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Cortney Ingle

From: Patty Spencer <spencer.patricia4555@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 16, 2019 5:07 PM
To: Cortney Ingle
Cc: andy.hover@county.okanogan.wa.us
Subject: Comprehensive Plan and DEIS Comments
Attachments: Okanogan County Comprehensive Plan Comments.pages

Please see my attached comments for your consideration for the Comprehensive Plan.

Okanogan County Planning Commission
123 5th Avenue North
Suite 130
Okanogan, WA 98840

Dear Okanogan County Planning Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the most recent draft of the Comprehensive Plan for Okanogan County. In my opinion, the current draft plan does not provide a coherent vision of the future of the County and lacks key regulation on issues that are important to me. I have lived in the Methow Valley full and part-time for over twenty five years, and my hope is that ultimately, we will have a comprehensive plan that protects the way of life that we have come to love. In order to do this, we must have a plan that best addresses the needs of our citizens, our businesses as well as the natural environment that sustains us all.

My particular concerns center around water resources, air quality, and wildfire. I live in Mazama, and these three issues, particularly wildfire and air quality, can have a tremendous impact of the quality of life here.

I believe it is critical that the Comprehensive Plan provide guidance on land use and development that acknowledges the future of our water supply, both in-stream and ground water. With the warming of our planet water issues are likely to become even more contentious over time. Harmonizing watershed and land use planning, ensuring legal and physical water availability, and protecting in-stream flows and senior water rights holders should be critically important goals of the Comprehensive Plan. Furthermore, it is critically important to me that we continue to protect in-stream and ground water from contamination or pollution now and in the future.

Wildfire is an issue that effects all of us in the valley as we have seen fire become the new “norm” in late summer heat. While personal responsibility is an essential part of fire prevention, county government has an important role in land use planning so that risk to homes, families and first responders is reduced. The Plan should update the Community Wildfire Protection Plan with meaningful actions to reduce risks to life, property, critical areas and natural resources.

With the combination of wildfires, open burning and increased use of wood burning stoves, air quality has become increasingly an issue living in Mazama. The inversion often traps poor quality air for extended periods of time, making it difficult for even those with healthy lungs to enjoy the outdoors. 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. I would like to propose measures that 1) 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 airsheds that experience poor winter air quality, 2) will support alternative to open burning such as neighborhood chipping, and 3) will impose burn bans not just for fire danger, but also to improve air quality during inversions.

Thank you for your work on this important Plan. I do sincerely hope that you will take into account my comments and concerns, as well as those of the many others that are offering their heartfelt thoughts during this time of public comment.

Sincerely,

Patty Spencer
457 Lost River Road
Mazama, WA 98833

