

**Lower Valley Advisory Group  
(LVAG)  
Planning Meeting**

**August 24, 2008 6:30 – 8:30 pm  
Methow Cafe**

**Present:** Karen Luft, Bill Tackman, Alex Kerr, Bev and Jeff Zwar

**Absent:** Isabelle Spohn, Gloria Royse, Betty Hagenbuch, Al Hymer, Ken Orford, Keith/Kevin Stennes

**Agenda**

**I. Updates**

**A. Meeting Notes from 7/31**

The meeting notes were reviewed; as there was no quorum and only two of those present were at the last meeting, we did not go through an approval process.

**B. Comp Plan Process Timeline**

Questions asked at the last meeting focused on the timeline for the Comp Plan process. Lorah was able to get more answers, which are as follows. Mr. Huston did indicate that the timeline continues to be “fluid,” as it is dependent on a number of factors, including the amount and type of feedback received from Neighborhood Groups and the public.

- Anticipated date we can expect to see a more current Draft: **End of Sept**
- Anticipated date of Draft EIS release: **DEIS, including refined options, should be out mid-Oct to begin formal Scoping**
- Tentative Scoping and Public Meeting schedule: **This was not available for certain, but assumed that if DEIS/Scoping begins in Oct, it will continue thru Nov with formal comment period**
- Anticipated process following the January release of the FEIS: **Begin “adoption process”. I was told no guarantee that FEIS would be ready by Jan, as it depends on the comments received. If no FEIS, adoption process would not start.**
- Path to Adoption: **Still not clear on what else this entails. Stay tuned!**

**C. Other Discussion**

Discussion based on meeting notes regarding Rural options presented:

With the exception of an option that included designating “scenic corridors” that would be restricted to 1 du/20 ac density, the group could not find any option in the Rural draft that clearly described the group’s expressed desire for 20 ac minimums on the valley floor. Discussion followed about what to do about this.

Options discussed:

- **“Scenic Corridor” designation:** Pros- might meet the need for desired density; Cons – puts the Lower Methow in the spotlight and could be more controversial than using some other method;

- **Identify and select properties for Ag Resource Designation:** Pros – might meet need for desired density and protection of ag lands; Cons – no guarantee that selection of Resource Lands will be up to this group, does not cover entire valley floor of planning area; good tool but not the best solution for this issue
- **Use Overlay to describe the different wishes of the Lower Methow with regard to Density:** This appeared to be a desired approach, as the group already has worked on a map that was displayed at the Growth Summit in June.
- **Develop language for another Rural Option that would better describe “valley floor” areas that should qualify for lower density:** This option will also be approached, in order to support the overlay. The group present expressed a wish to talk about these issues with Perry Huston. Jeff and Bill agreed to work on drafting language for a desired option and email it to the group for further discussion.

## **II. Draft Review: Resource Lands**

Overview: The group needs to review and provide feedback to the Rural and Resource Lands portions of the Draft, as these sections contain information most relevant to the expressed wishes of the committee. Due to limited time and the complex nature of the issues, the group spent the most time addressing options related to the “Ag Lands” Resource Designation. Discussion and comments as follows:

**A. Handouts Distributed:** Okanogan County Draft Resource Lands; LVAG feedback page re: Ag Lands Designation Criteria; Chelan Co. Resource Lands descriptions and criteria for reference.

### **B. Comments:**

- Bill commented that regardless of the good intent expressed in the language, it doesn’t appear Chelan Co is protecting much ag land these days. Lorah suspected this might have something to do with the way lands are designated – if it’s voluntary only, then that would explain the lack of designated land.
- Bill commented on his concern that people view clustering as a fix-all, when it may not be appropriate to the land base of our planning area. For example, clustering appears most beneficial when it can be accomplished on larger acreages, in places where vegetation and/or topography allow for screening and where the open space or resource land being conserved is significant. Those present seemed to agree that in the Lower Methow, at a minimum the review process for clustering should be thorough enough to discourage use of the tool except on appropriate properties where it would be effective.

### **C. Okanogan Co. Draft “Mapping Options” for Agriculture, Option 2 and 3:**

These options were generally preferred, with the rationale that if a landowner receives the tax benefit for producing agricultural lands, then they should accept any limitations that come with that designation as well. Option 3 looked like the most inclusive, but all wanted first to know what the “USDA ag activities map” is and to whom it applies. There

was also a suggestion to add to any option the ability for landowners to also voluntarily apply for Resource Lands status.

**Comments:**

- Question: How to deal with Open Space/Open Space classified lands? Designate or not? Chelan co's Plan seems to indicate that Open Space is an appropriate use in the Resource Lands designation.
- Add to Options 2 and 3 the option to volunteer land for the designation.
- Question: Could a landowner choose to give up Resource Land status and pay back taxes, as with the tax classification? Group prefers to "leave no loopholes" such as this.
- Question: Could an incentive be offered for voluntary designation – such as allowing the current use taxation to apply?
- Question: Can golf courses end up with a Resource Designation through an unforeseen loophole?
- Comment: In general, the group seemed to like the component of Chelan co's Resource Lands designation that allows for the expansion of existing tourist/recreational facilities to support ag lands, EXCEPT new residential development. For example, Fruit stands or Nightly rental cabins may be permitted, but not a new neighborhood of vacation homes adjacent to the ag lands.
- Comment: Neighborhood Commercial: Restrict to LAMIRDs and Urban in this planning area. No one wants to see mini-marts established for every gated community, and would prefer to support business development in the small towns represented by LAMIRDs.

**D. Mineral Lands General Comments on Designation**

There was concern about designation of Mineral Lands, as the scope and location of existing sites in our planning area is unknown. In general, everyone recognized that there is a big difference between setting aside land for use as a long term gravel pit for road improvement vs. the impacts of condoning gold mining in perpetuity on a site.

**Comments:**

- Where are existing sites in the county? In the Lower Methow?
- How does county designation interface with sites on Public land? i.e. County roads, groundwater, surface water and private lands can be affected by mining activities on public lands. Does resource designation deal with this? Do any existing regs deal with this?
- Ensure protection of ground and surface water, air quality, wildlife and aesthetics for all sites designated.
- Suggest a bonding requirement for mining companies, so there is \$\$ for cleanup.

**E. Forest Resource Designation, Mapping**

After a brief discussion, the group generally supported Option 3, for similar reasons as with the Ag designation. The group supported also adding language to allow for elective designation by landowners, and had the same question about offering incentives for voluntary designation.

## **F. Agriculture Resource Designation, Compatible Uses**

### **Comments:**

- **Feedlots:** change so that only “finishing” feedlots subject to CUP review process. Rationale being that most ranchers have their own cow/calf feedlots, but a finishing feedlot would be a unique use
- **Residential Activities:** Don’t support new residential development on ag resource lands, except perhaps to support farmworker housing or using the existing “one additional DU for ‘mother in law’” per property. See previous comments on clustering
- **Manufacturing:** Need clear criteria about what’s compatible with ag activities, what’s not
- **Neighborhood Commercial:** RESTRICT to LAMIRD, don’t just ‘encourage’.

## **G. Agriculture Resource Designation, Density**

Option 3 fits best, except the previously mentioned concern regarding the PBRS allowing too many clusters to slip thru in inappropriate areas. It was noted that the Mid-Methow group suggested that the Methow have its own PBRS with more stringent requirements; will need to follow the development of county wide PBRS to determine if this is necessary or not.

## **H. Urban Resource Land Designation**

This suggested designation and its rationale were explained and discussed briefly. The group supports the designation, and suggests allowing landowners to elect for such designation.

## **III. Next Meeting**

No further meetings of LVAG are scheduled at this point. Jeff and Bill will be emailing the group their suggested Rural Option language; if there isn’t enough participation online, another meeting may be called.

Lorah agreed to make sure that the group receives the most updated Draft as soon as it is released; there is some interest in scheduling a meeting to discuss the draft within a week or two of release. Lorah also agreed to inform the group when the “Valley-Wide” meeting is scheduled, sometime in mid-September.

**Meeting Adjourned at 8:28 pm**