

**A VISION
FOR THE LOWER METHOW COMMUNITY
Lower Methow Valley Advisory Group
22 May, 2008**

The Lower Methow Valley is a unique portion of the Methow Valley, a place that has retained its traditional rural character and productive agricultural base in spite of changing times, demographic and economic trends. The landscape is characterized by a balance between the natural environment and human uses with low density residential dwellings, farms, forests, outdoor recreation and other open space activities. Over 80% of land is in state or federal public ownership with the objective of meeting state and national objectives for providing habitat, natural resources and recreation to residents and visitors. Private land in the Lower Methow is limited to portions of the valley floor adjacent to the Methow River, and along the lower reaches of tributaries. The valley floor narrows in the Lower Methow planning area compared to other parts of the valley. Benches formed by meanders in the river, steep slopes and narrow canyons leave limited room on the valley floor to support the coexistence of agriculture, scenic views, residential development, and compliance with laws governing Methow River water quality and quantity objectives. **The Methow River contains critical habitat for endangered wild Steelhead, spring Chinook and Bull Trout. The hydrogeology of the Lower Methow area,** characterized by unconsolidated glacial sediments, calls to question the connection between groundwater resources and streamflows, and forces difficult decisions related to the allocation of water resources for domestic, stock, and agricultural use.

This vision statement articulates the wishes of residents and property owners of the Lower Methow planning area to reconcile the challenges and opportunities associated with this unique landscape into a cohesive plan that conserves our rural culture and rich natural heritage while providing room for change.

The Vision

In the next 20 years, the community of the Lower Methow Valley will be a model for people living in harmony with their environment, a community where people's needs for services, social interaction, agriculture, business, housing, recreation, and education are in balance with the ecosystem we inhabit. By carefully blending the natural, human and economic environments, we will pass on to future generations a landscape as rich and beautiful as the one we now enjoy.

It is of great value to the residents of the Lower Methow Valley to protect the many benefits of a low population density in a small, well-defined area of tremendous natural beauty still possessing clean air, clean water, natural and working forests, small scale agriculture, open fields, and abundant wildlife. Each of these elements is an important part of the whole and serves to preserve both the peace of mind that the quiet of the valley encourages and the rural quality of life so treasured by its residents. The freedom to exist and support oneself here, to move amid the open spaces, and to trust one's neighbors are of paramount importance to the citizens who embark upon this planning process and are the filter through which we consider and address future development.