

Methow Recycles Announces Retirement of Executive Director Betsy Cushman

After 19 Years, Cushman to Retire Spring 2021; Search for New Executive Director to Begin Immediately

Twisp, WA – December 16, 2020 – Today, Methow Recycles announced the forthcoming retirement of Executive Director Betsy Cushman. Cushman has served as executive director since 2001. Like many relative newcomers to the Methow Valley, Cushman was a volunteer with the Methow Conservancy, helping on the project to build a recycling center. As construction neared completion, she was asked if she might like to run the organization as acting manager until “someone permanent” was found. Nineteen years later, she is finally ready to hand over the helm of a treasured, successful, and growing community resource.

“It’s been an incredibly interesting, challenging, and rewarding experience,” says Cushman. “Coming from the corporate world I wasn’t used to hearing ‘thank you’ so much as I’ve heard it here during this, my second career.”

Early in her tenure, Cushman learned the key to the survivability of recycling in the Methow Valley was to adhere to the recycling industry’s quality requirements to ensure access to the recycling commodity marketplace. To this, she added her commitment to treat the operation as a successful retailer would. “Nobody has to recycle with us,” says Cushman. “We want people to *want* to come to us. To ensure that, we place a high value on our staff and volunteers delivering great customer service - being friendly and helpful, creating a reliable and consistent experience, and making Methow Recycles a fun place to visit.”

Under Cushman’s leadership, Methow Recycles has grown to an organization with a \$350,000 annual operating budget, five dedicated employees, a passionate eleven-member board of directors, and a vibrant set of more than 40 volunteers. It has also become the trusted voice in the community for waste reduction and environmental stewardship as well as a highly valued contributor in the nonprofit sector in the Methow Valley.

“When people think of Methow Recycles, they think of Betsy, and for good reason” said Missy LeDuc, Methow Recycles board president. “I really can’t overstate her contribution in creating this community resource and, perhaps even more importantly, in making waste reduction central to the community’s ethos and mindset. Thanks to Betsy, the Methow Valley is an example of how we can take care of the environment and reduce our impact on it.”

Since its founding, the volume of materials handled by Methow Recycles has grown by nearly 400%. The organization is a role model for other rural recyclers and has been recognized statewide for innovation. Its superpower is adaptability, and over the years it has integrated curbside recycling collected by WasteWise, conducted ten metal drives, responded to international forces that have destabilized recycling commodity values multiple times and, most recently, reinvented its operations with additional health and safety protocols in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cushman will retire in the spring of 2021. The search for a new executive director is being led by the Methow Recycles board of directors’ executive committee and a hiring committee made up of community volunteers and past Methow Recycles Board members. The plan is to hire Cushman’s replacement prior to her departure to ensure a smooth transition.

“While finding a new executive director will be a challenge, we’ve been actively preparing for this transition for most of this year,” said Don Linnertz, Methow Recycles board member. “The executive committee has worked collaboratively with Betsy to create a succession plan. We’ve established a hiring committee and identified the skills, experience, and temperament that will be required for our next executive director. While we will miss Betsy and her leadership, she leaves behind a thriving organization in a strong financial position, a highly capable staff, and a clear set of priorities. We’re all excited to see what the future holds for Methow Recycles.”

As Cushman prepares for a new leader to take the reins, she observes, “Although recycling is very beneficial to our efforts to combat climate change, I hope to see our community begin to question the apparent inevitability of waste. Reducing our consumption and its accompanying waste does so much to ensure the sustainability of our community and the planet. We have a strong, talented staff and board ready to take our mission to the next level. The future of Methow Recycles is bright!”

About Methow Recycles

Founded in 2001, Methow Recycles inspires and facilitates resource conservation through recycling, waste prevention, and materials reuse in the Methow Valley. To accomplish its mission, Methow Recycles delivers educational programs in the schools, to local businesses, and to the community at-large to decrease the amount of waste going into the landfill, and to drive greater awareness and understanding of the importance of recycling. These innovative educational programs, combined with materials reuse, a tool library, repair cafes, and a successful recycling center help create a healthy and sustainable Methow Valley.