

Okanogon County Shoreline Management Plan Minimizes Regulations of Subdivisions Near Rivers, Lakes and Wetlands

March 6, 2015

After 7 years, nearly a million dollars, missed deadlines and public processes that appeared to go nowhere, Okanogon County has finally released a new Draft Shorelines Master Program, along with a determination that the proposed plan will have no significant environmental impact. Sound familiar?

The Shorelines Master Program (SMP) is every bit as significant as the Comprehensive Plan in its potential to affect the future look, feel and ecological health of the Methow Valley and the county. The SMP is intended to work together with the Comprehensive Plan and Critical Areas Ordinance to regulate the amount and type of development that can occur adjacent to rivers and lakes.

It is no surprise that the county has taken its time updating this important policy document, and that **the newest draft is stripped down to minimize regulation of subdivision and development near lakes and rivers and in wetlands. If the draft SMP is accepted in its current form, we can expect to see a significant increase in dense development along waterways in the county - including parts of the Methow, Okanogon and Columbia rivers - with serious impacts to threatened and endangered fish species.**

The SMP is regulated by the state Department of Ecology (DOE), which has the final authority to approve or deny the county's plan.

The SMP has to be reviewed and passed by the Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners before it goes to DOE, which will hold a public hearing before approving the SMP.

We have been told that DOE's public hearing may not be held locally unless there is evidence of widespread public concern.

Public pressure at every step is the only way to make sure that DOE doesn't accept a bad plan from the county just to get it over with.

Time is limited.

Please take the time to get involved now, by sending comments and/or providing oral testimony at Monday's Planning Commission Hearing.

Here are some possible talking points to use in your comments: [PC-Talk-Points.pdf](#)

MVCC's more detailed comments are available at this link: [MVCC-SMP-Comments.pdf](#)

While we do not recommend copying and pasting MVCC's comments verbatim, repetition of important points is very beneficial.

Schedule of Upcoming Public Comment Opportunities:

March 9, 7:00 pm:

Planning Commission Hearing, Okanogan

Oral testimony is encouraged! Three minute limit per person.

Email comments to: phuston@co.okanogan.wa.us

It would be best to send comments to the Planning Commission in time for Monday's meeting, but it is likely that comments will be accepted afterward, and deliberated upon at the next Planning Commission meeting on March 23.

Please send a copy of your comments to [MVCC](#), so we can ensure that the Planning Director passes all of the comments to Planning Commission members.

Carpoolers should meet at the MV Community Center at 6pm on Monday, March 9

March 18, 5:00 pm:

Comments due on the SEPA Determination of Non-Significance (DNS)

Email comments to: phuston@co.okanogan.wa.us

MVCC has requested that the county withdraw the DNS and start a new comment period due to lack of adequate information provided for the current comment period.

Since we do not know if the request will be honored, we still plan on submitting comments by March 18, and will keep you posted.

March 23, 7:00 pm:

Planning Commission Hearing, Okanogan

It is not currently known whether the PC will take oral testimony from the public or use the time to deliberate upon the comments they have received, so it is wise to send in your comments before this meeting.

We will continue to share information as it becomes available through e-mail alerts, website updates, radio spots and press releases.

Stay tuned, and please feel free to contact us if you have questions about this complex but critically important process.

With Heartfelt Thanks,

The Methow Valley Citizens' Council Board of Directors