

Cortney Ingle

From: Nancy Kuta <bikeandbook111@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 16, 2019 9:45 PM
To: Cortney Ingle
Cc: Andy Hover
Subject: Okanogan Comprehensive Plan Comments

Dear Okanogan County Regional Planning Commissioners,

Thank you for reopening the comment period to the latest draft of the Okanogan County Comprehensive Plan. Given this document will guide the future development of the county, I urge you to carefully consider the current responses being submitted and those from citizens of the lower Methow Valley from 2008. Since this document is required by RCW 36.70.010, a person with professional knowledge of Land Use Planning should carefully rewrite it. Let's do it right to avoid lawsuits and incurring taxpayer litigation expenses.

The draft as written does not appear to conform to state law nor is it user friendly. It inadequately addresses or lacks sections dealing with water, air quality, wildfire, ridge top development and dark skies, broadband infrastructure, and recreation. These issues are important to the quality of life, economy, safety, and enjoyment of our county residents and visitors.

Water – The Comp Plan needs to follow and meet instream flows, which have been established when planning for growth. Currently, water is an issue for new development down valley from Twisp and growth in the town of Twisp has been hampered by a lack of water rights. Preventing water right holders from selling their rights to water banks is something that should be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan.

Air Quality – Given that the town of Twisp has the second worst air quality during the winter in the state, the Comp Plan should address new homes built with wood stoves. Incentives should be devised to encourage people to convert to other fuel sources and eliminate uncertified wood stoves from existing homes. Other energy sources such as solar should be encouraged as a means of preserving air quality and reusable energy sources.

Wildfire – Wildfire is a real threat we've experienced in numerous years and it is unlikely to get better. Some of my neighbors have been notified by their insurance company that they will no longer insure the homeowner due to the threat of wildfire in our county. The Comprehensive Plan should require new construction to utilize more fireproof materials on the exterior of buildings or limit the use of exterior flammable materials. Roads should be constructed to allow fire vehicles easy access and developments need more than one road for egress. Regulations like these increase the safety of residents and fire fighters alike.

Ridge Top Development and Dark Skies – The Methow Valley has been recognized as one of the 10 darkest areas in the lower US. While not all regions of the county would want to pursue Dark Sky status, those communities that do should have guidelines in place to limit light pollution. In addition, buildings and homes placed on ridge viewsheds should be limited to preserve the natural landscape.

Broadband Infrastructure – The County needs to develop a plan to provide for broadband access throughout the county. Broadband should be considered a necessary utility much as electricity is. Broadband access can open the door to additional economic development in more remote parts of the county. It can be a vital tool when wildfire or other natural disasters are threatening. Please address this in the plan.

Recreation – The Planning Enabling Act requires Recreation be considered in the Land Use section and the current draft gives scant attention to this topic. The County needs a recreational plan because many areas of the county actively promote tourism to provide employment and the natural beauty of the area attracts residents and tourists alike,. The plan could address human recreational uses, preserving wildlife corridors, historic sites, etc.

I live in the upper Methow Valley and have owned property here for over 2 decades. The Mazama area is fortunate to have sub-area planning to steer development in a direction the residents desire. Okanogan County is the largest county in Washington with diverse economies and differing needs. I believe other areas would benefit from sub-area planning to promote their livelihood and recreational interests. I recommend the county actively encourage the formation of sub-area planning units.

In closing, I'd like to thank the volunteers serving on the Planning Committee for their time and diligence to address the inadequacies of the Draft Comprehensive Plan. Again, I urge hiring a professional who can organize and rewrite the plan to conform to state law in addition to considering citizen input.

Warm regards,

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