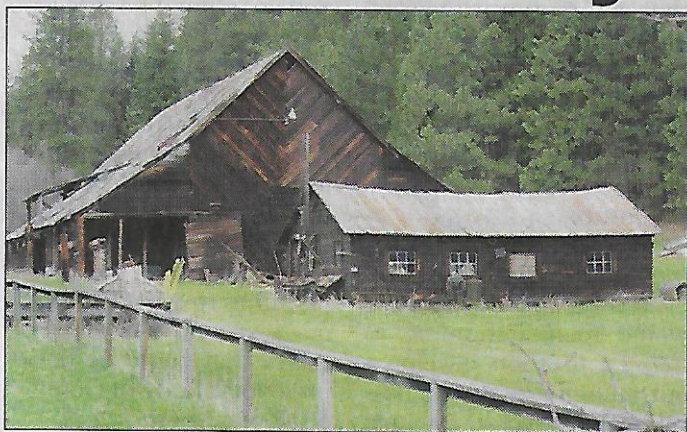


# *Fish and Wildlife Commission approves* **215-acre acquisition in the Teanaway**



**THE CROSETTO Family's 215 acres includes this old barn, a repository of Teanaway River Valley memories and a visible chapter of the region's olden day story.** N.K.C. TRIBUNE/Jim Fossett photo - 2017

**by Jim Fossett | jim@nkctribune.com**

**TEANAWAY** — On Friday, April 14, the Washington State Fish and Wildlife Commission flashed the green light for the agency to acquire 215-acres in the Teanaway River Valley.

The agency describes the acreage as “agricultural land, irrigated hay fields, and logging and forest management lands that include 0.6 miles of the Teanaway River, with a [notable] water right.”

The site is off Teanaway Road, about four miles from where the road meets SR970. Locals know it as the Crosetto family farm.

Said **Michael Livingston**, Washington Fish and Wildlife's [WDFW] South-Central Regional Director, “Getting the Commission's approval to pursue this acquisition was a big step, though there's quite a bit of work left to do. The goal is to wrap up the sale by June.”

Livingston said to get started WDFW would manage the land as part of the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area.

“Ultimately we want consistency with how we manage the Teanaway Community Forest, so over time we'll roll it over to the management scheme used for the Community Forest.”

Livingston said the funding strategy has changed.

Back in January 2016 when the agency announced its interest in the property, the thought then was to underwrite the buy with state and federal grants administered by the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund and the North American Wetland Conservation Act.

Wildlife Service, Kittitas County, and the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan to underwrite the purchase.

Livingston said the buildings on the Crosetto family homestead, visible from Teanaway Road, are not part of the sale.

“The owners want to salvage what materials they can, including barn wood. Eventually all the buildings will go. I think they may already have someone lined up to do that. As far as we know, at this point we don’t have a timetable for that work.”

Buildings include the massive barn Livingston mentioned, a large shed and a home — all deeply rooted in the river valley’s past. For the history books, **Chuck Ballard**, a lifetime Teanaway resident, filled in some blanks.

“My grandfather bought the buildings and the property some time before World War II. Then my dad farmed it the whole time I was going to school in the 1940s and onward into the 1950s when he sold it the Crosetto family.

“They say the house was built in 1935 and that the barn was probably built then, too. It’s a shame to tear it all down, but that’s the family’s choice. They have the right to do what they want with it.”

**William Myer**, a WDFW biologist who has spent a lot of time in the Teanaway, said he’s excited about the acquisition.

“It’s critical fish and wildlife habitat, once home to spotted owl habitat, back before the forest was thinned. We have photos of the endangered Gray wolves crossing the property, and where the land abuts the Teanaway River lies the heart of Chinook spawning ground. Also in the river are two other species: bull trout and steelhead, both threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

“Another great thing about the property is that it ties together Teanaway Community Forest lands on both sides of the valley.”

### **Public process**

Livingston said the time to comment on the acquisition has long since expired.

Last year in January WDFW Land Conservation and Restoration Section Manager **Cynthia Wilkerson** led the review process, designed to solicit public input before the agency developed a funding strategy. Back then she said, “We want to give people the opportunity to comment before moving forward.” Deadline for comments was February 12, 2016.

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