

**Cortney Ingle**

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**From:** george schneider <georgeschneider2000@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 17, 2019 7:54 AM  
**To:** Cortney Ingle  
**Subject:** Comments for PC Hearing August 19

Dear Okanogan County Planning Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the most recent draft of the Comprehensive Plan for Okanogan County and the need to take a critical look at the future of the County. My understanding is that a comprehensive plan does not get into the details of zoning codes and regulations per se but that it should articulate a vision of the future of the County that would guide the development of such things. I don't feel the current draft plan provides a coherent vision and think a lot more should be done.

The Comprehensive Plan should provide guidance on land use and development that acknowledges the future of our water supply, both in stream and ground water, is very uncertain and water issues are likely to become every more contentious over time. The Plan should address the differences in water availability from place to place and ensure that land use policies and subsequent zoning practices do not exacerbate conflicts over water or run afoul of state law and or existing water rights. Specific policy recommendations:

- The County will participate in watershed planning efforts in WRIAs 48 and 49 as an initiating government and will consider revisions to the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations to incorporate data and recommendations from newly completed or amended watershed plans.
- The County will encourage and support efficient water use and transfer of saved water to towns and designated growth areas and to maintain and enhance fish and wildlife habitat and instream flows.
- The County will approve only developments that comply with the adopted instream flow rules for each watershed.
- The county supports water banks and exchanges to allow development in designated growth areas where water is not legally and physically available consistent with instream flow rules, water law and fish and wildlife habitat needs, and consistent with adopted land use plans and zoning ordinances.
- The county supports establishment of water banks or exchanges, administered by independent non-profit entities, that can buy or accept water in trust for reallocation for agricultural, residential, or municipal purposes within the County.
- The County will review existing data and studies and designate critical aquifer recharge areas throughout the county. The County will rely on the maps provided by the US Geological Service (Golder Associates, 2003) to designate critical aquifers for the Methow Valley. (These maps are in the Methow Aquifer Study by Northwest Land and Water contained in Chapter 5, appendices of the draft comprehensive plan)
- The County will work with County Health Department to determine if (a) any upgrades are necessary for OSS criteria for new developments over critical aquifer recharge areas, and (b) any changes in zoning are necessary to accommodate OSS.

Wildfire: Given the rural nature of the County and its susceptibility to fires, the Comprehensive Plan should guide development in a way that minimizes the risk to human life, property loss and the public expense of



defending against fires. The plan should also address issues related to roads and egress, which become critical in emergency situations.

I think the Comprehensive Plan should specifically address the need for More Completely Planned Areas that recognize the unique characteristics of sub areas of the county. The unique topography, hydrology, and vegetation of different areas suggest that a “one size fits all” approach to planning for the County does not respect these features and should allow local communities more say in the development of sub area plans.

Rather than rely heavily on zoning for guidance, we recommend policies in the Comprehensive Plan that apply to each Rural land use designation, its intent, the densities and types of uses allowed, and criteria for applying the designation to specific areas. It should provide clear policy guidance for development of the implementing regulations (e.g. zoning). Lands designated as Rural Lands include lands suitable for different kinds of uses, including residential development, limited commercial services, agriculture, and rural living. This alternative includes up to four Rural designations (e.g. Residential, Resource, Transitional, Remote) to recognize areas within the Rural environment with unique attributes, avoid conflicting uses and protect rural values. Policies:

- The existing mix of agricultural and resourced based activities, recreation, and tourism are recognized for the diversity they provide to the economic base. A mix of residential densities should be allowed to provide an adequate inventory of housing sites for those seeking a rural lifestyle and to provide worker housing in proximity to employment providers.
- Each designation will recognize the varied attributes of the rural landscape that determine the land’s ability to support residential density and other land use activities.
- Each designation will propose appropriate density as well as permitted and conditional uses to avoid incompatible and nonconforming use conflicts.
- The District Use Chart in the zoning code will be amended to harmonize compatible uses with permitting requirements.

Thank you for listening and for the work you are doing to gather input from the community and to develop the comprehensive plan. I don’t feel the current draft is adequate and think we should take the time to do it right.

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