

DATE: September 2, 2019

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

FROM: Surya DiModica
16 Dancing Bear Road
Carlton, Washington 98814

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

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

I was raised in Okanogan County, have lived in the Methow Valley for twenty-two years, and have owned property and lived in Carlton for eighteen years. For many of these years, I operated a very successful grafting business, working for many large orchards in Oregon and throughout north central Washington. I owned a raft-guiding company for ten years, and was employed as an instructor and crew leader for Terraqua, a stream ecology company that completed scientific research studies in our local rivers. Currently, I am studying for my Registered Nurse degree while homesteading and raising my two-year old daughter.

As a mother and a nurse, I am very concerned about the air quality in Okanogan County, particularly with the annual threats of wildfires. With that in mind, I am submitting the well-researched comments about air quality prepared by the Methow Valley Citizens' Council.

I recommend that these comments become part of our County Comprehensive Plan 2019.

Comment # 1: Air Quality

Is it in the Comp Plan? No

Where should it be in the Comp Plan? New part of Chapter 12 Natural Environment

New proposed language:

Objectives/Rationale: The Okanogan and Methow valleys regularly experience impaired air quality caused by wood stoves and open burning. These impairments are felt most heavily by the elderly, children, pregnant women, individuals with cardiovascular impairments and those with compromised immune systems. Poor air quality is most apparent in the winter from uncertified wood stoves, and in the spring and fall from open burning.

While the Department of Ecology maintains regulatory jurisdiction over air resources in Okanogan County, County government has an important role in reducing particulate as well as informing the public of risks associated with wood smoke. It is important to reduce man-caused particulate because smoke from wildfires is expected to increase due to climate change and other factors.

Goal: Protect the population of Okanogan County by reducing particulate emissions from wood stoves and open burning.

Policy: Okanogan County will actively work with the Department of Ecology and NGOs to reduce exposure to man-caused particulates through incentives, fees, building code enforcement, burn bans, and information dissemination.

Recommended implementation Measures:

New Homes: Okanogan County will examine planning and building codes to seek incentives and disincentives to encourage new homes to heat with devices other than wood stoves, especially in the air sheds that experience poor winter air quality. For example, wood or pellet stoves could have an impact fee assessed, and that fee could then help with replacing uncertified wood stoves. Incentives to forgo wood stoves in new homes might include relief from certain building code requirements, and providing information on the air quality problems and safety (chimney fires, indoor air pollution) associated with wood stove emissions.

Existing homes: Work with the Depart of Ecology to encourage programs that assist low income residents of the air shed to convert from inefficient uncertified wood stoves or fireplaces to pellet stoves, propane, certified stoves, or other affordable heat sources that have fewer particulate emissions.

Open Burning: Open burning of yard and forest debris is a poor practice, especially during atmospheric inversions. The County should support alternative such as neighborhood chipping. Burn bans should be imposed not just for fire danger, but during inversions.

Best Regards,

Surya DiModica

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Surya DiModica". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "S".