

Get the goods
Valley Goods store will be open year-round
STORY Page A6

Digging it
Gravel pit operation to begin soon
STORY Page A3

Methow Valley News

PUBLISHED WEEKLY SINCE 1903 TWISP, WASHINGTON VOL. 117 NO. 22 WWW.METHOVALLEYNEWS.COM September 30, 2020 \$1

County Public Health's 'Because We Care' campaign promotes COVID-19 safety

Aim is to help businesses, customers

BY MARCY STAMPER

Shoppers can have increased confidence about their health and safety when they patronize local businesses that take a new "Because We Care" pledge to be COVID-safe.

The pledge is also expected to be a boon for businesses by using a commitment to healthy practices to attract customers and recruit employees.

The new program will identify

the businesses with an eye-catching "COVID-Safe/ Because We Care" logo (in English and Spanish) and listings on social media and the county's COVID-information website. The campaign was developed by Okanogan County Public Health with input from the Okanogan County Coalition for Health Improvement (CHI) and the Economic Alliance.

Public Health has been getting calls from community members concerned about businesses that weren't following state guidelines—and who didn't feel safe patronizing them, Okanogan County Community Health Director Lauri Jones said. Although

Public Health doesn't have enforcement authority, the department wants to encourage and identify businesses that do the right thing, she said.

"We like positive social campaigns rather than enforcement," Jones said. "People take more kindly to non-mandatory things. We want to recognize businesses that are doing their best during a difficult time."

Against a backdrop of fear and polarization over measures to control the spread of COVID, the Because We Care campaign takes a cooperative approach. After a list of tangible steps—requiring masks, maintaining a safe distance

between customers and staff, and regular cleaning protocols—the last commitment in the pledge is more qualitative. Businesses who sign on commit to "Treat everyone with kindness, respect, and care. We're in this together."

The approach has been used in other areas. "The Association of Washington Business led the way by having businesses certify they're COVID-friendly and are following guidelines to get people to come in the door," Economic Alliance Executive Director Roni Holder-Diefenbach said.

The association has been

See COVID, A3



Graphic courtesy of Okanogan County Public Health
This logo will be available for posting in stores that sign on to the "Because We Care" campaign.



Photo courtesy of Jim Pigott

Loading the 1,300- to 1,500-pound hay bales at Moccasin Lake Ranch took some heavy duty equipment and transport, provided at no charge by volunteers to assist OkanDogs.

After fires, OkanDogs steps up for a different kind of rescue mission

Organizational skills put to good use: feeding cattle

BY DON NELSON

The devastating Cold Springs and Pearl Hill fires wiped out not just homes and

other structures, but also consumed hay pastures, stored feed, grazing land—and hundreds of head of livestock.

The surviving animals needed to eat—and there was precious little hay left for thousands of head of cattle in Okanogan and surrounding counties.

But within a few days,

life-saving hay donations and other assistance began to arrive from many directions to help area ranchers.

In the Methow Valley, a heretofore unlikely collaboration between a dog rescue organization and a local hay grower started small but

See OKANDOGS, A2

Methow Valley builders have all they can handle in short season

'Jamming' to get backed-up projects done

BY MALCOLM GRIFFES

The local construction industry is enjoying a boom year as valley contractors hustle to get projects done before the building season wanes.

The season had a late start this year because of a two-month moratorium on construction related to coronavirus countermeasures. However, contractors didn't stop getting requests for work, and when Gov. Jay Inslee re-opened construction in early May, builders quickly headed for job sites.

"The whole season got compressed," said Tim Smith, owner of Big Valley Builders. "Everyone is struggling to do what we normally do, with a limited timeframe. We lost two months, and it's been tough on everybody."

"It's a matter of having just barely enough [subcontractors] to get things done.

We're also seeing things out of stock," said Smith, who's been waiting on the delivery of a refrigerator for two months.

"We're jamming to get it all done. Hopefully we won't be outside too much in January, but it really depends on how the next couple of months go," he said.

Permits continued

While construction halted in late March, building applications and contracts for proposed projects didn't slow down much.

"Everything was shut down right when work would have been starting," said Dan Higbee, Okanogan County Building Official. "When it did open up, there was no staging, everybody was trying to start at the same time."

The building department has issued 45 single-family dwelling permits in the Methow Valley this year, compared to 55 issued in 2019.

"Considering the slowdown this year, we're a little ahead of where we were

last year [with issued permits]," said Higbee. "Overall, I expected a downturn in applications this year, with a pandemic going on, and a presidential election ... I was surprised when that didn't happen."

"I'm doing different inspections right now than I was at this time last year," Higbee added. "I'm basically looking at a two-month difference, which means some contractors will continue framing throughout the winter; some are just getting the foundation in this fall, and will have to continue in the spring."

Taking longer

Phil Dietz, owner of Lost River Construction, has been so busy that he's had to turn work down this year. Other contractors have reported being booked through next year.

"I think more people are moving here, they can work remotely; I think that's what we're seeing," said Dietz.

Dietz and his crew are hard at work but he's look-

See BUILDING, A3

INSIDE THIS WEEK

- A guide to the 2020 Give Methow campaign, inside the B section.
- The connection between fires and mental health, on Page B1.

GIVE METHOW NONPROFIT DIRECTORY
Donate October 1-31 at www.GiveMethow.org

SUPPORT LOCAL NONPROFITS! Your donation to the Give Methow campaign will be directed to one of more than 100 local nonprofits. The campaign will support 100% of your donation goes to the nonprofits you select.

WIN \$500 ON HUNDAY MORNINGS! Each week from Monday to Thursday, we'll randomly select a Monday, your name will be entered in our \$500 Give on Give drawing and you could win \$500!

SHOW THE STRETCH POOL! Show your support for Give Methow nonprofits! Donate to the Stretch Pool! Each organization will receive an equal portion of the pool. New this year, every donation to the Stretch Pool is eligible for a Friday Monday entry!

Alder Creek Project
Alder Creek Project is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Alder Creek watershed in Okanogan County, Washington.

American Legion Post 4423
The American Legion Post 4423 is a patriotic organization dedicated to the service and support of our veterans and their families.

Columbia River Salmon Recovery
The Columbia River Salmon Recovery Fund is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Columbia River salmon population.

Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakima Nation
The Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakima Nation is a sovereign nation with a rich history and culture.

State grants support local salmon recovery projects

Funds dedicated to improving fish habitat

BY DON NELSON

Three Methow Valley salmon restoration projects are included in state grants totaling \$18 million recently awarded by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board.

The grants go to organizations around the state to repair rivers, remove barriers blocking fish passage and replant riverbanks in an effort to recover salmon from the brink of extinction.

The state grants total \$856,438 in Okanogan County including a fourth project near Malott.

The grants, given annually

and overseen by the state Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO), went to 91 projects in 29 of the state's 39 counties.

Okanogan county projects are:

- Restoring a historic side channel of the Chewuch River north of Winthrop to facilitate year-round salmon habitat.
- Adding tree root wads and logs in Alder Creek south of Twisp to support side channel habitat.
- Improving fish habitat and creating additional flood capacity in the Upper Beaver Creek area east of Twisp.
- Restoration of Loup Loup Creek near the town of Malott.

More detail on each project:

Chewuch River

The Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakima Nation will



Photo courtesy of Recreation and Conservation Office
A project in the Alder Creek area south of Twisp will support side channel habitat.

use a state grant of \$266,485, and provide matching funds of \$392,866, for a \$659,351 project that will restore a historic side channel and floodplain connections to improve habitat for Chinook salmon, which is a species listed as endangered under

the federal Endangered Species Act, and steelhead trout, which is a species listed as threatened with extinction under the federal act. The project area is about 4 miles north of Winthrop on the

See GRANTS, A3

ADDRESS LABEL

THURS.	FRI.	SAT.	SUN.	MON.	TUES.
Oct 1	Oct 2	Oct 3	Oct 4	Oct 5	Oct 6
80°	82°	82°	81°	78°	77°
50°	53°	49°	49°	50°	45°
Partly Sunny	Sunny and warm	Ditto	Sunny	Mostly sunny	Mostly cloudy

WEATHER DATA BASED ON ACCUWEATHER.COM FORECAST FOR TWISP

INSIDE ...

OPINIONA4
CLASSIFIEDSB2
COMMUNITYA5
HARTS PASSA6
VALLEY LIFEB4

OKANDOGS

From Page A1

quickly escalated into a major operation that has moved hundreds of tons of hay to the other side of the county.

Thanks to some logistical miracle-working, generous donations and selfless volunteerism, OkanDogs – a Cashmere-based nonprofit whose main mission is to facilitate dog adoptions in the Okanogan County area – has played a major role in keeping cattle fed the past couple of weeks.

Coordinating that effort in the Methow Valley, with lots of volunteer assistance, is valley resident Penelope Varn, a community outreach director for OkanDogs.

OkanDogs' intent is simple: to buy and distribute hay to those in need. Varn said the organization is on track to deliver about 1,000 tons of hay to fire-impacted areas by the middle of next week.

"We are on the ground, finding the ranchers who are in dire need and trucking it to them," Varn said. "With the continued support of our donors, I would not be surprised if we meet or exceed half the government's projected hay aid for all of Okanogan County within a month. The government hay aid, on the other hand, won't materialize until late December, most likely."

Although there are costs associated with moving big shipments of hay – trucks, gas, drivers, loaders and unloaders – all donations to the OkanDogs fund were used to purchase hay, Varn said.

"We have not had to pay one cent to get hay from the source to the ranchers in need, because of very generous volunteers," Varn said.

More than 200 tons of that hay was purchased from Moccasin Lake Ranch, a sprawling working ranch on

Patterson Lake Road owned by longtime Methow Valley benefactors Jim and Gaye Pigott. The money to purchase that hay came from the Moccasin Lake Foundation, a nonprofit administered by the Pigotts that supports a variety of community-based causes.

Early response

Varn said the need became evident almost immediately after the fires started and quickly spread. OkanDogs' involvement was precipitated by an OkanDogs volunteer, Tiffany Wisdom, who lost all of her hay and put out feelers for acquiring feed, Varn said. Summer Huckaby of Rock Island, another OkanDogs volunteer, was also buying hay, or procuring donated hay, and rounding up volunteers to get feed to ranchers in the burned areas, Varn said.

"We realized there were a lot of starving animals out there," Varn said. OkanDogs President Tom Short asked Varn if she could get hay for people who needed it. "Tom Short gave us marching orders," Varn said.

The first smaller loads that OkanDogs purchased from Moccasin Lake Ranch were pickup truck loads that Varn, Annie Budelisech and her husband Bob Levy piled onto their rigs. They went to the Okanogan County Fairgrounds, where some injured animals were also being tended to. Varn continued to buy hay from the ranch, and asked ranch manager Steve Tomschin for a bill.

"Jim [Pigott] originally got involved with this because he saw me buying and transporting hay from Moccasin Lake, a little at a time, and finally found out what I was doing from his ranch manager [Tomschin]," Varn said. "Out at the haystacks, Jim said to me, 'if Moccasin Lake were to donate this hay to help people who need it, who would

be the ones to get it to those people?' I said to him, 'that would be me. That would be us — OkanDogs.'"

The next day, Pigott called Varn to tell her that the Moccasin Lake Foundation would donate enough money to OkanDogs to pay for the hay on his ranch that the organization was purchasing.

"We have good hay here," Pigott said in an interview. "We thought, if we can help these people now, let's do it."

Pigott said he identifies with the farmers. "It's fun for me to be a part of this," he said. The Pigotts even accompanied one of the bigger deliveries, to Brewster-area rancher Dale Smith, and got a first-hand look at the fire damage.

Pigott said he was impressed with how efforts were coordinated to procure the hay, and round up drivers to get it where it's needed. The Moccasin Lake bales are supersized, 1,300 to 1,500 pounds each, so heavy equipment is required for loading and unloading.

Early on, hay shipments went to the fairgrounds but "it became evident they wouldn't be capable of handling everything that was coming in," Pigott said. The call went out for more hauling capacity, and the Methow Valley promptly responded.

Bob Lloyd of Lloyd Logging Company was instrumental in lining up others to help, Varn said. "Bob coordinated all the drivers," she said. "We told him who needed the hay, and he scheduled it."

Companies that also provided transport for the loads included McHugh Excavating, Brandenburg Construction, Palm Construction, Haase Excavating, Wildcat Excavation, CWH and B&B Excavating. Drivers included Dennis Gardner, Bob Lloyd, Max Judd, Justin McMillan, Mike Scarsella, Paul Darwood, Keith Strickland, Paul

Soodak, Al Oosterhof, Aaron Buzzard and Don Maples. Also assisting with deliveries were Christina Cline, a local farrier, and Toby, Tammy and Jake Pennock of Pennock Excavation, Varn said.

"These guys stepped up in the heart of a busy [construction] season ... they devoted time to hauling the hay and absorbing all the costs," Pigott said. "Everybody's doing it with a smile."

Looking ahead

"Our goal up until now was to get every rancher in need set up with two weeks of hay, but with some of the bigger operations, that is a very tall order," Varn said.

The response at the receiving end has been more than gratifying. "They're so relieved when we come, and so thankful," Varn said of the ranchers. "They needed hay fast. They've got cattle going hungry."

Varn said OkanDogs hopes to buy third-cutting hay from Moccasin Lake as well. OkanDogs' efforts will shift to smaller ranches that still need assistance, Varn said. "We will continue to do this until we can't," Varn said. "At least we're buying the ranchers some time."

"We'll need every bit of it to get [ranchers] through the winter," she added. Then next spring, ranchers will be looking for viable range land that wasn't burned beyond use.

"Everybody's been just wonderfully generous," Varn said of the valley's volunteers. "We haven't had anyone say no."

"That's the Methow," Pigott said. "Somebody needs help, you do it."

HOW TO HELP

Want to help with the OkanDogs hay project? Make donations to <http://paypal.me/okandogs> or send checks to OkanDogs, 6820 Osprey Lane, Cashmere, WA 98815.

A longtime rancher copes with devastation

BY DON NELSON

Dale Smith's family has been ranching for more than 100 years, running cattle in the big, open expanses east of Brewster on the Colville Reservation. The Smith clan endured a lot over that century – but nothing like the Cold Springs Fire.

The high-velocity blaze blasted through Smith's ranchland with such ferocity that it burned everything it encountered right down to the ground.

"We've never seen anything like it," Smith said in an interview this week. "We couldn't have taken a more direct hit."

The fire barely spared the ranch buildings, but it wiped out about 90% of Smith's stored hay, burned hay-growing pastures, and killed at least 200 cows, 200 calves and 30 bulls "that we know of," Smith said. He estimated his overall herd at around 1,000 head.

At the same time, although the fire stopped short of his stored hay, embers the size of baseballs drifted over and set the hay piles on fire. "We watched them go up, one-by-one," Smith said. Miles of boundary fences also burned, making it harder to locate the surviving livestock. With the help of neighbors, Smith put up some temporary fencing to contain the cattle that are found.

The livestock that could be found and rounded up were in desperate need of feed. But it didn't take long for donated hay, including big truck-

loads delivered from the Methow Valley's Moccasin Lake Ranch by OkanDogs, to start arriving at the Smith ranch.

"It's very humbling," Smith said of the donations.

Smith and his employees have spent a lot of time in the saddle looking for scattered livestock – and encountering too many dead cattle. "Seeing all the dead cows is heartbreaking," Smith said. "The cows got overtaken." And because the entire landscape is charred black, Smith said he may not notice a carcass until he's right on top of it.

"Everything was so dry," Smith said. "We knew we were on a powder keg."

Smith said he feels fortunate compared to others who lost homes and more in the fire. Waves of volunteer help came from a variety of directions, Smith said, and through a variety of means including a much-needed generator.

Smith said it's been hard to sleep despite the long, exhausting days, because he's always thinking about what else needs to be done. Looking ahead, he said it will probably be a couple of years before the ranch fully recovers, including time for rangeland to be restored.

Ordinarily, Smith would not start feeding his cattle hay until Christmas, but there's nothing for them to eat now except what's donated. The remaining herd is going through 20 tons of hay a day. "It's going to be a long fall," he said.

Update: County actions on land use, recreation

BY MARCY STAMPER

Here's a quick look at the status of land use issues and actions in Okanogan County:

Lower valley zoning

New lots in the lower Methow Valley will be at least 5 acres – instead of 1 acre – if the county commissioners follow a recommendation by the Okanogan County Planning Commission. The planning commissioners recommended making the zoning rules permanent at their meeting on Monday (Sept. 28).

The less-dense zoning from Gold Creek to near Alta Lake was instituted by the county commissioners on an interim basis in June 2019 to protect limited water supplies. The commissioners were concerned small lots would allow thousands

of houses to be built without enough water to supply them. According to an analysis done about 10 years ago, the lower valley already has more lots than the water allocation can support.

The zoning change slashes the number of buildable lots by 81%. Anyone who already has a parcel smaller than 5 acres will be able to build on the lot, although they must meet other water requirements. Lots where wells would be fed by the Columbia River are also not affected.

Methow Valley Citizens Council Executive Director Jasmine Minbashian testified in favor of the change, to protect water availability, wildlife habitat and open space. Lower density will increase wildfire safety, she said.

Mark Miller questioned why zoning is being used as a tool to control density, rather

than assessing water availability on individual lots. This area needs more housing, Miller said.

Recreation plan

Okanogan County could have a current recreation plan for the first time in years, now that the planning commissioners recommended adoption of an updated draft. The planning commission recommended adoption of a rec plan six years ago, but the county commissioners never adopted it, according to Okanogan County Planning Director Pete Palmer.

Members of the public urged the county to revise the plan to prioritize additional trails for recreation and commuting, to address conflicts between users such as equestrians and all-terrain vehicles, and to relieve pressure on trails in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.

Because having a current rec plan is important for obtaining grants, Palmer urged adoption. Issues raised by the public can be addressed in an update, she said.

Okanogan Watershed plan

The planning commission also recommended adoption of the Okanogan Watershed plan, a massive effort that has been in the works for several years.

A key aim of the plan is to create a net ecological benefit for aquatic habitats and species.

The Okanogan was one of several watersheds required by the state Legislature in 2018 to update its watershed plan to identify the potential impacts of exempt-well use, identify conservation measures, and identify projects to improve watershed health.

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE® Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)

1. Publication Title: Methow Valley News 2. Publication Number: 01341334810 3. Filing Date: September 30, 2020

4. Issue Frequency: Once per week 5. Number of Issues Published Annually: 52 6. Annual Subscription Price: \$39, \$50, \$65

7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Not printer) (Street, city, county, state, and ZIP+4®): PO Box 97, 502 S Glover St, Twisp WA 8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher (Not printer): 98856

9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor (Do not leave blank):
 Publisher (Name and complete mailing address): Donald Nelson PO Box 97, Twisp, WA 98856
 Editor (Name and complete mailing address): Donald Nelson PO Box 97, Twisp, WA 98856
 Managing Editor (Name and complete mailing address): Same as above

10. Owner (Do not leave blank. If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, give the names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address.)
 Full Name: Donald Nelson Complete Mailing Address: PO Box 97, Twisp, WA 98856

11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities. If none, check box: None

12. Tax Status (For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at nonprofit rates) (Check one):
 Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months
 Has Changed During Preceding 12 Months (Publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement)

13. Publication Title: Methow Valley News 14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: September 23, 2020

13. Extent and Nature of Circulation		14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below	
		Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)			
		2447	2432
b. Paid Circulation (By Mail and Outside the Mail)			
(1) Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)		616	600
(2) Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)		784	855
(3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS®		1047	977
(4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail®)		0	0
c. Total Paid Distribution (Sum of 13b(1), (2), (3), and (4))		2447	2432
d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail)			
(1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541		0	0
(2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541		0	0
(3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail)		0	0
(4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means)		0	0
e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of 13d(1), (2), (3) and (4))		0	0
f. Total Distribution (Sum of 13c and 13e)		2447	2432
g. Copies not Distributed (See Instructions to Publishers #4 (page #3))		245	308
h. Total (Sum of 13f and g)		2692	2740
i. Percent Paid (13c divided by 13h times 100)		100%	100%

17. Publication of Statement of Ownership:
 The publication is a general publication, publication of this statement is required. Will be printed in the September 30, 2020 issue of this publication.
 Publication not required.

18. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: [Signature] Date: 9/30/20

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).



Twisp Medical

Monday-Friday
8am-5pm

Call 800 660-2129 for information on FHC Dental hours and closings



FAMILY HEALTH CENTERS
WHOLE PERSON HEALTH



OPEN DAILY

Take Out & Limited Seating
Call In n' Come In

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Open Daily 6-3 • 509.997.5030
Free Wi-Fi • Downtown Twisp

PARDNERS MINI MARKET

STORE OPEN LATE
6am-midnight!

with 24 HOUR BRANDED FUEL



Winthrop • 996-2005

METHOW VALLEY CITIZENS COUNCIL
Raising a strong community voice for the protection of the Methow Valley's natural environment and rural character since 1976.



Give Methow is right around the corner, tune in to our Facebook page (@mvcitizens) and website (mvcitizens.org) for more info!

509.997.0888 www.mvcitizens.org