

METHOW CONSERVANCY NEWS

For Wildlife ♦ For Farming ♦ For Community ♦ Forever



Photo credit: Jason Paulsen

Summer 2019-20 Newsletter

July 2019

*Inspiring people to care for
the land of the Methow
Valley since 1996*

This Issue Features:

From the Director

*Amendments, Trees &
Climate*

*Conservation Shorts:
Your Impact!*

*More than Meats the
Eye*

*Helping a Spring Spring
Again*

*Talking Fire with the
USFS*

Public Access Updates

& More!



Julie Grialou, Conservation Biologist, meets with a landowner of a smaller-acreage property to discuss land stewardship priorities in our pilot *Good Neighbor Project*, designed to provide conservation outcomes for small properties. Photo credit: Daniel Senner

Being a Good Neighbor

by Julie Grialou, Conservation Biologist

From landowners who own less than an acre in Twisp to those who call a 38-acre parcel of shrub-steppe in the Rendezvous home; from long-term residents to second-home owners; from people just learning about weeds and wildlife habitat needs to those who know almost every plant on their property, the pilot participants of our *Good Neighbor Project* all share an enthusiasm and desire to be exemplary stewards of their land and to learn more about how to do so. Working with these landowners has been a humbling and rewarding experience for Daniel Senner, our Community Conservation Coordinator, and me.

This past spring, we embarked on the pilot phase of the *Good Neighbor Project*. The purpose of the project is to help the Methow Conservancy achieve our goal of

providing a conservation outcome for all landowners who want them, specifically by working with landowners whose properties are too small to support a conservation easement. A secondary goal of the project is to enhance the ethic and culture of land conservation and stewardship in the Methow. The pilot project will end in October.

For years, we've wrestled organizationally with how to provide conservation-related assistance to landowners who don't have properties large enough for our usual conservation tool — a conservation easement.

from our belief that even small improvements in the habitat are good for the ecological health of the Valley. We are all neighbors here.

For years we've have a popular written publication called the *Good Neighbor Handbook* with suggestions for how to live thoughtfully with the land. After offering free on-site visits with landowners whose properties



the
GOOD NEIGHBOR
project

We know that if we are to create a strong and enduring conservation ethic, we need to engage all landowners (and visitors!) and not just those with larger properties.

After all, loving the land is the common language for everyone living in the Valley.

The *Good Neighbor Project* grew out of this recognition and

We are excited to be piloting the Good Neighbor Project and are especially in love with the project's logo designed by local artist Baylie Peplow. We picked the pygmy owl as our project mascot since they are "small" like the properties we are working with but as wise as any owl!

burned in the 2014 and 2015 fires, we realized that people crave not just general information but advice specific to their property's unique

(cont. on page 3)

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Methow
Conservancy
315 Riverside / PO Box 71
Winthrop, WA 98862
509-996-2870 www.methowconservancy.org

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Winthrop, WA 98801
Permit #241

From the Director

Dear Friends,

This edition of our twice-a-year printed newsletter highlights a number of aspects of our work that make me proud.

You'll notice that lots of different staff voices appear in this edition. You support an incredible team at the Methow Conservancy and I'm glad you'll get to hear from and about many of the people I am excited to work with every day in this edition. This staff is thoughtful, smart, innovative, and fun and we all agree it is an honor to work on your behalf to inspire people to care for the land.

This edition offers many different perspectives on how we are working to advance conservation opportunities on properties of all sizes – ranging from properties of less than acre to playing a role in a significant “win” for over 340,000 acres of public land in the Methow Valley!

At one end of the spectrum, I'm thrilled to have our staff working with the owners of several of the valley's largest properties to bring lasting conservation to the ground. These properties total thousands of acres in size, and provide habitat for critical migration corridors, support agricultural use, and define the character of our Valley in the way they dominate the landscape and skyline. These projects are complicated, require years of patient grant-seeking and relationship building and are essential to preserving the look and feel of the Methow Valley.

I am also proud of the community effort reflected in the successful Methow Headwaters campaign, bringing permanent protection from industrial scale mining to the headwaters of the river that brings so much to our lives. It is no small feat to achieve this conservation outcome in these divided times, and I am honored to have the support of members like you who make it possible for the Methow Conservancy to have a seat at the table among so many talented organizations in building the quiet relationships essential to this success.

At the other end of the spectrum, it is gratifying to be piloting our new *Good Neighbor Project*, a program that will allow us to say “yes” to landowners of our Valley's smallest properties who come seeking a meaningful role on team conservation. While this pilot will greatly inform what this program looks like into the future, I hope you share my pride in being one of the first land trusts in the nation to recognize that growing the conservation



Yes, that is a bobble-head doll of Jason Paulsen. The staff went all-in this past holiday season and secretly had a custom-made version of a mini-Jason made. Talk about an innovative, creative, and fun staff! Photo credit: Daniel Senner

community to include small acreage landowners is important to the future of our movement.

As always, you'll also find articles in this issue that remind us that conservation only happens when we inspire people to care. Sometimes that means giving volunteers an opportunity to do good work in the field and sometimes that means listening to the needs of our community, as we have done with our new pilot project to support local USDA meat processing in Okanogan County.

And, of course, I'd be remiss if I did not celebrate the examples unfolding in our community where generous people are working on permanent public access to our rivers and to iconic upland properties. From the Meadowlark Natural Area trail project we hope to complete this fall, to HomeStream Park in Winthrop and a future public access point in Mazama, all of us at the Methow Conservancy are humbled by the trust that has been placed in us as a partner with the capacity to bring community-centered dreams to reality.

I hope you enjoy this edition of our Methow Conservancy News and that you, too, take pride in the breadth and depth of the conservation movement in the Methow Valley. You definitely make it possible!

With gratitude,

Jason Paulsen

Remembering Bob Wilson

The Methow Valley and the conservation community lost a good one this spring with the passing of Robert (Bob) Wilson this past June 11th.



On his last outing with us, Bob Wilson (in the yellow gloves) taught a whole new generation of volunteers about the fine art of removing old, derelict barbed wire.

Photo credit: Daniel Senner

Dr. Bob served on the Methow Conservancy Board in the mid-2000's and, along with his wife, Dotti, was a lifeblood of our volunteer program. Bob brought his surgeon's precision to the art of carefully removing barbed wire. Together, he and Dotti wound hundreds (if not thousands) of miles of old, no longer necessary barbed wire, ensuring countless deer and other animals could avoid injury. He also spent many hours patiently teaching others this specific skill.

Bob was endlessly curious and after retiring from his medical practice as a plastic surgeon in the Army, he thrived exploring the Methow Valley and diving in where the community needed him. He tutored students at the high school in math and science and would even sit in on classes to make sure he was helping students in ways that would make the most sense to them.

We will always admire Bob's practical, get-it-done attitude and we will miss him as we carry on his legacy of keeping the Valley free of derelict barbed wire.

Board of Directors

David Schooler, *President*
Mary McCrea, *Vice-President*
Peter Bauer, *Treasurer*
Ashley Lodato, *Secretary*
Phil Davis
Mary Drobka
Jane Gilbertsen
Sam Naney
Peggy Porter
Gordy Reynaud
Stephanie Stewart
Kevin van Bueren

Staff

Heide Andersen
Stewardship Director
Sarah Brooks
Associate Director
Johnnie Duguay
Stewardship Associate
Julie Grialou
Conservation Biologist
Alyssa Jumars
Agricultural Coordinator
Mary Morgan
Membership Assistant
Jason Paulsen
Executive Director
Joy Schwab
Bookkeeper
Daniel Senner
Community Conservation Coordinator
John Sunderland
Land Project Manager
Jeanne White
Land Program Manager

Methow Conservancy
PO Box 71
315 Riverside Ave.
Winthrop, WA 98862
509.996.2870

www.methowconservancy.org
www.facebook.com/methowconservancy
www.instagram.com/methowconservancy

Methow
Conservancy



Amendments, Trees, & Climate

We love celebrating the new conservation projects you make possible here at the Methow Conservancy, but we probably don't thank you enough for the less exciting work you support in the form of strengthening our conservation easements through the conservation easement amendment process.

Amendments provide an opportunity to correct errors, clarify language and bring additional conservation protections to a conservation easement. This work is often quiet, behind the scenes, and well...sort of boring – but really important!

We can't do an amendment unless the change would preserve or enhance the conservation values on an easement. As an accredited land trust, the process for moving forward with an easement amendment is complex and cautious.

We recognize that conservation easements are permanent restrictions on a piece of land, but sometimes our scientific knowledge grows and changes. When we have an opportunity to enhance the conservation values of a conservation easement by applying the most



Conservation easements are permanent restrictions on a property, however, sometimes we can amend them if new science or other circumstances help us see we can actually enhance the conservation values of the easement. This year we have been working on improving the conservation values of some of our easements in the Upper Rendezvous.

Photo credit: Johnnie Duguay

current scientific principles to our document, and we have a landowner interested in this update, we will go through the amendment process.

We recently completed an amendment on a beautiful and healthy 160 acre property

conserved early in our history for its forest conservation values.

Recognizing the rapid changes that climate and other forces are bringing to our forests on the east side of the Cascades, we have embraced opportunities to update this and other conservation easements in the Upper Rendezvous neighborhood this year to ensure that they will stand the test of time while providing for the management flexibility the future will require.

Healthy forests that are thinned and treated with low-intensity prescribed fire are not only more resistant to catastrophic wildfire, but they also absorb about 15% of the total carbon dioxide emissions contributed by the United States each year.

By supporting private landowners in conserving and stewarding healthy forests, we're not only maintaining a scenic landscape and habitat resource, we're also helping to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions in a very cost-effective manner. Thank you forest landowners!

Good Neighbors, con't.

features. This year we decided to experiment with offering personalized site visits to small acreage landowners to see if we could inspire even stronger connections between people and their land.

So far, the pilot phase has involved working with landowners of 24 properties scattered throughout the Methow. For each of these properties, we have conducted a free site visit with the landowners. Site visits began in late April and were completed by early June.

During each visit, we talked about the Methow Conservancy's aspirations for the *Good Neighbor Project*, learned about the landowners' goals for their land, and then walked around the property

with the landowners and provided them with suggestions for stewardship actions to improve habitat.

Following each site visit, we provided the landowners with a summary of the site visit and recommended stewardship actions, as well as relevant contacts and follow-up information (e.g., sources for obtaining native seeds, website links for how to install a bird box, etc.).

In July and August, we will be following up with participants to learn how they are doing with implementing the stewardship actions that we recommended to them and to answer their questions or concerns.

As part of the pilot project, we are also providing each participant with a monthly calendar that includes stewardship suggestions and natural history information relevant to that given month. The pilot is supported by an on-line stewardship forum (using the program SLACK) specifically set-up for this project where participants can ask natural history and land stewardship questions and share information. Methow Conservancy staff are monitoring the forum and providing answers to participants' questions.

We've already started to see signs of success. For example, one of our pilot participants had been planning to build a new house on top of a ridge in prime shrub-steppe habitat. During our site visit, we talked about what makes a good homesite zone and they have decided to build in



Some of the fun things we do on a site visit for the *Good Neighbor Project* is help a landowner identify plants (native and weedy) growing on their land. If you look closely, you'll also see we found a pure white spider on this specimen.

Photo credit: Julie Grialou

a less visible, already disturbed area.

We are counting on our pilot participants to help us evaluate whether this program has benefits for the land and the community. We look forward to gatherings of pilot participants this summer and at the end of the pilot in late October. These gatherings will be an opportunity for participants to meet each other, build community, and share their experiences with land stewardship.

As we learn more, we'll plan to share what has been working and will offer more stories from the field with you. It's been so gratifying to be a part of something new and innovative and we think we're on to something important.



We've visited 24 different smaller-acreage properties during the Good Neighbor Project and we've been inspired by so many landowners who want to be good stewards of their land.

Photo credit: Daniel Senner

Interested in leaving a legacy for the land?

You can include the Methow Conservancy in your will or as a beneficiary on an investment account. You don't have to be able to leave us millions of dollars and you don't have to be near the end of life to consider the legacy you want to leave for the land of the Methow Valley. (*You should, however, consult with a financial advisor or legal professional.*) Contact Sarah for more information, at 509-996-2870 or sarah@methowconservancy.org.

Want to stay up-to-date on the Methow Conservancy?

Make sure you receive our monthly E-News!

We only print a newsletter twice a year - but each month we send out the latest and greatest on conservation in the Methow Valley via our E-News. To sign up, e-mail us at info@methowconservancy.org.

Thank You -- you make so much possible at the Methow Conservancy!

Here are just a few examples of your impact on conservation in the Methow Valley:

Your Impact:

You are inspiring the next generation of land stewards. You make it possible for Sarah "Sloth" and Johnnie "Jellyfish" to visit the 4th grade classrooms at Methow Valley Elementary School every month for School Yard Science. At the start of the school year, students and staff chose animal names to embrace the spirit of naturalist learning. Each monthly lesson brought the students outside to explore their school yard and connect to International Baccalaureate themes. Students took part in scientific inquiry in the form of migration relays, snowshoe tracking, observation activities, food chain and population dynamics games, service projects (4th graders are great weed pullers!), map reading and more! This year culminated in a field trip to the nearby Moccasin Lake Ranch where students learned about agriculture in the Methow Valley from local farmers, ranchers and experts. Does scientific learning get any more fun than that?

Photo credit: Willy Duguay



Your Impact: You make it possible for us to hire enthusiastic, smart, personable community members like Valley-grown Johnnie Duguay. Here's an update from Johnnie, our Stewardship Associate: Johnnie here! I'm just wrapping up my third month of this season's conservation easement monitoring visits. The Methow Conservancy protects over 8,800 acres from Pateros to Lost River using conservation easements as our tool for land protection and I am fortunate enough to conduct the annual monitoring for all 110+ of our easements. My favorite aspects of the job include meeting with landowners and hearing about their relationship to the land, hiking across beautiful landscapes that I know will remain forever protected, and seeing wildlife species including black bear, mule deer, grouse and more. I like to visit the easements with the most sun exposure early in the year before it gets too hot. I love to hike the shrub steppe hillsides in the spring when the wildflowers are in full bloom! Now we're heading into summer temperatures and more monitoring visits! Next up? I look forward to ducking under irrigation spray while monitoring our agricultural easements and dipping my toes into the Methow River on our riparian easements.

Photo credit: Willy Duguay



Your Impact: You are helping make the outdoors more accessible to all. In addition to providing free Discover Passes to all 4th grade families in the Methow Valley, we've also welcomed the new homeowners in the Methow Housing Trust to get to know their backyard and beyond with Discover Passes from us. Beyond that, we're members of the Methow Valley Trails Collaborative -- a unique consortium of Methow Valley organizations, businesses, and government agencies who all care about trails and trail access. The Trails Collaborative (with the help of lots of great volunteers) has been working hard to improve trails in the Riser Lake and Lewis Butte area on Gunn Ranch Road. The goal has been to build more ecologically sustainable trails at a grade that is accessible to multiple ability levels and user groups. In addition to being part of trail construction days, the Methow Conservancy held several of our own volunteer days to address the ecological restoration of old trail alignments.

Photo credit: Daniel Senner



Your Impact: You are helping to grow a land-based workforce program. Four years ago, we forged a partnership with the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) to provide fee-for-service labor on conservation easements. A crew of five or six WCC members are in the Valley for approximately seven weeks every summer, helping conservation easement landowners with a gamut of stewardship tasks including weeding, forest thinning, building trails, repairing fence lines, clearing ditches and doing various fuels reduction activities. WCC is an AmeriCorps program that provides hands-on experience, field skills, and training opportunities to young adults between 18 and 25 and military veterans. This has been a popular program for both the WCC crew and our landowners. We have a number of repeat customers, and the landowners often join right in with the crew, discussing conservation and plant identification while weeding or felling. Our dream is to one day have a Methow-based crew that could address many more needs in a larger community context, such as fish and habitat restoration, trail (or infrastructure) building or maintenance, or maybe even providing agricultural labor.

Photo credit: Heide Andersen



Your Impact: You ensure we take all the right steps to be financially responsible. Each year, for example, we undertake an extensive external audit to certify that our financial statements are accurate and that our internal controls are sound. Our annual operating budget is about \$875,000 and our capital budget can run into the millions. We take our financial responsibilities seriously and in addition to thinking the world of our super-detail oriented bookkeeper, Joy Schwab, we have an active volunteer Finance Committee and monthly financial reports to our Board to keep a variety of eyes on our financial health and stability. If you'd like to see a copy of our financial reports or if you have any financial questions, just email us and ask at sarah@methowconservancy.org. More than 75% of our operating budget comes from people like you, so we are more than happy to share information on your investments in conservation.

Photo credit: Jason Paulsen



Your Impact: You give us the chance to be creative in our educational outreach to ensure we include as many people as we can in our conservation movement. From high intensity alpine walks to standing in a field looking closely at grasses we try to offer a wide array of classes, field trips, and gatherings to help everyone see themselves in conservation. A few years ago, for example, we launched a GenNxt series, aimed at engaging people in their 20s and 30s in our work. At our most recent GenNxt event in May - aptly named *Beers of the Shrub-Steppe*, twenty millennials found the right balance between community, nature, adventure, and beer by hiking three hydrated miles through beautiful intact shrub-steppe on a conservation easement protected in perpetuity by the Methow Conservancy.

Photo credit: Jason Paulsen

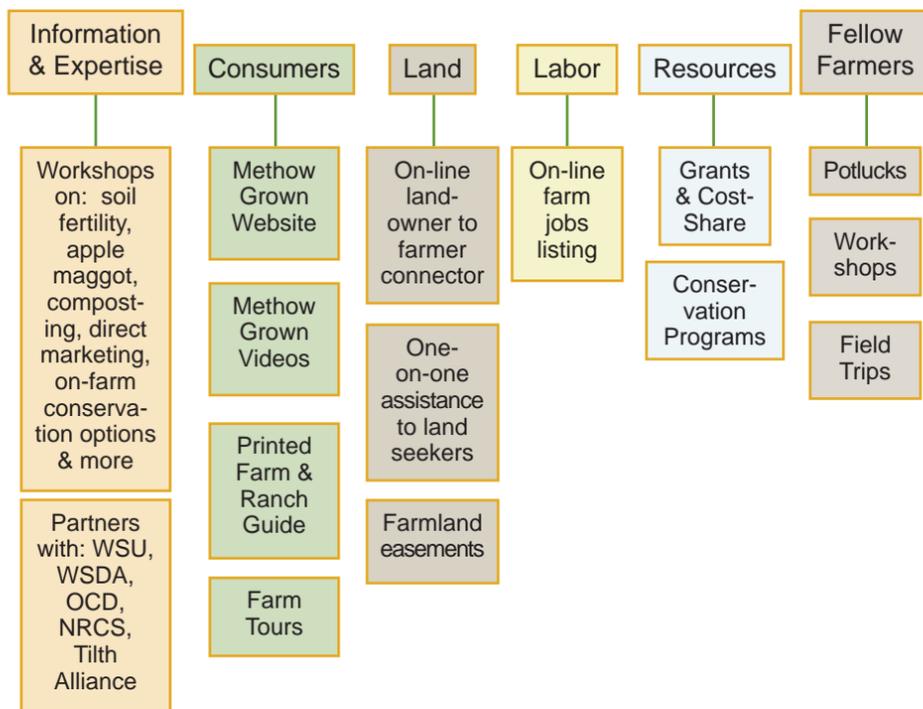
More than Meats the Eye

by Alyssa Jumars, Agricultural Coordinator

It's no secret that we are really excited about our unusual project to bring USDA-inspected livestock processing to the region. We see a bright future for farming and ranching here, and we are proud to be a part of ensuring economic opportunity for farm-to-table meat producers of Okanogan County and the Methow Valley. If you've missed the exciting news about our recent purchase of a USDA-approved processing unit, please visit www.methowgrown.org/usdameat to watch our video and learn more!

And while the USDA Meat project has been consuming much of the attention of our Agricultural Program, it's only a part of what we do to support the diverse farming and ranching community here. The Methow Conservancy's Ag Program, which is nearly three years old, has been working to build diverse connections: connecting farmers to existing resources and information, connecting farmers to consumers and market opportunities, connecting farmers to land, and connecting farmers to each other.

We've Been Connecting Farmers To....



More About Meat:

Why, you may have found yourself wondering, is the Methow Conservancy getting involved in meat processing?

The reason is simple: We believe agriculture has a home in the Methow forever and we recognize that supporting local agriculture means more than just protecting prime soils. We have to ensure that there are farmers to farm the land and to do that, we need farming to be viable.

The decision to take on this unusual project stemmed from a 12-month study of the need and opportunities for USDA-processing in Okanogan County--which would allow producers to sell locally raised meat at grocery stores and restaurants. The study was funded by the USDA, involved a half-dozen industry specialists, and included survey data from nearly 100 livestock producers representing farms and ranches of all sizes.

Here's what we learned:

- 59% of respondents said current meat processing options are not meeting their needs;
- 93% of respondents desire access to USDA-inspected processing (in addition to currently available "custom-exempt" options);
- 31% of respondents said access to USDA-inspected processing is a primary barrier to the growth and success of their farm.

Based on that data, we believe a small USDA meat plant in the region will benefit many small-to-medium farms and ranches here. We estimate that demand for USDA processing services in the region will be on the order of 500 beef, 300 pork, and 400 lamb and goats, annually. Through detailed evaluation of both technical and financial feasibility, the study also found that an expansion of existing custom-exempt plant, Double S Meats in Tonasket, was likely to be successful at that scale.

We know this is an unusual undertaking for a land trust, but we believe in the future of farming and we are grateful for the opportunity to pilot a project that has long been on the minds of local agriculturalists. If you want to learn more, visit www.methowgrown.org/usdameat.

Helping a Spring Spring Again

by Heide Andersen, Stewardship Director

Hancock Springs flows through two of our conservation easements. The spring- and groundwater-fed creek once was deep and narrow and winding through a riparian thicket and provided important off-channel habitat for fish in the Methow River. After it was homesteaded in the 1890's, much of the land was cleared and, over time, the spring and soils and vegetation along the channel were degraded. As a result, Hancock Springs became a straight, wide and shallow stream with eroded banks, lacking vegetation and any quality habitat for native fish.

In 2011, local biologists recognized the potential in Hancock Springs, with its consistent temperature (meaning cold water in the summer and warm in the winter) and stable flows, both of which can provide unique spawning, rearing, and overwintering habitat for our endangered salmonids and other fish. Together with design and project oversight from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Yakama Nation, Phase 1 of the restoration project restored the historical meanders in the spring and provided structural and vegetative diversity to the very upper portion of the spring.

Among other things, this project used mud slingers, large machines that can catapult mud across impressive distances, to bring dirt in to help define, narrow and deepen the channel. On top of this mud structure, wetland mats were placed like carpet to add stability to the shore and jump start the revegetation. These mats were created from seed collected on-site that was propagated elsewhere and incorporated into rectangular wetland carpet squares.

Finally plant plugs that were grown from on-site seeds, shrubs and trees were also incorporated and spawning gravels were placed in the new stream corridor. A once denuded wide, straight and shallow section of stream became a paradise for spawning salmon and migratory birds. We know from monitoring efforts that fish density, growth and productivity, along with macroinvertebrate and algal biomass were not only significantly improved in the restored reach but in many cases are higher than other side channels of the Methow River.

This summer we are partnering again with the US Fish & Wildlife Service and the Cascade Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group (CCFEG), to launch Phase 2 with a focus now on the downstream portion of the spring. Last August, Methow Conservancy volunteers waded through cold water alongside children of the landowners for several days to meticulously collect the tiniest sedge seeds imaginable so that truly native plants will be ready to replant in the channel area. Later, the mudslinger will be back in action ensuring we can re-create the complexity that native fish like and need in a spring.

"If Phase 2 of the Hancock Springs Restoration Project can be as successful as Phase 1 was, then we are well on our way to restoring an important place for endangered fish in the Methow Valley," notes Stewardship Director Heide Andersen. As the climate continues to warm, thermally-protected, spring-fed channels like Hancock Springs will become more and more important for the survival of these species.



In an effort to ensure this project restores the creek as close to its natural state as possible, project partners literally grow mats of vegetation from tiny sedges collected on-site by volunteers. Photo credit: Heide Andersen

Talking Fire with Matt Ellis of the USFS

by Jason Paulsen, Executive Director

With the summer solstice behind us and lightning in the forecast recently, I was fortunate to catch up with Matt Ellis, our local Fire Management Officer here on the Methow Ranger District to hear what's on his mind this fire season. Matt has been in his position for the past four years, and I've had the opportunity to work with him during wildfire events and as part of educational programs. I always come away impressed by Matt's sincere dedication to our community, and the natural resources he stewards in this role.

Q: Hi Matt, what can you tell us about the Crescent Mountain and McLeod fires and what you're seeing out there on the ground this spring?

A: Both Crescent Mountain and McLeod wildfires burned during the 2018 fire season here in the Methow Valley. Typical weather patterns in the Methow provide periods of stagnate air with little ventilation and this may reduce fire behavior in some situations. Both wildfires experienced stagnant air followed by periods of increased fire behavior due to weather system passages. These weather conditions assisted in providing a mosaic burn consisting of primarily moderate fire severity impacts. The full range of fire effects can be observed, consisting of short range crown runs with complete overstory mortality to lower intensity surface fires with limited mortality. Due to these conditions, regeneration in most locations is very high and coupled with the early summer moisture should aid in seedling survival. Fire weakened trees and snags will continue to come down over the next few years and is part of the cycle of a fire adapted ecosystem.

Q: I've read that past thinning and controlled burns played a role in minimizing growth of the McLeod Fire last year. Can you tell us about that?

A: Science and experience have shown that the best method for limiting fire behavior during wildfires and providing an effective and safe place for firefighters to engage in suppression actions is through a combined approach of hazardous fuels reduction projects and active forest management. The 8-Mile drainage is one of many locations on the district that has had active management. During the McLeod fire we saw first-hand the beneficial results of concentrated efforts to actively manage our National Forest. Since 2004, the Methow Valley Ranger District has completed multiple



Scenes like this from last year's fire camp outside of Winthrop have become a reminder of the presence of fire on the landscape. As Matt Ellis notes, pre-fire preparations, like thoughtful forest management and creating defensible space around your house can make a difference in the impact of a fire.

Photo credit: Jason Paulsen

different treatments in the 8-Mile drainage ranging from tree thinning, and prescribed fire, to timber harvesting. These efforts altered the fire behavior within portions of the McLeod fire thus leaving a more resilient and healthy forest behind. These treatments also allowed for the firefighters to safely engage in suppression actions and stop the fire progression down the 8-Mile drainage towards private property. Check out this YouTube video to learn more: tinyurl.com/y4phk3e6

Q: With drought mentioned in the news almost daily, what can we expect to see in the woods these next few months?

A: We've been very fortunate to have a cool and moist start to our summer, however, current fire year outlooks show above normal large fire potential for July-September. Drought is certainly a factor in that. We're tracking these predictive outlooks concurrently with conditions out on the ground here in the Valley all the time to keep a close watch on where we're trending.



Matt Ellis is the Fire Management Officer for the USFS Methow Ranger District. He believes communities like ours can take the right steps to learn to live with fire. Photo credit: USFS staff

Q: If you had a magic wand, what would we be doing more of as a community to protect our Valley or best prepare our forest resources for the future?

A: The best community assistance plan is for communities and home owners to be Firewise. Living in a fire adapted ecosystem means we are all responsible for doing our part. What we really need is defensible space, a place to safely engage a fire when it visits your farm or neighborhood. If you haven't already done so, think about moving that wood pile you hauled against the house for the long winter. Where is that fuel tank? Do I have branches against my roof? What could and will ignite within that critical 30 foot zone around my home? The great news is that folks can start right away including a Firewise assessment from the good folks at Okanogan County Conservation District. We're a strong community here - we can do this if we all do our part, including being smoke ready and supporting proactive work like prescribed fire that will help our kids and grandkids live better with fire for generations to come. Be informed on wildfire preparedness tips, create defensible space around your home and support active management of your forest.

Q: What's your Methow love story – when did you first know this place had your heart?

A: I first came to the Methow in 1999, not on fires but recreating like so many of you. I spent 40 consecutive days hiking in the Pasayten Wilderness exploring the vast remote rugged beauty of the North Cascades. Since then, I have been fascinated with the area both personally and professionally. I have a strong passion for my work here in the Methow, a deep connection with these mountains, and it is a pleasure to serve the community as we continue to adapt to living better with fire each and every year.

Q: Anything else you'd like to share with the community as we head into summer 2019?

A: Fire has been on this landscape for centuries and will continue to shape the landscape in which we live. I'd just like to end with a note of encouragement that we can be prepared for the 2019 fire season by working with each other as neighbors, county, state and federal partners to seek opportunities for us all to be successful be it in thinning and prescribed fire on thousands of acres or rolling up the sleeves for a few good Saturday's of creating defensible space right at home.

Thank you Matt, and thanks to all who work in our community to improve forest health and reduce the negative impacts of fire as a natural part of our landscape here in the Methow!

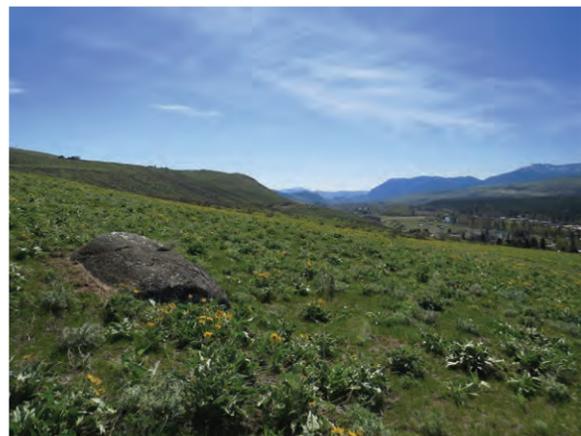
Looking for more Fire Prep Info?

Check out our newly re-designed website! It's full of resources and information, including our special Fire Prep & Recovery pages at: <https://methowconservancy.org/discover/fire-prep-recovery>

Public Access in Progress

We are excited to share a quick update on our progress toward providing public access points in Winthrop and Mazama.

Meadowlark Natural Area: We have officially named the former Heckendorn Homestead property (approx. 148 acres on the flank of Studhorse Mountain, just above the town of Winthrop) the Meadowlark Natural Area. Since we took ownership of this land in the spring of 2018, we have been working hard to be good stewards and neighbors -- removing old debris, metal, and barbed wire; weeding; tending to dead trees along the ditch; and listening to what neighbors and the community want for this beautiful hillside. We are in the process of reviewing proposals from entities who will



We continue to work on a public access and trail plan for the newly named Meadowlark Natural Area (formerly known as the Heckendorn Homestead). We hope to have official public access opening by next spring. Photo credit: Jason Paulsen

help us design and build a walking trail system on the property, with an eye toward protecting the critical mule deer habitat and providing a free place for people to walk close to town. We hope to be working on this through the fall with a goal of a public access opening in Spring 2020. We continue to be so grateful to Tina and Eliot Scull who seeded the Tina Scull Fund that gave us the opportunity to purchase this iconic Winthrop property.

Mazama Park: This past January, Nancy and Dick Gode helped us purchase a roughly six-acre parcel near the Mazama Corner which will, in the future, provide public access to the river in the heart of Mazama. This will be the only public access point to the river in a seven mile stretch. Recognizing that this intersection is a busy thoroughway for visitors and residents alike, we are planning to engage this winter with a park planner to help us manage the flow of people and to make sure the pocket park ultimately helps tell

the story of this Valley and a community dedicated to conservation. We will look forward to sharing more updates as our plans become more clear and as we work toward a late 2020 or early 2021 debut of public access to the river in Mazama.

Homestream Park: We are proud to be helping make Cathy and Phil Davis's vision for a park dedicated to the rivers and fish of the Methow Valley at the entrance to Winthrop. Cathy and Phil are leading the way in what they hope will be an official opening of the park in the fall of this year. For more details see: <http://www.homestreampark.com/>.

We will always be committed to our conservation easements and will always look for new worthy easement projects. It has, however, been so satisfying to add public access projects to our conservation palette. We can't wait to celebrate some ribbon cutting ceremonies with you in the next few years!



This June, Nancy and Dick Gode joined some of our staff to visit the approx. 6 acre property they helped purchase for future public river access in Mazama. Photo credit: Jason Paulsen



A major transformation is underway at the site of the future Homestream Park just before the bridge into Winthrop. Photo credit: Daniel Senner



Save the Date!

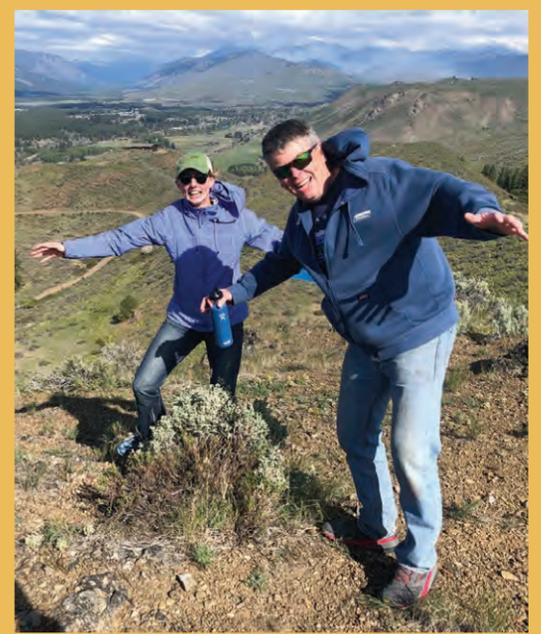
Cider Squeeze
 Sunday, September 29th
 2 - 4 pm
 At the Sabold's in
 Winthrop

Celebrate another great
 year for conservation in the
 Methow Valley!

Welcome! Join us!

Check out our
 Events Calendar
 for an upcoming
 class, presentation,
 field trip or social
 gathering.

www.
 methowconservancy.org



Share Your Love for the Methow Valley!

Your tax-deductible donation permanently protects the Methow Valley you love.

Use these levels or decide on an amount that works for you:

Individual	\$35 - \$49	Name _____
Family	\$50 - \$99	Address _____
Supporting	\$100 - \$499	City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Sustaining	\$500 - \$999	Email(s) _____
Leadership Circle	\$1000 & up	(you will receive our once-a-month E-News, our primary source of news and events and periodic updates)
Other	\$ _____	Phone _____

You may also donate with a credit card. Use our secure on-line donation system.

Go to www.methowconservancy.org and click the "Make a Donation" button.

Thank You!

The Methow Conservancy is registered with the State of Washington Secretary of State's Office under the Charitable Solicitations Act - you may call 1-800-332-4483 or visit www.sos.wa.gov/charities for more information.

Mail with your check made payable to *Methow Conservancy* to: PO Box 71 • Winthrop, WA 98862