

Teanaway Grazing Management Plan gets the green light

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TEANAWAY – When the Teanaway Community Forest Citizens Advisory Committee met last week inside Swauk-Teanaway Grange to review and approve the Grazing Management Plan proposed by its Grazing Subcommittee – not a single objection was put on the table that would have sent the plan back to subcommittee for further discussion.

Thursday, Sept. 8, Grazing Subcommittee chair and Department of Natural Resources liaison **Eric Winford** left the Grange with a green light to use this first evolution of the plan as a foundation to author next year's grazing leases, scheduled to be put out for bid in November.

Although state and local stakeholders in this process have voiced their optimism about garnering the dollars needed to start in the spring with fencing and other projects aimed to protect the watershed from cattle intrusions, at this writing no funding has been identified.

"The devil is in the details," said Yakama Nation Fisheries watershed restoration authority **Scott Nicolai**, offering a cautionary word to the Advisory Committee. "We're going to need tools and funding to make this work."

ects typically require), and a list of prioritized projects.

The Top Ten list puts Henry Field's 45 acres at the mouth of Indian Creek as the plan's Number One priority with two miles of fencing, followed by (listed in order of priority): Dickey Creek (1 mile), Rye Patch at the mouth of Jack Creek (2 miles), North Fork Teanaway between Shirk and Indian Creeks (1 mile), Bussoli Field (3 miles), Indian Creek above the county road (2 miles), Jack Creek (3 miles), North Fork Teanaway upper (2 miles), North Fork-Middle Creek (1 mile).

As agency officials have indicated the miles of fencing required are best-guess attempts to forecast what is really needed and, in some cases, areas targeted may be fenced by optimizing the use of natural features in the terrain. They also said "lay-down" fences would be an option in areas where there is a lot of outdoor recreation during the winter season.

With the list of priorities on the table the magnitude of the project finally has a face.

Said **Jeff Burnham**, a Grazing Subcommittee member and Department of Fish and Wildlife expert specializing in grazing and lands, "Controlling cattle on some 20,000 acres of grazing land is going to be challenging and expensive."

Highlights of the plan

The future of grazing

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The approved Grazing Management Plan, as all players involved with this project have stated, is by no means set in stone. It is, for lack of a better phrasing, a fluid document that will be amended when watershed restoration experts and grazers get into the field to see what parts of the plan work and what parts do not, an adaptive management strategy not uncommon in inaugural projects of this magnitude.

What's in the plan?

The four-page plan provides grazing managers with a set of overriding principles (such as the responsibility to meet legislative mandates), metrics to measure progress (such as evidence fences are working in a target area based on the revival of riparian or flood plain vegetation), monitoring (every two or three weeks versus annually as some federal proj-

The future of grazing

In spite of all the questions still at large as stakeholders move forward, before Thursday's meeting adjourned Advisory Committee member and Kittitas County Commissioner **Paul Jewell** reaffirmed his view of the future. "We are definitely going to maintain grazing leases in the Teanaway."

More info

For answers to your questions, a complete list of grazing management priorities or a copy of the Grazing Management Plan GOOGLE Teanaway Community Forest.

Milestone in the process

State agency leaders say the Grazing Management Plan will be amended to the Teanaway Community Forest Management Plan in October, after the Grazing Subcommittee meets one more time to refine details.