

Teanaway committee begins work on recreation plan

Meetings, field trips planned over next 12 to 18 months

By **NICOLE KLAUSS**
staff writer

The Teanaway Community Forest Recreation Planning Committee met on Thursday to discuss the planning process for the next 10 to 15 years of recreation in the Teanaway.

The state purchased 50,241 acres in 2013 to create Washington's first community forest.

The management plan for the Teanaway Community Forest requires the Washington state Department of Natural Resources and state Department of Fish and Wildlife to develop a recreation blueprint for the forest that will be an outline for recreation development and opportunities.

Committee members were introduced to staff from DNR and WDFW during Thursday's meeting at the Swauk-Teanaway Grange. The majority of members had previously served on the Teanaway Community Advisory Committee during the creation of the management plan.

PLANNING

The committee will be responsible for developing objectives to manage the land for the next 10 to 15 years, and will determine what types of recreation will be provided in the forest and where. Members will identify opportunities for connections across the landscape, identify partnerships and volunteer opportunities, and will set priorities for implementing the plan.

Specifically they will look to maintain and expand opportunities like birding, hunting, hiking, fishing, horseback riding, camping and snowmobiling while ensuring watershed protection.

The committee has 12 to 18 months of work ahead, said DNR assistant region manager Doug McClelland, who is retiring today, but will continue assisting in a volunteer capacity.

Over that time there will be 12 to 14 meetings, about three hours each, and additional field trips. Once the group has developed a recreation management plan, both state agencies will have the final decision on approval.

McClelland encouraged everyone to make the meetings and to communicate with their organizations

and constituents throughout the process.

"This is a time for you to step outside of your specific interest and communicate so you can provide their insights," he said as he explained expectations for the group.

LEGISLATIVE ASK

Doug Schindler, a committee member, spoke about the upcoming Legislative session and budgets. The two agencies are asking for \$775,000 in operating funds and \$1.48 million in capital for the Teanaway and recreation process, said Schindler.

"We've got our work cut out for us in convincing the Senate and the House to fund this," he said.

Schindler said Sen. Judy Warnick, R-Moses Lake, and Rep. Tom Dent, R-Moses Lake, are supportive of the request, but added more people need to show support. He encouraged committee members to get their organizations to write letters of support and to start spreading the word about the importance of the funding.

"We're really going to need a lot of people to lean in on this," Schindler said.

MEMBERS

Committee members introduced themselves and talked about their connection to recreation in the Teanaway.

Andrew Cromarty, a local landowner, said it will be important to have shared interests and get over disagreements quickly.

"We have an opportunity to create something unlike anywhere else, and I think it's important we take the opportunity to be creative and to think outside the box," he said.

Martha Wyckoff, a neighboring landowner, said her goal is to make the Teanaway a place for education.

"We need an economic focus and community outreach to a much larger audience than just here to make it a great community forest. ... I think we have a resource and asset here that is unlike anywhere else."

Members of the Teanaway Community Forest Recreation Planning Committee include: Dale Bambrick, fish biologist; Paul Jewell or substitute Laura Osiadacz, Kittitas County Commissioners; J.J. Collins, county resident; Kitty Craig, the Wilderness Society;

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Andrew Cromarty, local landowner; Jeri Downs, Teanaway Valley farmer; Urban Eberhart, Yakima Basin Integrated Plan Board; Deborah Essman, Kittitas County Field and Stream Club; Scott Gray, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance; Darcy Batura, the Nature Conservancy; James

Halstrom, Friends of the Teanaway; Andrea Imler, Washington Trails Association; John Littell, Kittitas County resident; Wayne Mohler, Washington State Snowmobile Association; Mike Reimer, off-road vehicle interests; Phil Rigdon or substitute Tom Ring, Yakama Nation Department of Natural Resources; Doug Schindler, Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust; Tom Tebb or substitute Sage Park,

Washington Department of Ecology; Martha Wyckoff, a neighboring landowner and family farmer; and Kathy Young, Back Country Horsemen of Washington.

The committee will meet next from 6-9 p.m. Feb. 9 at the Putnam Centennial Center in Cle Elum.

To get updates on the recreation planning process, visit www.dnr.wa.gov/TeanawayRec.