

# VALLEY VOICE



The Newsletter of the Methow Valley Citizens' Council

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SPRING 2009

okanogan county

## County to require development agreements for large projects

**T**HE LONG-TERM IMPACTS of Okanogan County's new development agreement ordinance make it one of the most significant issues addressed by MVCC and other citizens in 2008.

Development Agreements (DAs) are intended to assure a developer that he/she will not invest a substantial amount of money in a development only to find that the rules have changed before the project is completed. Counties like these agreements because, in return for assurance to the developer, the county can require that the developer officially agree to conditions that may be in the interest of the town or county involved.

In MVCC's opinion, often too much discretion is left to town or county planners in approving these agreements, and there is too little opportunity for the public to influence the process effectively.

DAs are often labeled a "double-edged sword," since the result can either be negative or beneficial to the public interest. A DA is negotiated between a developer, often represented by an attorney, and local planning officials. A DA can remain in effect for any length of time, up to 30 years or more. The resulting development cannot be required to comply with any new local regulations passed during the term of the agreement, even if the term spans decades.

For several reasons, DA negotiations are

often perceived as an unequal playing field. First, although the local government may not require that the developer comply with new regulations passed during the term of the agreement, the developer may request, and be granted, changes to the DA at any time. Next, officials are often dependent upon the information provided by the developer during the application process. Finally, a well-paid land-use attorney with years of experience may be negotiating with an overworked and underpaid public servant who cannot compete in available time and expertise, even if well-informed and dedicated.

On the other hand, if the planner is adequately equipped with training, experience, and dedication to the public interest, conditions that would reduce negative impacts from the development can be negotiated, especially with appropriate public pressure during the process.

For almost one year, MVCC representatives and other citizens communicated with the planning department regarding the draft ordinance, wrote numerous comment letters, and testified at four planning commission meetings and two hearings before the county commissioners.

We originally advocated for a stronger zoning code as a better alternative to DAs, for periodic public review of any DA (in the event that the ordinance became law), and for assurance that the DA would be open to

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## COUNTY COMP PLAN UPDATE: FIRST IN FOUR DECADES

**O**KANOGAN COUNTY's comprehensive plan is in the process of being rewritten. Drafts of many parts of the plan are available on CD from the county planning office and on the planning department website.

Goals and policies developed after a year of meetings by residents of the Lower Valley, Middle Methow, and Mazama have been incorporated in early drafts. This citizen input joins recommendations by county planners and other staffers in a county-wide plan, maps, and a new zoning ordinance.

Still, the process of updating the comp plan—for the first time in 45 years—is ongoing, with significant revisions as county planners and the planning commission take input from people throughout the county. While the process is nearing the final stages, it is still too early to say what the new document will mean for the future of the Methow or the county as a whole, so citizen input is vital at this time.

MVCC has been involved in the process from the start, working with neighborhood groups, submitting written and oral testimony, and providing scoping comments to be addressed in an environmental impact statement that is part of the state's Environmental Policy Act.

Among MVCC's primary concerns:

- Current zoning in the Methow Review District must not be relaxed. Methow residents have worked hard to craft guidelines and corresponding zones that preserve the rural character of the Methow. As the county seeks to create a plan that will apply throughout the county, we risk having lot sizes reduced from the existing 5- and 20-acre minimums.
- No commercial development should be permitted outside the towns.
- Cluster definitions in planned developments must be crafted to ensure significant tracts of open space are preserved in perpetuity.

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## Copperstone development near Methow proposes 46 vacation homes in a gated community

**T**HE PROPOSED COPPERSTONE DEVELOPMENT, by Burma Shores, LLC, is located two miles south of Methow. Forty-six lots, ranging from one to 10 acres, are planned on approximately 266 acres, with a lodge, one employee housing unit, a picnic shelter (which can already be seen across the river from the highway), on-site irrigation, walking trails, and man-made ponds. The developer, Don Wallis of WSA, describes Copperstone as a gated community with high-end vacation homes.

The development relies upon transfer of an existing seasonal agricultural water right from a recently operational orchard to a year-round group-domestic right. Due to this transfer, and since a major portion of the development is classified as “Intensive Agricultural” by the Okanogan County comprehensive plan, the development has been a catalyst for discussion of the future of agricultural land here in the Methow.

According to the current Methow Basin Plan, the developer must show that the change from a seasonal agricultural water right to year-round domestic use will not adversely affect the instream flow of the Methow River. An initial plan to pump water uphill and release it to the river

during low flow did not meet with Department of Ecology approval, so a new plan involving water storage was submitted to Ecology and was recently approved.

The Ecology decision prevents Copperstone from applying for water rights as a municipality and adds a number of stringent conditions to be fulfilled by the developer. These include an inspection of the completed mitigation and domestic water systems when they are completed.

The newly proposed system will be expensive. An appeal by the developer would need to have been filed with the Pollution Control Hearings Board within 30 days of receipt of the January 9, 2009, letter from Ecology. Ecology is requiring completion of construction by December 31, 2013, and proof of appropriation and full water use by December 21, 2018.

Despite concerns (aside from water availability) raised by both citizens and members of the planning commission at the public hearing on the development, preliminary approval for the development was granted by commission members

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## Friends of Bear Creek fights for open space & local scale of golf course

**F**ROM THE FRONT LINES.... Friends of Bear Creek wins one for the deer and the duffers. Last November FOBC responded quickly to a county approval (*sans* environmental review) of a large-lot segregation on the Bear Creek Golf Course. We filed a Land Use Planning Act appeal against the county and the new owner of the golf course, McCormack Vineyard Partners LLC.

FOBC considered this segregation the first step toward a chopped-up, bulldozed, over-lit, snarly trafficked development of second homes surrounding what is now a wildlife-rich, quiet, affordable local golf course. An environmental assessment, in our view, was an absolute necessity.

In January, shortly before a scheduled court hearing, McCormack and company withdrew the subdivision. A parcel consolidation was the next step, returning the site to a single parcel. However, the county, anticipating there would be a new application for a subdivision, suggested in a letter to McCormack that the consolidation and new subdivision application could be processed concurrently... at some future date. FOBC attorney Dave Bricklin requested a more definitive action by county officials, who removed the LLS from the books and restored the golf course property to one whole parcel.

FOBC is cautiously optimistic about the results of this first skirmish, pleased not to have the expenses of a court hearing, but also aware that a new subdivision application may be forthcoming—and that county actions need to be watched closely.

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## Can MVCC keep up this pace of responding to development issues?

**T**HE SHORT ANSWER IS: No, we can't. The pressure of keeping on top of various development issues over the past couple of years has been overwhelming. MVCC is an all-volunteer organization, and some of the same people have been attempting to influence development positively here in the valley for 20 to 30 years. We need help. We have found it necessary to take a “triage” approach.

Why are these smaller development plans so much more difficult to deal with than the huge developments (such as the previously proposed Early Winters ski hill of 10,500 skiers at one time)? For one thing, smaller developments receive much less publicity and thus attract less public interest and contribution. But their cumulative effect can result in just as much, and often more, impact to our valley. In addition, hiring legal assistance for many small developments rather than one larger development can be expensive. Finally, the number of overlapping dates of written

responses and hearings required to preserve the right to challenge any of these development plans—and the challenges themselves—are overwhelming for volunteers who are usually working at the same time.

### WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT THE SITUATION?

**CITIZENS' GUIDE TO ACTION:** First, we published the *Citizens' Guide to Action* to assist residents in taking part in the planning process. We are hoping that Methow Valleyites will assist by keeping an eye on development and environmental issues in their own neighborhoods—starting with the weekly Legal Notices in the *Methow Valley News* and *Omak Chronicle*.

The *Citizens' Guides* are available at Cinnamon Twisp Bakery, Rocking Horse Bakery, outside the Twisp library, inside the Winthrop library, and at

the Mazama Store. The guide is also available under the 'Projects' tab on our web site.

### STAFF POSITION

Next, we hope to employ a staff person to track development and subdivision applications and the associated deadlines so that we can respond in a timely fashion and inform others—a formidable task. We have heard from concerned citizens that, although they do not have time to help out themselves, they would contribute to groups that can do the work for them.

We now have donated office space and are asking that anyone who is willing to contribute toward paid staff in any way, either individually or through your organization (grant writing, monthly or yearly pledge, one-time donation, partnership with your organization, or any other assistance) immediately

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## Strong county Shorelines ordinance may be weakened in current revision

**W**ASHINGTON has required Okanogan County to revise its Shorelines Master Program by June of this year. The Shorelines Master Program is the plan by which counties and other jurisdictions regulate development and environmental impacts along their rivers and lakes.

Two groups, the Shorelines Advisory Group (SAG) and the Technical Advisory Group (TAG), were formed over a year ago to accomplish this task.

In addition, the county has hired Highlands Associates to write the new Master Program. The two advisory groups give input to Highlands, who use existing maps and scientific criteria to determine which parts of county shorelines meet the various environmental designations of the new master program.

At present, Okanogan County has the most protective program in the state, as this is the only county that prohibits subdivision in the shoreline area. This has changed in the new program, resulting in loss of protection from subdivision in some areas of the Methow shorelines. The main revision in the latest state shorelines legislation is a requirement to preserve "net ecological function."

Some of the issues currently under discussion in the SAG include:

- the frequent use of the lengthy and sometimes cloudy conditional-use-permit process for approval of shorelines uses
- the conflict between the research company and the Department of Ecology over appropriate scientific methodology
- the need to address all goals of the Shoreline Act, including public access to shorelines
- the discrepancy between computerized models and on-the-ground observations

A draft of the new Shorelines Master Program is available on the county website. Public hearings on the changes will probably be scheduled for May.

The two advisory groups meet monthly in open public meetings, usually held on the fourth Wednesday of the month, at the PUD headquarters in Okanogan. ■

### METHOW WATERSHED COUNCIL NEWS

**T**HE METHOW WATERSHED COUNCIL is currently working to implement the Methow Basin Plan for water-use prioritization that was adopted by the county in 2004.

The new plan requires a change in state water law. It emphasizes water storage and greater access to groundwater supplies for municipalities, subdivisions, and planned developments. Moving water from the Early Winters reach to downstream municipalities is also under consideration.

A new facilitator, Lee Hatcher, joined the Watershed Council in October and is playing a major role in tracking the consultants recently hired by the Council (with funds from the Department of Ecology) to carry out a number of water-availability studies. These include measuring valley residential and irrigation water use and the effects of winter water withdrawals on endangered fish species.

The six members on the Council are appointed by the towns of Twisp and Winthrop, the Methow Valley Irrigation District, and Okanogan County. Meetings are in the old bank building in Twisp on the third Thursday of each month at 6 p.m. and are open to the public. More information is available at [www.methowwatershedcouncil.com](http://www.methowwatershedcouncil.com). ■

## Where do we stand with water ?

### INTERRUPTIBLE WATER RIGHTS

Until and unless the lengthy process of reviewing the Methow Valley Basin Plan results in a change in state law, group domestic wells in the Methow (other than in about 10 developments that came under an emergency rule years ago) are categorized as interruptible rights if they are in continuity with the Methow River. This requires drilling below bedrock and sealing the well to the bedrock to prevent contact with the river. Interruptible rights are shut down by the Department of Ecology during low instream flows.

This rule exists because, under current law, what remains of the 14 cubic feet per second (cfs) of surface water to be allocated in the Methow Basin is reserved for single-family domestic wells. Group-domestic wells are classified as "other uses" under the Basin Plan.

These "other uses" are junior to the instream flow of the Methow River and junior to single-family domestic wells and are considered interruptible. Therefore, unless these wells are drilled below bedrock and not in continuity with surface waters, they use interruptible rights.

Okanogan County has recently been granting approval to proposed developments with plans that rely upon group domestic wells, which seems contrary to common sense. Interruptible agricultural rights have been shut down during low flows in the Methow River during an estimated 90 percent of summers in recent history.

What water source will the owners of homes in these new developments be using when their water is shut down by Ecology during low instream flows? Will they be allowed to operate against the law, leaving agriculturists to bear the brunt of the water shortage?

Will our new comprehensive plan and zoning code allow our county to continue to ignore the current law and leave citizens to fend for themselves when water is in short supply, or will the documents make adequate provisions for the current situation? ■

### Bear Creek Golf Course

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Our website, [www.friendsofbearcreek.com](http://www.friendsofbearcreek.com) is live, thanks to generous donations from FOBC members. Our attorneys have been extremely responsive and helpful. We'd appreciate your continued support in the form of donations, and encourage new members so that we can continue to keep the Bear Creek watershed healthy, the golf course affordable for all, and our agricultural land thriving. ■

*by Sam Owen for Friends of Bear Creek*

The mission of the Methow Valley Citizens' Council is to preserve and protect the rural character of the Methow Valley



#### METHOW VALLEY CITIZENS' COUNCIL

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#### BOARD MEMBERS

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Isabelle Spohn

## Mining in Mazama?

**A**S THE DEMAND for Washington state's natural resources responds to a global marketplace, a treasure of copper ore and associated precious and industrial metals lies perilously close to the headwaters of the Methow River. Geologists have long suspected a major porphyry copper deposit near the town of Mazama, some 1,200 feet above the valley floor.

Situated between Goat Peak and Flag Mountain, a collection of mining claims focused on finding those deposits has been registered, packaged, drilled, sold, and resold by a series of small mining exploration companies for over 40 years. The Mazama claims, as they have come to be known, are located on U.S. Forest Service property but, in the convoluted logic of the federal government, because they concern ownership of subsurface rights, are administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

Pacific Copper Corp. is the current owner of the roughly 140 registered claims. Incorporated in Delaware and headquartered in Tucson, Pacific Copper describes itself as an exploration-stage mining company engaged in the acquisition and exploration of mining properties. Besides the Mazama claims, they have projects in Peru and Chile.

Pacific Copper purchased the Mazama claims, in their entirety, in 2006. The following year they conducted a series of test drills to verify previous exploration reports. The results of those tests have not been released to the public, although an earlier report estimated up to 4 billion pounds of high-grade copper ore and 5 million ounces of gold, along with substantial deposits of molybdenum, in the area.

Information on Pacific Copper's web page in late October 2008 stated that the claims are serviced by improved gravel roads and have access to Highway 20. Ominously, that same web page indicated the Mazama Project was "proposed to start mining at 10,000 TPD (metric tons/day) and gradually increase to the rate of 30,000 TPD." What is implied—but not described—is a full-scale, open-pit copper mine, the ramifications of which are not to be underestimated by anyone even casually concerned with the environmental and social well-being of the Methow Valley.

The Mazama claims comprise between 600 and 1,200 acres. Antiquated mining law allows an individual or company to add onto those claims as exploration deems feasible. The endgame for any mining company would be a massive open-pit mine from which vast amounts of ore would be blasted, loaded, crushed, and leached on-site. The resultant product would be shipped long-distance to an as yet unspecified mill on trucks traveling daily through the valley.

The leaching process, using a sulfuric acid solution to extract, concentrate, and purify the ore, would require enormous amounts of groundwater and result in a nearly endless stream of contaminated wastewater, which would be held in large holding ponds, where the imperfect attempts to purify the highly toxic wastes would occur.

Refined and smelted, copper is used extensively for electrical wire, piping, and other industrial products. Unlike gold, silver, and other precious metals, it is not extensively stored or stockpiled, although there are several storage facilities worldwide.

Copper is often thought of as one of the most reliable barometers of world industrial demand. It is most often mined "as needed." While the price soared from under a dollar a pound in 2002 to over \$4 per pound in mid-2008, the economic crisis sharply blunted the demand for copper along with most other industrial metals. Copper has recently ranged between \$1.60 and \$2 per pound.

At these levels, it is difficult to imagine Pacific Copper or any mining company ramping up the process of a mine near Mazama. Only time will tell how soon the price of copper will rebound to a point where it might be economically feasible to begin the long process of mining the claims.

Mining companies, especially large, well-capitalized ones, deal in long time frames. The claims could conceivably be sold to such an entity. The possibility—however remote or in the future—of an open-pit mine in this pristine and ecologically sensitive area remains. We invite those who protect the headwaters of the Methow River: become familiar with the Mazama claims. And remain vigilant. ■

## WILDLIFE HABITAT AND VEGETATION ADDRESSED IN CRITICAL AREAS ORDINANCE

**O**n December 1, 2008, the state deadline for a Critical Areas Ordinance to designate and protect critical habitat in our county went by with no document prepared by Okanogan County.

Unfortunately, the county has not been forthcoming about its legal obligation to create a CAO that meets the state's requirements under its Growth Management Act.

People may say, "Critical Areas What???" Yes, through all this planning process, people have been kept in the dark regarding the part of growth management that could really control growth. In 1990, the Growth Management Act required every county in the state to designate and protect critical areas. These areas include habitats that support federally endangered and state threatened species. The Okanogan is blessed with both these species and habitats but, at this time, Okanogan County provides them no protection.

Once a Critical Areas Ordinance is passed, no changes can be made for seven years. One fear is that the county is attempting to sneak in a CAO without regulatory force by tacking it onto a comprehensive plan.

The CAO draft the county may be trying to pass as part of the comp plan is a reworking of the 1994 ordinance, which, without appropriate maps, is a non-regulatory document. The county has not taken advantage of state funds for mapping.

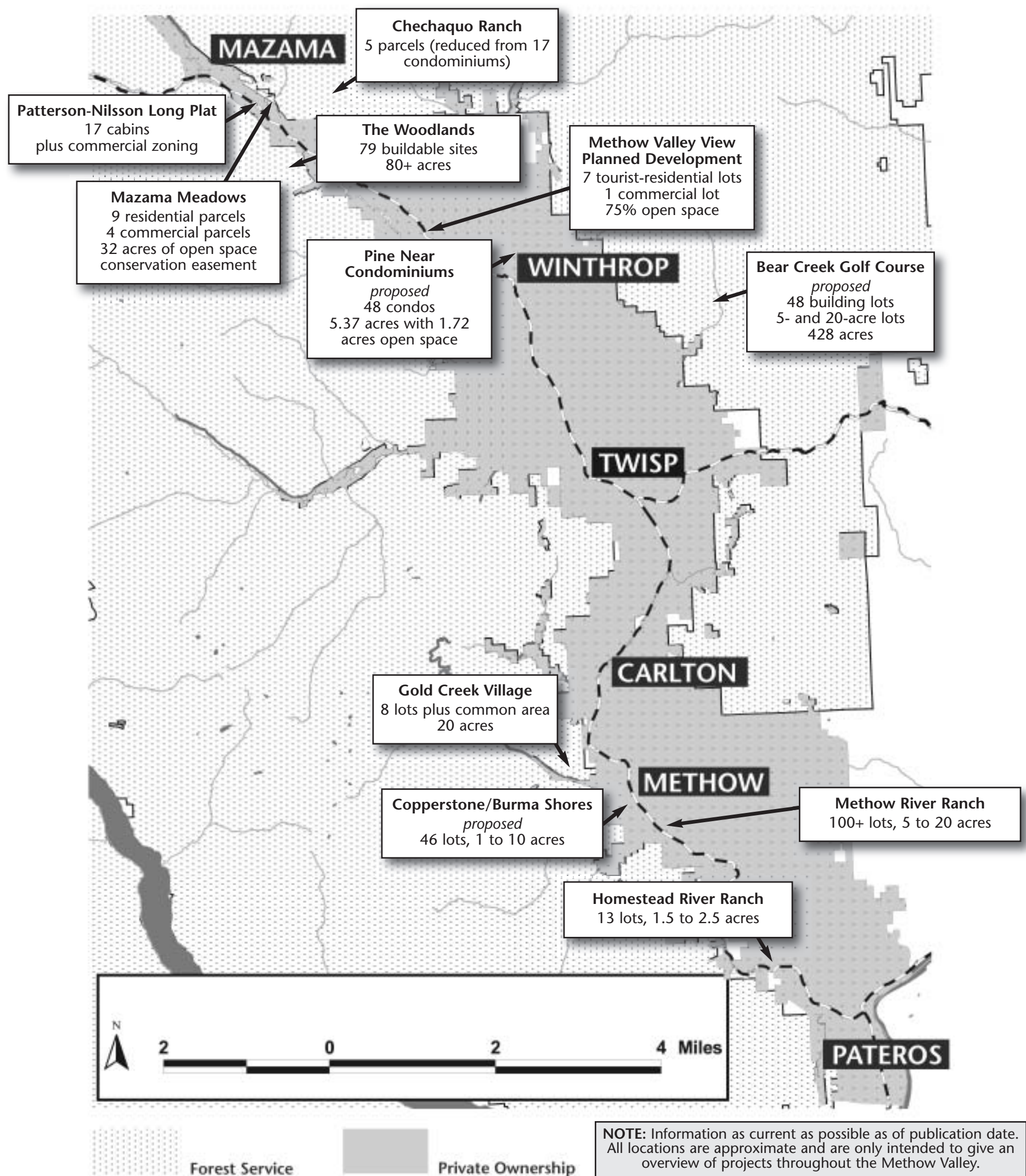
The county's 1994 CAO states that regulatory maps will be forthcoming "when practical" but, 15 years later, we are still waiting for the county to comply with state law.

The county can continue to disregard the law as long as no one notices. For those of you who could not attend the county's third Growth Summit this January, please note that there were no hard copies of the draft CAO. At the same time, there were abundant copies of the draft comprehensive plan, with the page for CAO left blank.

In order for the county to have credibility in the eyes of the state's Community, Trade and Economic Development department, which is funding the creation of the comprehensive plan, the county has to make a convincing show of citizen involvement. If CAO-specific comments are not made—and made soon—CTED may assume there is support for the draft CAO. To avoid this, the county needs lots of critical feedback on the draft CAO.

I would urge people to review the current draft and submit comments to the county stating that the CAO is inadequate. We need a regulatory CAO to ensure that protection of open space, wildlife, and critical habitats is not discretionary on the part of the county. ■

*Submitted by Nancy Soriano. She is the newest member of MVCC and also raises grass-fed beef.*



## MVCC, past and present

MVCC has been active preserving the rural character of the Methow for 35 years. Here's a look at where we were 30 years ago and where we are today.

### MVCC 30 YEARS AGO

#### Forest planning/downhill ski area

After recommendations of non-wilderness status for Sandy Butte and Forest Service decision to use old timber-harvest plan, MVCC objects in writing to Forest Service chief's allowing ski development on Sandy Butte without a revised regional plan.

#### Wilderness & county issues

MVCC members give hours of time, testimony, and effort to the development of the Methow Review District, a more protective zoning code for the Methow that outlaws strip development and requires a five-acre minimum lot size per dwelling unit on the valley floor. The Methow Review District zoning is adopted after numerous hearings, despite organized opposition.

MVCC works with the newly formed Okanogan Wilderness League (OWL), successfully lobbying Congress to create the Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness.

### MVCC TODAY

#### Gold Creek Village (see map)

This development, although only nine lots, threatened to set a negative precedent for approval of a development with interruptible group-domestic water rights. It also had incorrect shorelines and development setbacks. MVCC attended three planning commission hearings, submitted two sets

of written comment, and brought an oral and written SEPA appeal before county commissioners. MVCC's efforts resulted in revision of the shorelines setback and emphasized the importance of interruptible water rights.

#### Development agreement ordinance

MVCC discussed ordinance with county officials in beginning stages, submitted response documents, and brought two appeals. Succeeded in adding requirements that development agreements comply with county zoning and be subject to performance review and a 10-year term limit.

#### Copperstone (Burma Shores) (see map)

A major concern about Copperstone was the proposal to transfer seasonal agricultural rights to year-round domestic rights. MVCC submitted SEPA comments to planning department on environmental impacts, submitted comments to and testified before planning commission at hearing for preliminary approval, and submitted comment to Department of Ecology on most recent (and apparently final) plan.

#### County comprehensive plan (see article)

MVCC members worked with Lower Valley Advisory Group and Middle Methow neighborhood group to draft comp plan revision and submitted scoping comments to guide environmental review. The group attended planning commission hearings on the draft plan, providing

verbal comment and written input on issues including restrictions on ridgeline development, a dark-skies ordinance, preservation of farmland, and protection of wildlife habitat.

#### Short and long plats

MVCC and its members submitted comment documents on several new developments, including Hidden Harmony (Gold Creek), Lightning Place (near Methow), and Shamrock (near Methow).

#### Citizens' Guide (see article)

Wrote, published, and distributed *Citizens' Guide to Action: Development Issues in the Methow Valley and Okanogan County*.

#### Committee memberships

MVCC board and advisory members have served on the Methow Watershed Council, the Shorelines Advisory Group, the Methow Conservancy board, the Middle Methow neighborhood group, and the Lower Valley Advisory Group.

#### Coordination with other organizations

MVCC members assisted in the formation of Friends of Bear Creek. We are working with citizens in the Okanogan on the proposed Eagle Creek development and the Critical Areas Ordinance. We also work closely with People for Alternatives, Conservation, and Education; Okanogan Wilderness League; Conservation Northwest; and Okanogan County officials. ■

## books & ideas

### DEAR CITIZENS OF THE LAND...

Want to speak on behalf of "the land"?

Want to develop the courage in ourselves and our young to stand up to the oppressive forces of overshoot development?

The revolutionary book by restoration ecologist William R. Catton, Jr., *Overshoot: The Ecological Basis of Evolutionary Change*, helps us learn to



live within carrying capacity without trying to enlarge it. The Methow Valley Citizen's new book club invites all who love dwelling in the Methow Valley to read together. It will help every one of us to stand up to the oppressive forces of development led by over-exuberant real estate corporations and the tools of land planning, which too often express approval and encouragement for the strategies and tactics of overdevelopment.

**If you are interested, please contact:** James Donaldson at 509-997-0115 or by e-mail at donalbain@tuul.cc. ■

## Keeping up the pace

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contact Celeste Roberts (509-996-8288) or Isabelle Spohn (coldmtn@centurytel.net) so we can determine the extent of public support for this endeavor. Donations are tax-deductible and can also be sent to MVCC, Box 774, Twisp, WA 98856, earmarked "staff position."

Effective land-use planning depends on the long-term vision and far-sightedness of the community. As such, it can be neglected in the face of more immediate concerns. If you have moved into the valley recently, please reflect upon the effort that has been made by individuals and organizations over the past decades to preserve the valley you now see and enjoy. It is a hard-won prize, and we hope to keep it. ■

# Copperstone development

*continued from page 2*

with no discussion as to possible mitigations or additional conditions they could require to address these concerns.

One commission member suggested that this should be left to the county commissioners. Even after advice from planning director Perry Huston that any concerns held by planning commission members should be addressed at that time, all commission members declined to discuss any additional mitigations regarding fire safety, traffic safety, air quality, or other concerns.

MVCC has filed a letter with the county

commissioners objecting to the fact that at least one of the commission members (who quickly made the motion to approve the project) revealed personal connections with the property only in part; MVCC has requested that the member reveal the entire extent of his involvement with the project.

Preliminary approval for the development by the county commissioners occurred February 9, 2009. MVCC and several members of the Lower Valley Advisory Group, who have objected to the fact that this development does not meet with the density, water-quality, and other goals set by Lower Valley citizens during the comp plan

process, attended the meeting but were not allowed to speak because it was a closed-record meeting.

Also troubling is the fact that the February 9 hearing had originally been scheduled for an earlier date, before the minutes of the planning commission hearing (including public testimony) were available to the commissioners. After complaints by MVCC, the hearing was rescheduled so the minutes of the planning commission meeting would be available in writing for the commissioners to read. It is hoped that they did so, but their recent record regarding public input does not inspire confidence. ■

Dear Readers,

We are energized by renewed interest in protecting the rural character of the Methow Valley. Many of you have taken time from your busy schedules to comment on the many developments that have sprung up. Thank you! Your time and work are beginning to pay off in county planning efforts that actually use your ideas.

We welcome new board members Paula Mackrow, Celeste Roberts, and Carole Schroeder. The MVCC board continues to meet regularly, and we invite you to join us. At meetings we talk over the latest developments in water-resource planning, the Public Utility District, and proposed developments of major consequence such as planned developments and zoning variances. Our *Citizens' Guide* has become a popular medium for people to use to become more effective ([www.methow-valley-citizens-council.org](http://www.methow-valley-citizens-council.org)).

Perhaps the most powerful aspect of the Methow Valley Citizens' Council is



the encouragement of public dialogue about local issues of concern. There are many ways in which you can become part of this dialogue. You can attend meetings: MVCC board meetings, county commissioner meetings, PUD meetings, public scoping meetings, or public hearings; you can write letters to your elected representatives within the county, state, or federal government, the PUD commissioners, or the editor of local papers; you can renew your membership to MVCC by completing and returning the form below.

We have much to be thankful for. Next time you take a fresh breath of air, think and take a moment to recommit yourself to the preservation of the rural character of the Methow Valley. Together we do make a difference in keeping this valley the beautiful place we all cherish.

Join us at MVCC board meetings the second Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. above Confluence Gallery.

■ The Methow Valley Citizens' Council

## ARE YOU A CONCERNED CITIZEN?

Then MVCC is your organization! For over 35 years MVCC has worked to protect the rural character and biological integrity of the Methow watershed. With your support we will continue to do so. Let's bequeath to our children a valley every bit as vibrant and beautiful as the one we are privileged to live in now. Send in your MVCC membership today to P.O. Box 774, Twisp, WA 98856.

Limited Income: \$10       Regular Membership: \$35       Additional contributions welcome! \$\_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I'd like to become a member. I support MVCC's goals and actions in promoting and protecting the rural and environmental character of the Methow.

I'd like to contribute \$\_\_\_\_\_ per month/year (*circle one*) to help fund a staff person to track projects and keep us all informed.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY, STATE, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteers are welcome! I can help by doing one of the following:

Joining the board       Attending meetings       Writing letters       Fund raising       Networking and phone-tree help

MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE

## Comp plan

*continued from page 1*

- Agricultural and other resource lands must be designated throughout the county in order for them to be preserved.

Comments on the impacts of the proposed changes will be addressed in the EIS. The scoping process, in which county residents and agencies submit suggestions and parameters for the environmental review, has recently been completed. The first draft of the EIS is available now for

comment, but a more detailed draft is expected later this spring after the planning commission's recommendations have been incorporated into the plan.

In addition to revising the comp plan, which sets out overall designations throughout the county, the county is redoing its zoning code and zoning maps, with more specific guidelines and allowances for development of individual parcels.

The planning commission has just completed three hearings to take public comment on the draft documents and has begun deliberations on the options. The planning commission, county planners, and board of county commissioners will

also be accepting written input through the county commissioner's hearings, currently scheduled for some time in May or June.

The county hopes to adopt the new comp plan in June, so it is vital for the public to let planners know now how we want our valley and county to be in the future. Urge the planning commission to take more testimony on the next draft.

The public may request copies of the documents and maps in CD or paper form by calling 509-422-7160. Many of the documents are also available on the planning department's web site at [www.okanogan-county.org/planning](http://www.okanogan-county.org/planning). ■

## Development agreements

*continued from page 1*

public comment, specifically at a planning commission hearing. In the end, what was actually gained in this lengthy process was:

- A stipulation that any development agreement must comply with the underlying zoning code
- Performance review by the county every three years (rather than the requested public review)

- A term limit of 10 years for any DA. (This may have been a palliative measure, however, since the planning department may determine that it is in the public interest to extend the term limit. According to the first major development agreement since the ordinance was passed (Eagle Canyon, near Tonasket) the developer will be excused from any new zoning, impact fees, building/development regulations; State Environmental Policy Act regulations and substantive policy; and laws, statues, and ordinances governing land development and building permits for at least 20 years. The agreement may be changed on any part

of the development at the initiative of the developer during those 20 years.)

Although we are pleased that some improvements were made to the original draft ordinance, perhaps the most valuable lesson learned is that we have a long way to go if we are to have a user-friendly, equitable, and effective public process in our county. For example, before denying MVCC's appeal regarding the environmental impact of the DA ordinance under SEPA, the county commissioners admitted at the beginning of the hearing that they had read neither the MVCC appeal nor comments from 38 citizens on this issue. ■

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