

Methow Conservancy Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Methow Conservancy Welcomes New Executive Director

The Board of Directors of the Methow Conservancy officially announced on Thursday that it has hired a new Executive Director. Jason Paulsen, currently the City Administrator of Black Diamond, Washington, will take the helm on October 2, 2006.

Paulsen will replace outgoing Director Katharine Bill, who has served in the position since April 2002. "I'm ready to focus on specific projects," said Bill. "We have great momentum right now, and I'm confident that Jason will build on the common care for the Methow that galvanizes newcomers and old-timers at the Conservancy."

In his 11 years with Black Diamond, Paulsen has gained considerable experience in organizational management, working with a broad constituency, and negotiating significant conservation agreements. Specifically, he played a key role in a landmark 2005 Open Space Protection Agreement between the City of Black Diamond, the Cascade Land Conservancy, King County, and Plum Creek Timber, ensuring that over 2,500 acres of critical riparian areas, wildlife corridors, park lands and productive forest lands within and surrounding Black Diamond would remain forever protected from sprawl.

"The opportunity to build upon the decade of success that the Methow Conservancy has had in working with the community to protect critical habitat in the Methow is extremely exciting for me," said Paulsen. "After fourteen years of working on a wide range of issues at the municipal level, I have come to recognize my personal passion for working in a creative and cooperative fashion to preserve the landscapes that help to define a community. I am truly humbled to have been invited to join with the dedicated staff and Board in the continued implementation of the vision that guides the Methow Conservancy."

Paulsen is a graduate of the Evergreen State College and an avid outdoorsman whose love of the outdoors is rooted in life-long experiences in the mountains of Washington and Colorado, as well as time spent as a child helping his grandparents on their small Whatcom County farm. He and his wife, Valerie Potts, a counselor who specializes in work with children and their families, have been visiting the Methow Valley regularly since 2001 and are landowners. They have long-held a hope of living and working in the Methow.

“I feel fortunate to have visited and explored a number of beautiful places in my life, and none of them has called to me like the landscape and community spirit of the Methow,” said Paulsen. “The connection I feel to the Methow today is probably rooted in a combination of childhood memories of family trips over the North Cascades, my grandfather’s fishing tales, and the knowledge that my great grandfather once prospected here. Sometimes you just know when you are in the right place, and the Methow is that place for me.”

As the Executive Director, Paulsen will assume responsibility for the overall management of the Methow Conservancy and will work closely with the Board of Directors to guide and implement a long-term strategic plan and vision for the organization.

Board President Dave Sabold noted, "Jason brings a keen mind and a gentle presence to the Conservancy's work. He will identify the common interests of farmers, business people, conservationists, developers, and recreationists for us here in the Methow as he did so successfully when he protected all that open space near Black Diamond. Jason has a love for the valley that is palpable, and we welcome him with enthusiasm."

During the leadership transition, Katharine Bill, the current Executive Director, will remain on staff to assist Paulsen and to work on specific conservation projects.

“I’m proud of all the work we’ve accomplished together as an organization, and I know that we’ll continue to make a real difference for this valley,” reflected Bill. “It is incredibly rewarding to know that so many places will remain intact for wildlife, farming, and inspiration, and to know that this community has a voice in shaping the future for the Methow.”

During Bill’s six years with the Methow Conservancy, the organization has grown tremendously. The Conservancy has now worked with more than 75 families to voluntarily protect more than 5,000 acres of critical habitat, working farmland and scenic corridors in the Methow Valley, and has launched several innovative and popular conservation-based education programs, including a free First Tuesday lecture series, a Conservation Course each winter, and the Good Neighbor Handbook.

Sabold said, “Katharine Bill, with the help of staff, board, advisors, members and friends, has brought the Conservancy to a level of excellence that has drawn attention throughout the Northwest. Everyone who has met Jason agrees that he will carry forward and enhance the legacy Katharine has inspired through her leadership.”

On September 30th at the third annual Methow Conservancy Cider Squeeze at the Sabold’s house, the Conservancy will host a celebration of Katharine’s leadership and an official welcome of Jason. The public is invited to this free event. For more information, please visit www.methowconservancy.org.

The Methow Conservancy is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to inspiring people to care for the land by accepting voluntary conservation easements in the Methow Valley, providing conservation education opportunities for visitors and residents, and assisting with community-based conservation projects.

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