

Rocky Robbins

From: Kathleen Learned <klearned@seanet.com>
Sent: Saturday, January 12, 2019 10:57 AM
To: Rocky Robbins
Subject: Comp Plan Scoping Comments

Thank you for extending the comment period on the County Comprehensive Plan so people like me, away for the holidays, have an opportunity to carefully review and comment. I have some specific comments that relate to my most personal concerns, but I also wish to strongly support the MVCC's proposed Alternative 4 that more precisely and carefully responds to the Scoping document than I can. But please consider my below stated concerns. Please include Alternative 4.

As a property owner in the Methow Valley I am very concerned about how the Comprehensive Plan is finalized. I strongly object to the "status quo" alternative. Conditions in the County have changed significantly and the current plan doesn't adequately take them into account. Climate change with warmer weather, reduced snow pack, increased fire danger, coupled with more people wanting to share in the County's living spaces and amenities speak to a clear need for more up to date thinking for the comp plan.

These changes impact me greatly: In The Rising Eagle fire I lost 19 of my 20 acres to a rapid spreading wildfire. My home was spared only because the huge command center for the Carlton fire was located nearby. Secondly, my well draws only 4 gallons per minute and I am very concerned about the long term viability of my household water source as new homes adjoining or very close to my property, (4 since I purchased my property in 2001) also tap into the ground water.

Water, water – it is critically important to all aspects of County life and economics. It is critical that all aspects of water usage and health and the demands upon our water resources be competently studied, understood and planned for. With a low population we have perhaps "gotten away" with sloppy planning around water air and other resources. This cannot continue into the future. Building and zoning must rigorously be based on maintaining a healthy and adequate water supply. And let's not forget that the water is not just for humans. Plants, wildlife, fish depend on it also and those aspects of the natural environment are such an important part of what makes this county special to all its human inhabitants.

Greater oversight of building practices and permits, and off road vehicular is necessary for another aspect of land impacts that I care deeply about: healthy vegetative cover. As a devoted amateur botanist and volunteer for wild plants I am keenly aware of the increase in noxious and other unwelcome weeds in our County. Construction sites disturb the ground and leave empty spaces for weeds to gain a foothold in what may have previously been a healthy area. Grading and clearing also on steeper slopes can lead to damaging erosion.

Uncontrolled travel by RTV's and other vehicles through healthy vegetated areas trample, erode and bring in weeds. I have personally witness deep ruts and tire tracks in valley wild meadows and slopes that have no business being used by motorized vehicles. I appreciate that people enjoy getting "off road" precisely because these areas are beautiful and wild and attract. But so doing can lead to the slow but steady destruction of those traits inviting the "trespass upon nature" in the first place. Greater education about vehicular impact and standards of vehicular travel should be part of the plan.

In all areas of planning it is so important that the County consult, understand and consider the best scientific knowledge and practices and incorporate them into planning. Air, water, fire, emergency response cannot be adequate without knowledge. Marching blindly into the future should not be an option. I feel so strongly about this.

The County preferred alternative, as I understand it, seems not to "count" so called "part-timers" in projecting population growth and impact on both the hazards and benefits of the County. As a "part-timer" myself I am mystified by this. I recall reading that approximately 60% of the homes in the Methow Valley are owned by "part-timers". Even if that number isn't accurate, the point remains true that "we" have a big impact on both the economy and resources of the Valley and the County. This is both good and bad. We bring in money and pay taxes, but our presence also impacts the natural resources, sucks up the water and pollutes the air with our "quaint" and "homey" wood stove fires and fireplaces, and can strain the burden on emergency resources among other things. We should certainly be counted and acknowledged as impacting County planning.

I have reviewed the MVCC's proposed Alternative 4 and strongly urge the County to adopt it. There is no point in my repeating all the well thought out comments in that document. But I want to add my vigorous support of that Alternative.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments

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