

Rocky Robbins

From: Bonnie Ellis <bonefishellis@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, January 18, 2019 5:04 PM
To: Rocky Robbins
Subject: comp plan comments
Attachments: Ellis comp plan comments.docx

Please see the attached letter. Thank you!

Ms. Rocky Robbins, Planner
Mr. Perry Huston, Director of Planning
Okanogan County Office of Planning and Development
123 5th Avenue North, Suite 130
Okanogan, Washington 98840

Subject: Comments on the scope of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for revisions to the 2014 Okanogan County Comprehensive Plan and Zoning regulations.

January 18, 2018

Dear Ms. Robbins and Mr. Huston,

Thank you for the extension on accepting comments on scoping of the EIS for the County Comprehensive Plan. I just learned that the deadline is about 30 minutes from now, so I will try to be concise. I am in agreement with MVCC's comments and encourage you to include Alternative 4 as I believe it will significantly reduce environmental impacts in comparison to the other alternatives. I have only a few additional comments concerning air and water quality, and light pollution.

Water quality is an essential resource that should be of major concern as you move forward with the comprehensive plan. Please utilize maps showing depth to groundwater as you consider housing densities and other projects that disturb the natural landscape. We know that there is a substantial connection between the groundwater and the river system (i.e., the hyporheic zone), thus, disturbance (e.g., creation of impervious surfaces, removal of vegetation) and pollution on the floodplain can adversely affect water quality in the river.

Please also consider the impact of developments near both intermittent and perennial streams. I have only lived here a few years but I see little evidence of buffer strips between developments and river corridors. Nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) are abundant in rainfall and are easily sequestered by native vegetation. However, if that vegetation is removed or converted to grass, very little removal of nutrients occurs. Large buffer strips should be encouraged or mandated with any new developments. Many counties across the U.S. have instituted large buffer strips to protect streams, rivers, ponds, lakes from enhanced nutrient inputs. Perhaps more importantly, buffer strips of native vegetation do not require watering, once established, and do not require herbicides. Without buffer strips, nutrients which stimulate the growth of algae and herbicides easily find their way into our waterways.

Wildfires and wood burning not only increase particulates which we all breathe, but there is a large impact to water resources from biomass burning. Globally, nitrogen is increasing in the atmosphere due to biomass burning. I don't know if it has been measured in the Methow, but I have no doubt that the wildfires, slash burning and wood burning stoves have greatly increased nitrogen loading to the water bodies in the region. Just something to be aware of – the shift in the ratio of nitrogen to phosphorus can alter the biological community in water bodies and impact the food web.

Lastly, I encourage you to look closely at ways to promote better lighting (downward facing lights with shields) to save our night sky. Other areas of the country have been successful in creating programs to partially reimburse current as well as new landowners to convert their lighting to protect our night sky.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comments. Please excuse my rushed letter and all mistakes within.

Sincerely,

Dr. Bonnie Ellis
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