



Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Community Members Receive Conservation Awards

Methow Conservancy Honors Denny O'Callaghan & Sue Roberts at December Program

Winthrop, WA – The Methow Conservancy proudly announced its 2011 Methow Conservation Awards at its December 6th Holiday Social and “1st Tuesday” program at the Twisp River Pub.

Since 2005, the Methow Conservancy has annually recognized two volunteers for their outstanding work on behalf of conservation in the Methow Valley with their Ken White and Susie Stephens Conservation Awards. With over 200 people in attendance, the organization presented Denny O'Callaghan with the Ken White Award and Sue Roberts with the Susie Stephens Award. The awards were a surprise to Denny and Sue, who were both in the audience but unaware that they were being honored that night. The evening program was also a chance for attendees to enjoy a holiday party and an entertaining and breathtaking presentation on winter aerial photography in the North Cascades by pilot John Scurlock.

The Conservancy's Executive Director, Jason Paulsen, opened the evening, thanking everyone for their support of and commitment to conservation in the Methow Valley. Before announcing the awards, Paulsen shared news about some of the organization's recent conservation successes, with more than 7,200 acres and more than 25 miles of shoreline now protected thanks to the participation of willing private landowners.

Paulsen explained that the “Ken White Award” is given to an individual or organization with a long-standing history of inspiring conservation efforts in the Methow Valley, and who carries on Ken White's love for the Methow Valley. Known by many people as the Methow's first naturalist, Ken was a self-taught conservationist who shared his deep passion for appreciating this beautiful valley with all who were interested. Past award winners include, Kent Woodruff (2010), Roxie and Carl Miller (2009), Dave Sabold (2008), Katharine Bill (2007), Ron Judd (2006) and John Sunderland (2005).

Paulsen honored Denny O'Callaghan saying, “I think of Denny as the taproot of this organization. He has helped to see the Conservancy through some difficult times in its early history. His positive attitude, and the sparkle in his eye inspire everyone who works with him.” Over the past 15 years, Denny has served as a Board Member, as interim Executive Director and as a member of the Organization's Advisory Council. The Methow Conservancy's Ken White award certificate stated, “To Denny O'Callaghan: Who has been a part of the Methow Conservancy from the beginning and always will be; who believes wholeheartedly in the potential for a community to choose its future; and who serves as a role model to us all with his steady, kind, and inspirational commitment to conserving a place he loves.”

Sarah Brooks, the organization's Associate Director, talked to the crowd about the annual "Susie Stephens Award" which is given to someone who has provided outstanding volunteer service to the Methow Conservancy's efforts, and who carries on Susie's endless energy for helping others and her strong belief that education about conservation can make a difference. Susie was the always-friendly Development Director at the Methow Conservancy in the early 2000s until a tragic accident took her life in 2002. Susie's enthusiasm for reaching out to people to inspire conservation was the impetus for creating the award, which is both a way to remember Susie and to honor those who follow in her footsteps. Past award winners include, Chris Hartwig (2010), Carole and Brian Reid (2009), Laurelle Walsh (2008), Dotti and Bob Wilson (2007), Joyce Bergen (2006) and Suzanne Follis (2005).

Brooks explained that Sue Roberts was chosen as this year's recipient for her loyal service to the Methow Conservancy and so many community organizations over the past decades. Sue has served on the Methow Conservancy's education committee for numerous years, played an important role on the Imagine the Methow Campaign Steering Committee, and is the volunteer always ready to ask "what needs to be done?" Sarah noted that Sue Roberts reminds her about what it means to serve a small community, stating "Sue is the epitome of someone who chooses to get involved." The Conservancy's award stated, "To Sue Roberts: For her years of loyal service to the Methow Conservancy and so many other important community groups. As a Committee Member, idea generator, and tireless volunteer, Sue shares her can-do spirit and a contagious belief that to protect a place you love, you have to get out there and do something."

The Methow Conservancy is a local nonprofit organization dedicated to inspiring people to care for and conserve the land of the Methow Valley, ensuring it will remain a place where future generations can enjoy the rural character and natural beauty we cherish today.

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