

## Rocky Robbins

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**From:** royfarrell@aol.com  
**Sent:** Friday, January 18, 2019 3:05 PM  
**To:** Rocky Robbins  
**Cc:** Perry Huston  
**Subject:** Comprehensive Plan EIS Scoping Comments

Ms. Robbins and the Okanogan County Planning Department,

My wife and I have had a home in the Methow Valley since 1982. I am a physician who took over Dr. Bill Henry's practice in Twisp for a month in 1980, My first trip to the valley was in 1976, when I did the first winter ascent of Liberty Bell with two other climbers. We have a long and intimate history in the valley and value its unique beauty and diversity of people, plants and wildlife.

In the last 5 years, there has been an explosion of traffic and homes built in woods that used to be wild and pristine through out the Methow Valley, including Mazama, where we live. We are concerned about the unhealthy haze of smoke we all must live in every summer and concerned for fellow citizens who have lost or lived in fear of losing their homes to wildfire. Our water resources are not unlimited and have become increasing sources of contention, controversy and potential conflict. The fish in our rivers are disappearing. The visual beauty of our valley is being degraded with houses being built on ridge tops rather than fitting in with the landscape, and popping up in woods that used to be wild and fields that used to be farmed or pastureland. This relatively uncontrolled development allowed under the current plan also creates increasing challenges for firefighters to protect when our forests are burning all around us each summer. We need a Comprehensive Plan that addresses and mitigates all these issues.

We request that the county use the most up to date data and science to identify and protect areas critical to the values most of us hold dear and that brought us here in the first place. We need a plan that identifies changes needed in State Water Laws in order for them to be consistent with the water distribution priorities in the plan alternative chosen for our county. We need to balance affordable housing and occupational opportunities in agriculture, the tourist industry and education and government with the need to keep our rural character intact. Of the 3 alternatives identified in the plan, we prefer a 4th, offered by the Methow Valley Citizens Council in their comments, which highlights many of our concerns which need to be addressed in the EIS:

1. The EIS should analyze both the Comprehensive Plan and zoning updates. These 2 issues are flip sides of the same coin and depend on each other for meaningful implementation of either one.
2. We live on a dead end road (Lost River Road). There is only one way out. The impact on public safety and emergency services access of allowing further development on roads with only one way out as well as narrow one lane roads needs to be addressed. This is even more imperative considering the increased fire danger we all live with in recent years. That increased danger of wildfire is not going away any time soon.
3. The impacts of the comprehensive plan and zoning code alternatives on senior water rights, ground water levels, stream flows and lake levels must be addressed in the EIS. The Comprehensive Plan and zoning code must include the requirement that new lots, buildings and other new uses must be served by a water source that is both physically and legally available. The impacts on agriculture in the county and on stream flows essential to maintaining fish and wildlife populations must be fully analyzed. We must limit growth to the water resources available and actively prioritize agriculture and fish and wildlife for their share of this limited resource. Zoning codes must be implemented to reflect these concerns.
4. This summer, we twice witnessed the neighbor's dog chase deer across our property. (No dog showed up when a big black bear was overturning house rocks behind the house however.) The impact of increasing the density of housing on our non-endangered wildlife, such as our deer and black bear, must be addressed, as this natural resource is a high priority for most residents of the county.
5. Air quality in the upper Methow in the winter, with our frequent temperature inversions, is sometimes almost as bad as it is in the summer, with our days and weeks of wildfire smoke haze. The winter gloom is mostly due to wood fireplaces in the increasing density of homes in our region of the valley. Any increase in densities which allows wood stoves to continue to proliferate, will make a bad situation worse. Please analyze this impact in the EIS and take steps to mitigate this source of pollution in the Plan itself.
5. Visual and light pollution are also a concern to us and many valley residents. Building houses on ridge tops instead of nestling them into the geographic landscape is a significant source of visual pollution. Dark Skys are essential to be able to visualize the night sky. We have often enjoyed watching satellites, including the Space Station, pass overhead while

sitting on our open deck on a dark summer night. Please address these two threats to the beauty of our natural environment in the Comprehensive Plan and discuss these issues in the EIS.

The MVCC Alternative #4 addresses these issues much more effectively than the original 3 alternatives. Please include Alternative #4 in the EIS and address the concerns outlined above.

Finally, the tourist industry is critically important to our economy. We are seasonal residents and rent our home out as a legal nightly rental in the months we are not there, and have done so since the late 1980s. Occupants of seasonal homes, nightly rentals and other short term accommodations all impact our traffic, water use, light pollution, and air quality, especially if they use wood stoves. They are also a significant source of income for our businesses and support the local population. These people need to be included population projections and their additional impact on our priorities, our infrastructure and our capacity for new development need to be part of the analysis of the EIS and the Comprehensive Plan. Don't ignore them. We, as a county, need their contribution to the economy and they only going to increase in the future. Nothing can better illustrate this fact than driving through Winthrop on 4th of July weekend. It took me 30 minutes to get through town on my way home from the grocery store.

Thank you for reading incorporating our input, and for giving us the opportunity to share our priorities on this important planning effort for our County.

Roy and Leigh Farrell