ton of PM2.5 during the cold months, so these upgrades make a real difference in local air quality and public health.

Local installer Mike Stenberg of Cascade Mechanical explains, "Heat pumps use 30–40% less kilowatt hours to heat your home, and you also get air conditioning. It doesn't get more efficient and clean than electric heat."

For many participants, the benefits go beyond efficiency. Kate Posey, a cancer survivor, said the program helped her connect environmental quality to personal health. "It made me more aware of how much the air we breathe affects us. Having clean air is just so important," she said. "This spring was the first time we turned on the cooling part of the heat pump and it was kind of mind-blowing."

The Edwards family shared that their new stove has brought both comfort and savings. "We were so pleased with the opportunity to receive a brand-new wood stove," they said. "Valley Lumber did such a great job on the installation. We've enjoyed the warmth of our energy-efficient stove—and we're using less wood, too. We're so grateful for this program."

For Donna Weishampel, a full-time caregiver to a disabled veteran, the new systems have made a meaningful difference. "The installers came out on a snowy day in December and got everything done in one day," she said. "Now I have an alternative heat source, and the house stays warm even when I'm not available to stoke the fire. This is a wonderful program, and I highly recommend it."

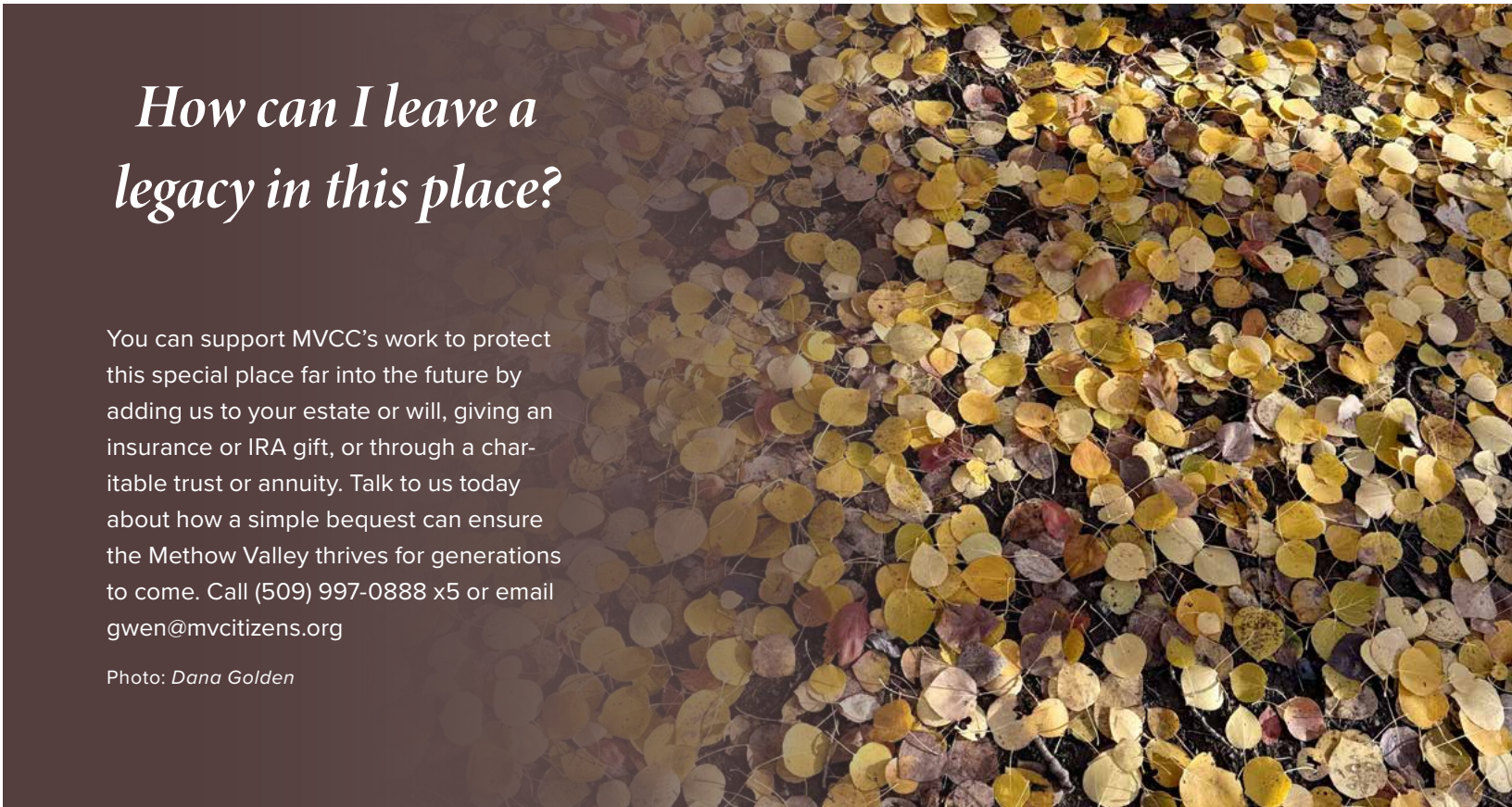
As our clean air strategic advisor Liz Walker puts it, "Smoke readiness means improving air quality where possible, and protecting our health when necessary." Programs like this help our community do both—keeping homes cozy and our air cleaner for everyone.

We're now accepting applications for the 2025–2027 program — if you'd like an application reach out to dana@mvcitizens.org. ♦

How can I leave a legacy in this place?

You can support MVCC's work to protect this special place far into the future by adding us to your estate or will, giving an insurance or IRA gift, or through a charitable trust or annuity. Talk to us today about how a simple bequest can ensure the Methow Valley thrives for generations to come. Call (509) 997-0888 x5 or email gwen@mvcitizens.org

Photo: *Dana Golden*



MVCC

METHOW VALLEY CITIZENS COUNCIL

Raising a strong community voice since 1976.

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Support our ongoing work to protect the natural environment and rural character of the Methow and Okanogan by donating to MVCC today:

Can we take our cue to rest from the dormant tree buds?

Usually unnoticed by us humans, are the buds of new leaves that grew in the summer and will sleep through the winter before they awaken as brilliant new green growth in the spring. The metaphor of this process is easy to see in ourselves—the buds of next spring's work are already laid, nourished by the energy of the past long days of light, but which now, have to winter in preparation for their work ahead. To have the energy for the new growth cycle, I have to rest and be introspective now. I am not a machine with a never-ending amount of energy. I am a sentient being that needs and deserves care. —Mary Yglesia, p. 3

Photo: Paige Devlin