

Grazing practices in Teanaway under review

by Jim Fossett
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ELLENSBURG – Sunday, April 10, was branding day for Ellensburg cattle rancher **Sam Kayser**, a milestone in an annual cycle that will next see his cattle headed for the Teanaway River Valley where they will spend the summer months grazing on Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) wooded range land – but this year the Teanaway Community Forest Advisory Committee and officials from managing state agencies say the way cattle have been grazing for decades on open range in the Teanaway has to change.

In a meeting of the Advisory Committee held on Thursday, March 10, DNR's **Rick Roeder** and the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife's **Michael Livingston** said to get started Kayser's five-year lease, formerly renewed annually with the American Forest Land Company, would be transitioned to an experimental one-year lease with DNR.

Said DNR's Advisory Committee facilitator **Eric Winford**, "Sam's lease with American Forest Land Company was up for renewal this year, so this transitional one-year lease with DNR will give us a

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ELLENSBURG CATTLE RANCHER Sam Kayser was at work Sunday, April 10, rounding up calves for branding, part of a 20-plus year cycle that changes this

year as state agencies reinvent the way he uses his grazing lease in the Teanaway River Valley.

N.K.C. TRIBUNE/Jim Fossett photo - 2016

Investigation of Snoqualmie Pass utility manager could end soon

by Jim Fossett
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SNOQUALMIE PASS – Mid-July last year the Washington state auditor's office published a fraud investigation report targeted at the timeframe between January 2011 and December 2013. The report targeted Snoqualmie Pass Utility District manager **Terry Lenihan** and de-

County sheriff launched a criminal investigation. At some point after that utility commissioners asked Lenihan to return to the district as a contractor "to help with the transition to a new manager" and to assist with what one utility commissioner described as "a lengthy public records request."

Last week Snoqualmie Pass Utility District com-

March 1 and is no longer employed by the district.

"A resolution of the fraud claims is pending the conclusion of the sheriff's investigation.

"[We] hired an interim general manager, **Mark Bauer**, until a permanent manager can be hired.

"Mr. Bauer has extensive experience in management of public utilities.

ter very seriously. The [case] is under investigation and [we] will take appropriate action in due course."

Monday, April 11, Myers said detectives hope

to wrap the investigation "in the next 30 days or so."

"After that we'll submit findings to the county prosecutor so he can make a decision on charges."

Two ponds at I-90 Exit 71 in Easton

GRAZING...

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...chance to adjust and evaluate what will work.”

Winford said changes being considered include fencing at Indian Creek “to allow new vegetation to establish itself” and at Bussoli Field “to keep cows out of the creek and protect riparian habitat.”

“We’ve still got to look at how much fencing will be involved and where it will go.

“We’ll also close Bussoli Field for dropping off cattle

this year to give the field a rest, but Sam will use it and the corral there to pick up his cattle in the fall as has been the practice.”

Winford said Kayser’s cattle drop-off point would move to what is locally referred to as the North Field, further up the North Fork, where the aging remains of an old corral still stubbornly fight the elements.

“It’s good practice to move cattle closer to where they spend time grazing

and when they return to Bussoli Field in the fall there will be plenty of grass for them.”

Other changes Roeder and Livingston mentioned include “changing some cattle stream-crossings to protect salmon spawning areas and the deployment of “salt and/or nutrient blocks away from streams to draw cattle into the uplands.”

Said Winford, “We’ll also use water troughs to that end, which may or may not require pipes, but at this time we’re still working with Kayser and another expert to determine what will work best.”

Winford indicated these changes would be a monitored learning experience this summer and fall, and that a special sub-committee recently chartered would take the reins on permanent long-term changes.

That subcommittee has met once already at DNR headquarters on 713 Bowers Road in Ellensburg. The next meeting is scheduled for today, Thursday, April 14, at 3:00 p.m.

The subcommittee includes facilitator **Jim Huckabay**, Advisory Committee members **Jeri Downs**, **Jim Halstrom**, **Kitty Craig**, **Andrew Cro-**

marty and Urban Eberhart, and technical experts **Tip Hudson** (WSU Extension Service), **Sean Gross** (NOAA Fisheries), **Scott Nicolai** (Yakama Nation Fisheries), **Elayne Hoyde** (Natural Resources Conservation Service) and Kayser.

The next regular meeting of the Teanaway Community Forest Advisory Committee is scheduled for Thursday, June 16, 3-6 p.m., at the Swauk-Teanaway Grange.

Grazing leases

Winford said there are three leases for grazing cattle on DNR-owned ranges in the Teanaway River Valley. He said lessees include Kayser (26,000 acres), **Gary Fudacz** (5,600 acres), and **Jed Burke** (2,800 acres).

TCF budget

Winford said the Teanaway Community Forest (TCF) got \$236,000 for 2016-17 from the state’s Supplemental Budget, which will be used for such things as signs, gates, locks, a trail inventory and the development of a recreation plan. “From the Biennium Budget (2015-2017) we got a total of \$282,000 to last us for two years. In addition, we’ll be applying for grants.”



BUSSOLI FIELD and the 50-year-old corral cattleman Sam Kayser has been using for over two decades will be closed for cattle drop-offs this year.

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