

Done Deal!

State signs-off on Teanaway Community Forest Recreation Plan

by **Jim Fossett**

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UPPER COUNTY – On Thursday, Dec. 6, in Olympia, Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Commissioner of Public Lands **Hilary Franz** and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Director **Kelly Susewind** signed off on the Teanaway Community Forest Recreation Plan, the last component of the grander Teanaway Community Forest Management Plan. Lest that historically crowning moment be lost, consider this.

This is the state's first-ever Community Forest.

The signing ceremony represents the culmination of thousands of hours spent

by hundreds of people in the field, at work parties, in lengthy meetings, and in public forums. You should see the maps that came out of the effort and the reams of accompanying data. It's a major, big deal, involving major investments, legislative oversight and staff resources contributed by two state agencies.

The Dec. 6 signing is worthy of a ship christening, complete with a bottle of champagne, speeches from dignitaries, and some of those little finger sandwiches cuddled by napkins emblazoned with the Presidential Seal they bring out for White House parties. Nobody really eats them – but they do pocket the napkins ... to remember the day.

The ball started rolling late in 2013, when New York commodities broker **John Rudy** sold his 50,000 acres, complete with 400 miles of free-flowing streams in the Teanaway River Valley, to Washington for a record \$100 million, the state's largest purchase of private land since 1968. That was Washington's first-ever partnership between state agencies and a local community.

Agency leaders, politicians and other stakeholders heralded state Republican Senator **Jim Honeyford**, Chair of the Capital Budget Committee, for his role in getting the dollars needed to push the sale forward.

REGIONAL NEWS

TCF RECREATION PLAN...



YOU ARE LOOKING at a \$100 million-plus body of work that took hundreds of people five years to complete: *The Teanaway Community Forest Management Plan*.

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Following up on a lighthearted jab at Republicans for being the last in the line among those who approved of purchasing private land for public use, Republican Senator **Judy Warrnick** said, "I think what sold the Republican caucus is that this purchase showed a direct connection to jobs and water conservation."

A 20-member Citizens Advisory Committee was appointed to represent groups with a stake in the Community Forest, and for the next five years the committee met monthly to tackle the extraordinary challenge of hammering out a master Management Plan with five primary components tailored to address the Legislature's five guidelines: (1) Protect and enhance the water supply and protect the watershed. (2) Maintain working lands for forestry and grazing while protecting key watershed functions and aquatic habitat. (3)

Maintain and where possible expand recreational opportunities consistent with watershed protection, for activities such as hiking, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, camping, birding and snowmobiling. (4) Conserve and restore vital habitat for fish, including steelhead, spring Chinook, and bull trout, and wildlife, including deer, elk, large predators, and spotted owls, and (5) Support a strong community partnership, in which the Yakama Nation, residents, business owners, local governments, conservation groups, and others provide advice about ongoing land management.

Those were marching orders that were easily understood, but challenging to carry out. With so many diverse stakeholders involved, it's no wonder it took five years to finish the five components in a way that DNR and WDFW leaders would sign off on. The final component - Recre-

ation - took the most time to complete: about two years.

Back to the future

After Franz and Susewind signed off on the Recreation component of the master plan, Franz opened the window with a view of the next decade-plus.

"(Today), with the signing of the Recreation component, the (Teanaway Community Forest Recreation Plan) is formally adopted, launching its 15-year implementation phase.

"The plan calls for a variety of recreational opportunities, including those supported by many of the people who visit the Teanaway - while helping to ensure the conservation of fish, wildlife and their habitats."

Said Susewind, "Thanks to all of those involved in developing the plan, which will benefit generations to come."

Final punctuation mark

Advisory Committee meeting facilitator **Doug McClelland**, offered a quote recently published by the *NKC Tribune*, that serves to anchor the milestone. McClelland is a veteran planner with DNR who stepped back into retirement after the Dec. 6 signing.

"The hard work of the advisory committee and the community has helped create a real vision for the Teanaway."

Read the plan

For a look at the master plan in its entirety, GOOGLE: *Teanaway Community Forest*.

