

RECEIVED

JUN 17 2014

OKANOGAN COUNTY
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

June 15, 2014

Perry Huston, Director of Planning
Okanogan County Office of Planning and Development
123 5th Ave N., Suite 130
Okanogan, WA 98840

Re: Comments on County Comprehensive Plan, Interim Zoning, and Determination of Non-Significance.

I have several concerns about the County Comprehensive Plan. One of the biggest problems concerns inadequate water supply. The lower Methow Valley, south of Twisp, is the most over-allocated portion of the Methow River basin. Studies conducted by the Methow Watershed Council make it clear that if further subdivision occurs, many parcels would be without water. The comprehensive plan needs to identify how decisions about water allocation will be made. It is imperative that land use planning and water resource planning be coordinated and that the comprehensive plan identify how that coordination will occur. Landowners should not have to bear the burden of inadequate or no water because of poor county planning. The county should not willfully put the State in the position of closure "enforcer" through its unwillingness to responsibly address the situation before a crisis develops.

A component of the solution for water allocation in the lower Methow Valley is creation of a "More Completely Planned Area (CPA) for that area. The increase in subdivisions and associated roads in this sensitive area is adversely affecting the hill slopes and sensitive soils, in addition to overusing available water, discussed above. This is an important agricultural area, which should be identified in the CPA/comprehensive plan. As a minimum, a specific schedule for creation of a CPA in the Lower Methow should be included in the comprehensive plan.

Groundwater resources are critical throughout the county and the following items address the need for protection. Uses that aren't compatible with groundwater protection should not be included in the District Use chart. It currently allows incompatible uses such as acid manufacturing plants, asphalt plants, and explosive manufacturing/storage to be placed over critical aquifers and Wellhead Protection Zones in all the Rural 1 acre, 5 acre, and 20 acre zonings, together with on-site septic systems. These uses need to be removed from the chart. In addition, crucial recharge aquifers need to be identified in the Plan with plans for their protection. Protections for Wellhead Protection Zones for public water supplies need to be identified. The Critical Areas Ordinance also needs to be completed and adopted.

There are many elements of the Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance and supporting documents that need reconciliation and that need definitions provided before adoption of these plans. The Comprehensive Plan cannot be analyzed or implemented as written because of ambiguities, contradictions, and inaccuracies that require clarification.

The county originally welcomed and facilitated county-wide Neighborhood Groups to help shape the Plan. In addition, early drafts of the plan allowed citizens and towns to request amendments to the plan. Input from the Neighborhood Groups should be included in the comprehensive plan and a provision for plan amendments should be included. Involvement of individual citizens, advisory groups and communities is necessary for effective and supported planning.

Leahe Swayze
Twisp, WA