

METHOW VALLEY CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Climate Action Plan for the Methow Valley presents a vision and road-map for our community to prepare for the impacts of climate change, and to reduce local sources of greenhouse gas emissions. Grounded in science, and based on input from hundreds of community members, the Climate Action Plan details realistic, practical strategies and actions the community and local governments can take to become resilient and carbon-neutral.

CLIMATE IMPACTS

Climate change is affecting the Methow Valley resulting in: hotter summers and lower summer stream flows; earlier peak flows and runoff; wetter, warmer winters with lower average snowpack; and more extreme, less predictable storms.

Impacts from these changes include:

- Increased asthma and respiratory diseases due to smoke
- Reduced tourism due to smoke, wildfire, and a low snowpack
- Reduced fish populations due to warming streams with lower water quality
- Crop stress and reduced agriculture production due to heatwaves, droughts, and smoke
- More flooding and erosion due to extreme rainfall and loss of vegetation due to wildfires
- Infrastructure damage due to fires, high winds, and extreme weather days

Many of these climate impacts have a greater impact on historically underrepresented people. We can create resiliency and ensure future generations' livelihoods, by addressing the needs of marginalized and vulnerable community members while implementing climate solutions.

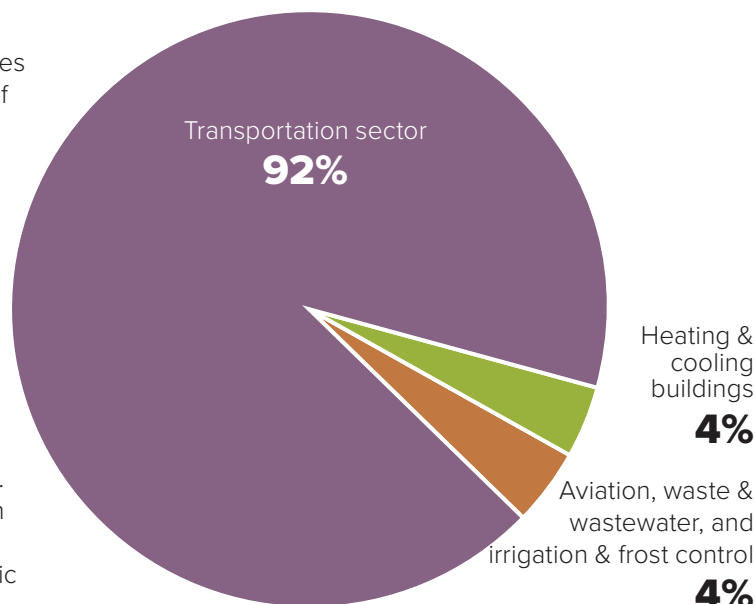
COMMUNITY EMISSIONS

A study commissioned for this process found 92% of greenhouse gas emissions in our community come from the transportation sector, 4% are associated with heat and cooling buildings and 4% come from waste and wastewater, aviation, and irrigation and frost control.

LANDSCAPE EMISSIONS

Methow Valley landscapes can be either a **source** of greenhouse gas emissions (from wildfires and decomposing organic matter), or **a sink** by sequestering carbon in trees, soils, and other forms of organic matter. Losing forest biomass to wildfires increases greenhouse gas emissions. Healthy forests can store carbon. It is vital that we maintain the health of our forests and minimize catastrophic wildfires.

EMISSIONS IN OUR COMMUNITY



EXPECTED CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS IN THE METHOW VALLEY



On average drier, hotter summers with more hot days; average temperatures 3 – 7°F warmer by the 2050s



Wetter winters, less snow, more rain: Snow season reduced by 21 and 47 days in 2040s and 2080s respectively; April 1 snowpack reduced by 65% in the 2080s



Higher peak flows and earlier seasonal flooding; January streamflows increase 164% by 2080s



Lower low flows during the summer; July average streamflow 48% less in 2040s, 65% less in 2080s



Earlier run off, already 20 days earlier in the Northwest

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GOALS FOR A RESILIENT METHOW

- 1. Water to sustain nature and people.** We manage the Methow Valley's finite resources to meet the needs of our growing community and the natural systems on which we depend.
- 2. Resilient, healthy, and abundant natural systems.** Our natural systems are able to withstand disturbances and rebound; resources and wild-life are plentiful and healthy.
- 3. A community prepared and safe in the event of adversity.** When natural disasters strike, we are prepared as a community, and able to respond adequately to protect our health and safety.
- 4. A low-carbon, efficient, livable & resilient/affordable built environment.** Our buildings, transportation, water, and energy infrastructure are highly efficient. Urban spaces and neighborhoods are livable because they are adapted to a warming climate — securing our comfort, health, and safety.
- 5. A thriving place-based economy with equity for all.** Where human needs are balanced with the natural environment.
- 6. A vibrant future for agriculture.** Diverse farms and ranches are resilient in a changing climate and have strong support from the community.
- 7. A carbon-neutral Methow Valley.** We meet state and science-based limits through systematically reducing our use of fossil fuels and improving the health of our landscapes to maximize carbon sequestration

THE METHOW VALLEY CLIMATE ACTION PLAN:

VISIONARY, VALUES-BASED, COMPREHENSIVE ACTION ORIENTED

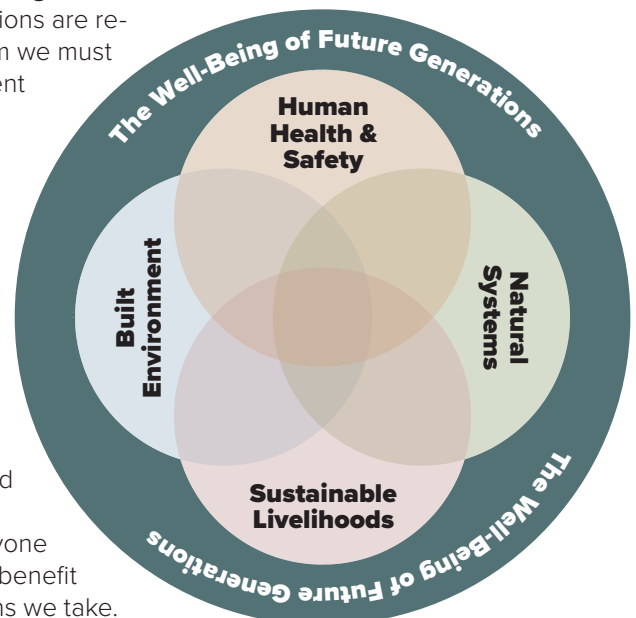
VISION: A Resilient, Carbon-neutral Future with Equity for All

A Resilient Methow. We plan for, and successfully respond to, our changing climate. Our resilience is measured by the health of our air, water, land, people, and all living things.

A carbon-neutral Methow. We reduce our emissions through individual and collective action, and we sequester carbon by ensuring the health and vitality of our landscapes.

THE VISION REFLECTS THE METHOW VALLEY'S CORE VALUES:

- **Human health and safety** for all members of the community, especially those most vulnerable
- **Sustainable livelihoods** that give us the ability to earn a living that enables us to afford to work and live in the Methow
- **A built environment** that is affordable, sustainable, and reliable
- Resilient and healthy **natural systems** that provide biodiversity and abundance
- The well-being of **future generations** to whom current generations are responsible and to whom we must pass on healthy, resilient natural systems
- We strive for **equity** in all elements of the Action Plan. This includes a commitment to long-term consultation with tribes as well as ongoing engagement with diverse stakeholders. Equity in this plan involves providing added support to disadvantaged groups so everyone can participate in and benefit from the climate actions we take.



METHOW VALLEY CLIMATE ACTION PLAN



Community Engagement and the Planning Process

The Methow Valley Climate Action Plan represents the culmination of two years of work and reflects the involvement and contributions of hundreds of Methow residents, consultants, and representatives of local governments, tribes, community organizations, public agencies, and businesses.

The process began in 2019 when the Methow Valley Citizens Council—compelled by the overwhelming community trauma from repeat wildfires and mounting concern over global climate trends—convened a Task Force of community leaders and organizations to discuss how the Methow Valley, from Pateros to Mazama, could best plan for, and adapt to, climate change. Through the Task Force and subcommittees, experts and stakeholders from five key Methow Valley sectors—agriculture, health and emergency services, infrastructure, natural systems, and the economy—came together to develop this plan.

View a full list of participants at www.resilientmethow.org.



NEXT STEPS

To get involved, go to www.resilientmethow.org

Now the essential work begins—collaborating across sectors, community groups, governments, and with tribes to embed climate action into key investment, operational, and policy decisions and acting with urgency on near-term priorities while laying the foundation for long-term change and success.

Some of the strategies identified in the plan are already being implemented by action partners and community members. Other new strategies need leadership, resources, and coordination.

Implementing these actions as a community will require an adaptable approach, and include incorporating new ideas and solutions, revising approaches as needed, and updating the Action Plan to remain relevant, current, and effective.

A Climate Action Hub has been formed to provide resources and support for implementing, guiding and coordinating

the work of community partners. The Hub will also support outreach and communication about the Action Plan and prioritized actions. Extensive community engagement and collaboration will be sought to broaden the network, ensure the plan is inclusive of a variety of perspectives, and expand the impact of the work. Throughout implementation, community partners will be supported by a set of action planning tools, including a network and website to share information. Community engagement also involves collaboration with tribes and regional entities, advocacy, and equity to ensure the actions continue to prioritize community members expected to experience the impacts of climate change the most.

Taking action on climate change is the challenge of our time. Working together, we can—and must—do our part to reduce and sequester emissions, and achieve a resilient community adapting, and thriving in a changing climate.

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PRIORITY STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

The Action Plan comprises strategies and actions to improve resiliency and reduce emissions. The table below summarizes the highest priority actions—those with poten-

tial to create high impact, to provide multiple benefits, to achieve equity outcomes, are foundational for longer term success, or are particularly timely.

STRATEGY	IMMEDIATE/NEAR-TERM ACTIONS	ONGOING/LONGER-TERM ACTIONS
Ensure resilient, healthy natural systems	Foster alignment and advocate for funding to accelerate the pace and scale of forest treatments	Protect & restore existing habitats for ecosystems health and biodiversity
Prepare for Changing Water Availability	Retain water rights in the valley through advocacy and legal action	Ensure towns have adequate water rights to meet current and future demand Plan for/implement water conservation, efficient delivery & storage solutions
Advance the Methow Valley as a fire-adapted community	Implement the Smoke-Ready Initiative Expand Firewise principles to community scale with a focus on equity, prioritizing vulnerable, in-need households	Adopt wildland-urban interface building codes
Invest in community and economic resiliency	Increase investment in and funding for affordable “green” housing Diversify the Methow economy, emphasizing local, climate friendly, and circular economy solutions Support funding and policies to enable affordable, equitable access to high-speed broadband	Use projected climate impacts to inform land use, water, & growth management planning and decisions Manage growth by concentrating development in and near town centers and by encouraging clustering in rural areas, including walkable routes and commuter trails Adapt existing and develop new recreation facilities to meet emerging community needs and sustain a low-impact tourism sector
Support a Resilient Agricultural Community	Create a Resiliency Fund to help farmers adapt to climate change; explore the feasibility of a local carbon offset market as a source of funding	Work with farmland owners to permanently protect agricultural lands from development through conservation easements Increase markets for local agricultural products Highlight the ongoing work of local farmers and ranchers to care for the land and the climate
Reduce Emissions	Organize an initiative to advance electric vehicles, public transit, ride-sharing, and active transport Establish a community composting facility	Expand weatherization and energy assistance to low and moderate income households Expand the reuse/sharing/zero waste economy Prepare for electrification of vehicles and buildings
Advocate, Engage, and Educate	Advocate at the state and federal levels for policies, programs and funding to reduce emissions and increase resiliency; secure resources for local initiatives Create a Resilient Methow website; develop and distribute educational brochures, presentations, and a survey instrument	Foster and nurture a local ‘Methow conservation ethic’ and collaborative, community problem solving in the face of climate change