

# Methow Valley News

PUBLISHED WEEKLY SINCE 1903 TWISP, WASHINGTON VOL. 117 NO. 29 WWW.METHOVALLEYNEWS.COM November 18, 2020 \$1

## State imposes restrictions to control COVID surge

**Holiday social gatherings discouraged**

BY MARCY STAMPER

Bars, restaurants and gyms will have to close for at least four weeks, retail stores will be limited to 25% capacity, and people will not be permitted to gather indoors with anyone outside their immediate household. The measures — to rein in the exponential spread of COVID-19 in Washington — were announced on Sunday (Nov. 15) by Gov. Jay Inslee.

New COVID cases in Washington have doubled in the past two weeks, and the daily toll has broken a record every few days. On Saturday (Nov. 14), the state recorded 2,286 cases, the highest ever, Inslee said.

Despite those dire numbers, Washington is one of a handful of states on the national map of COVID hot spots that isn't blood red. The new restrictions are an attempt to keep it that way — to avoid

more serious illness and death and not overwhelm the state's health care system, Inslee said.

"This spike puts us in a more dangerous a position [than] in March," Inslee said. "And it means, unfortunately, the time has come to reinstate restrictions on activities statewide to preserve the public's well-being, and to save lives. These were very difficult decisions that have very real consequences to people's livelihoods. I recognize that and don't take those impacts lightly, but we must act now and act quickly to slow the spread of this disease."

Inslee said the state would use federal CARES Act funding to help small businesses weather the shutdown. "We understand that this is both an economic and a public health crisis. We do not take lightly the impact these restrictions will have on local businesses, many of which have already had a very difficult year. You are not alone, and we will continue to provide supports," he said.

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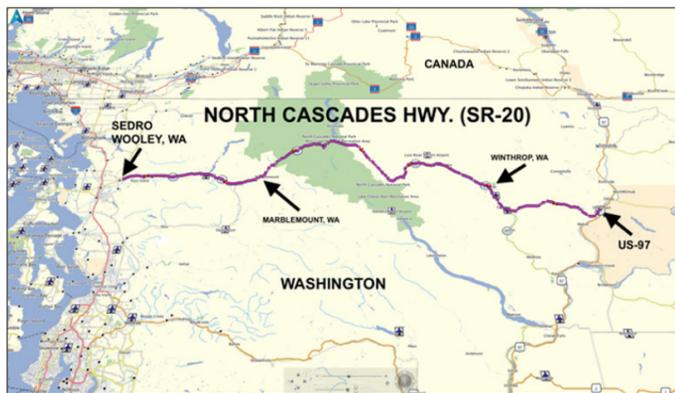


Photo courtesy of roadrunner.travel

The North Cascades Highway, including Washington Pass, was closed for the season last weekend after a couple of snowstorms.

## Heavy snowfalls close North Cascades Highway for season

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) said Monday (Nov. 16) that the North Cascades Highway is closed for the season due to recent heavy snows and a forecast for more.

The highway had been closed Friday (Nov. 13) because of snow accumulation and the threat of avalanches.

WSDOT crews close a stretch of State Route 20 every year once snow fills the avalanche chutes that line the highway, which pose a safety risk to travelers and road crews.

The closure points start at milepost 134/Ross Dam Trailhead and at milepost 171/Silver Star Gate. When significant snow begins to fall,

WSDOT crews will move the western closure point back to milepost 130/Colonial Creek Campground and the eastern closure point to milepost 178/Early Winters Campground, WSDOT said. These weather-dependent changes usually happen in January, WSDOT said.

Hikers, skiers, snowmobilers and other recreationalists can access the closed portion of highway during the winter season. Users should park in designated parking areas to allow plow drivers the space they need to clear snow around the closed stretch's access gates.

The highway closed on Dec. 11 in 2019, and reopened on May 12, 2020.

## EARLY RISERS



Photo by Ashley Lodato

Footprints in the snow indicate that perhaps someone else had come this way before our photographer, who was there in time to capture the best moments of a Methow Valley autumn sunrise.

## Mission Restoration Project lawsuit arguments heard in U.S. District Court

**USFS disputes need for environmental impact statement**

BY MARCY STAMPER

Lawyers for the U.S. Forest Service and the Alliance for the Wild Rockies made their cases in U.S. District Court on Tuesday (Nov. 10) as to whether the Forest Service had adequately analyzed the potential for the Mission Restoration Project to harm endangered fish and habitat for deer and grizzly bears.

The Montana-based alliance, which filed the lawsuit against the Forest Service last year, contends that the agency failed to look explicitly at the environmental impacts of logging, but instead combined them with the effects of restoration proposed in the project.

Forest Service attorney Vanessa Waldref countered that the alliance hadn't shown that the agency hadn't fulfilled its obligations under federal laws intended to protect the environment and enhance habitat

for endangered species. She asked Judge Salvador Mendoza Jr. to dismiss the entire lawsuit.

They alliance argues that the Mission Project is complex enough that the Forest Service should be ordered to do a detailed environmental impact statement to understand its impacts. The organization also asked the court to block the agency from carrying out the project.

Waldref specifically challenged the alliance's claim that the agency was required to consult with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service about the chance that roads in the 50,200-acre Mission Project could make it less likely that grizzly bears would recover in the area.

The alliance contended that because new information has emerged since 1989 (when the agencies consulted on the Okanogan National Forest Plan), the Forest Service must initiate a new consultation about potential impacts on grizzlies.

The impact of roads on grizzlies has been known for a long time and, since there are no known grizzlies in the area, there's nothing new to discuss, Waldref said. "Roads can

only affect grizzlies if grizzlies are there," she said.

The land in the Mission Project proposal is part of the North Cascades Recovery Zone for grizzlies, which requires that the land be managed for the bears, alliance attorney Kristine Akland said. Consultation is required when a species may be present — it's not necessary to know if the animals are actually present, she said.

Moreover, wildlife agencies have determined that the grizzly population in the North Cascades is so small that there's a significant risk that the bears could be completely extirpated. Roads present an imminent threat, Akland said.

The fact that a proposed plan to reintroduce grizzlies to the North Cascades was recently shelved doesn't change the requirement for the agencies to consult about the effects of the Mission Project, Akland said.

### Blurring impacts?

Waldref said the Mission Project incorporates restoration of streams

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## Westman's ongoing legacy: \$1.7 million bequest

**Funds will support valley nonprofits**

BY DON NELSON

Methow Valley nonprofit organizations will benefit from a \$1.7 million bequest by the late Ken Westman, a longtime community activist and benefactor, the Community Foundation of NCW announced in a press release.

The bequest will be managed by the Community Foundation, which will transfer funds to the Methow Valley Fund each year for distribution to the valley's nonprofits. "It will provide additional funding available for the grants,

so greater awards for the nonprofits that apply," said Community Foundation Executive Director Beth Stipe. "This will begin in the next grant cycle that opens December 2021."

Westman, who died in July 2019 after a long illness, "was an active participant with many local organizations that served to enhance the quality of life in the Methow Valley," according to the Community Foundation press release. "In addition to financial support, Ken devoted much of his time to serving on committees, as a volunteer on boards and in leadership positions. His lifetime of service and legacy in this community is legendary."

Currently, the Methow Valley Fund,

which has been operating since 2006, awards more than \$60,000 in grants each year to local nonprofits.

"This bequest will have a significant impact on the quality of life for the Methow Valley for generations," said Stipe. "Ken was always so kind and generous. We knew he was planning to leave a gift to benefit the valley he loved, but we were stunned at the magnitude. I can only imagine his delight and much loved laugh, knowing the surprise he pulled on all of us! We are honored to be able to continue Ken's generosity and to support the valley and the many causes that make it such a special place, forever!"

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Photo courtesy of Lynn Northcott  
 Ken Westman was a familiar figure in valley activities for decades.

ADDRESS LABEL

THURS.	FRI.	SAT.	SUN.	MON.	TUES.
Nov 19	Nov 20	Nov 21	Nov 22	Nov 23	Nov 24
42°	39°	41°	41°	40°	44°
26°	27°	29°	28°	32°	31°
Mostly cloudy	Cloudy	Ditto	Still cloudy	Chance of snow	Possible snow

WEATHER DATA BASED ON ACCUWEATHER.COM FORECAST FOR TWISP

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