

DATE: September 3, 2019

TO: Okanogan County Regional Planning Commission  
Courtney Ingle, Okanogan Planning Director  
123 Fifth Avenue North  
Room # 130  
Okanogan, Washington 98840

FROM: William DiModica  
POB 832  
Twisp, Washington 98856

RE: **Comments for the 2019 Draft Comprehensive Plan and the DEIS**

Dear Okanogan County Regional Planning Commissioners and Planning Director, Courtney Ingle,

I have raised my two children in Okanogan County, and have resided in the Methow Valley for over 15 years.

Because I have enjoyed excellent health during my adult life, I have been an active hiker, climber, camper, biker, swimmer, skier and outdoor recreationist who appreciates the beauty in nature, and the ability to view the stars in a dark sky.

Recently, I have learned about the "dark skies" initiative that teaches towns and cities different ways to avoid unnecessary lighting that interferes with a darkened nighttime skyline. Okanogan County has a unique opportunity to become part of a worldwide effort to promote citizen awareness and participation in efforts to darken our skies.

Since I agree with MVCC's comments regarding dark skies, I am providing the following comments written by the Methow Valley Citizen's Council and submitted to the County Planning Commissioners for the county 2019 Comprehensive Plan.

### **Comment #1: Dark Skies**

Is it in the comp plan? No

Where should it be placed in comp plan? Natural Environment (Ch.12), under a new section that could also house the Air element

Could be included in the Methow MCPA, but there are other parts of the county and other reasons people may be interested in the Dark Skies overlay (e.g. neighbors of cannabis operations, areas where Star Parties are already providing economic benefits)

#### **New proposed language:**

**Rationale:** Okanogan County largely maintains a rural atmosphere, where lighting does not impair views of the dark night sky or glare into the homes of others. Increased development in towns and rural areas

has brought an increase in light pollution, and the problem will only worsen with increased development unless modern lighting standards are encouraged.

The Dark Skies initiative, which has been embraced by the Okanogan County Electric Cooperative, is a good way to increase awareness of and reduce light pollution. A group of interested citizens in the Methow valley is exploring the additional option of achieving International Dark Sky recognition at a scale yet to be determined.

A reduction in light pollution would result in the following benefits (to the Methow Review District or other areas that adopt the overlay):

- (1) Preserve a clear view of the stars for all residents, now and in the future;
- (2) Improve the health and quality of life for residents presently afflicted by bright lights at night;
- (3) Reduce the continuing harm caused to local wildlife by bright lights at night; and
- (4) Attract astro-tourists during the shoulder seasons.

**Goal:** Preserve and protect the night sky through environmentally responsible outdoor lighting.

**Policy:**

- Provide for an ordinance allowing overlays that require buildings and other developments to achieve Dark Sky compliance

**Implementation Measures:**

This policy will be implemented by Overlay in the Zone Code. Communities can "opt in" to the Overlay by a process to be determined.

In the event that the citizens of the Methow More Completely Planned Area (MVMCPA) choose to pursue International Dark Sky Association recognition for all or part of their District as a Dark Sky Reserve (which if successful could create the largest Dark Sky Reserve in the United States), adoption of the Overlay will facilitate such a desire in those areas that are controlled by the county, and facilitate discussions with appropriate state and federal agencies that manage tracts of land within the district to obtain their consent. For each town within the MVMCPA that chooses to pursue International Dark Sky Association recognition as a Dark Sky Community, provide a "Zone of Influence" surrounding the community within which the community's local lighting ordinance shall apply.

With Best Regards,



William DiModica