

REGIONAL NEWS

State agencies celebrate draft management plan completion

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

TEANAWAY – The Washington State Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), on Thursday, April 9, joined with members of the Teanaway Community Forest Citizens Advisory Committee to host an open house at the Swauk-Teanaway Grange.

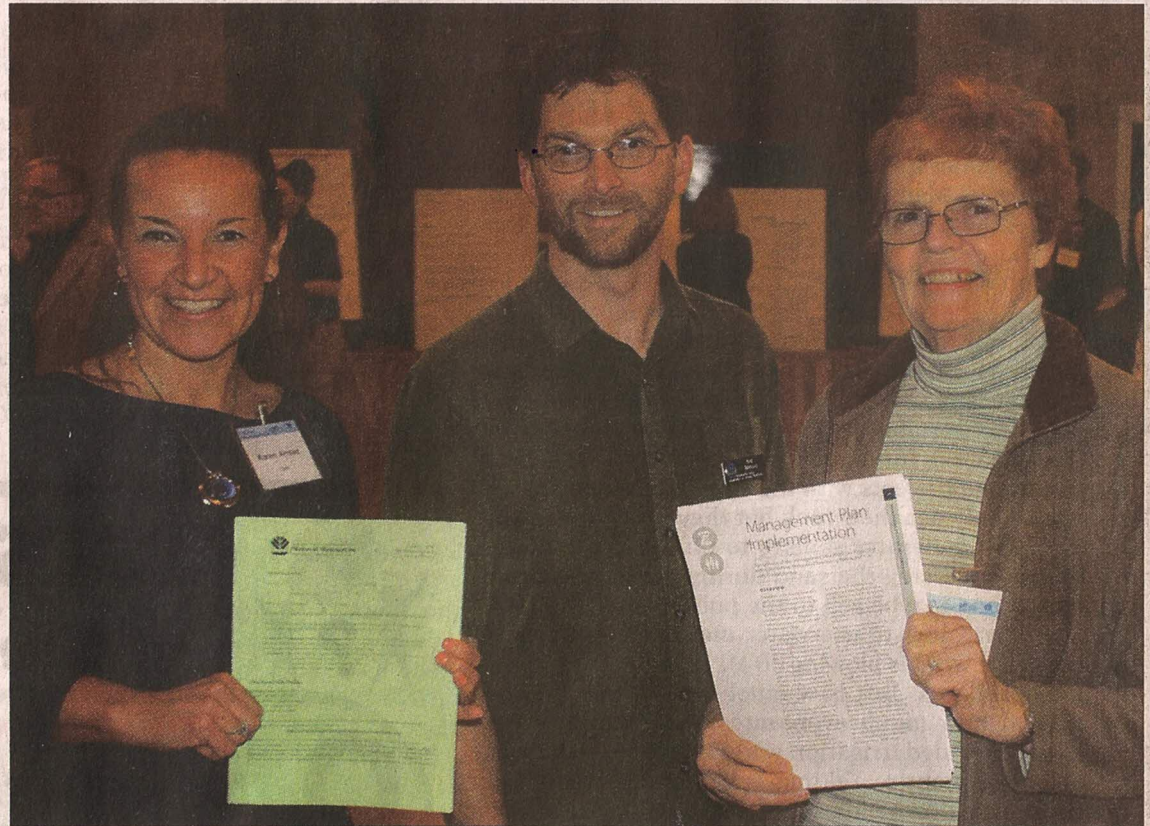
The event celebrated the culmination of a yearlong effort to create a draft management plan and SEPA for the community forest, and it offered an opportunity for the public to file comments on the two documents.

Teanaway River Valley resident and a member of the advisory committee **Jerri Downs** commented, “It’s good to see a final product that will guide the use of the Teanaway in years to come.”

Jim Halstrom, also a committee member, had this to say: “Given the level of conflict we started with I’m delighted with the consensus for a final draft, not that there aren’t some lingering challenges.”

What stakeholders should know, as Downs pointed out, is that though the 74-page draft management plan will be finalized after the comment period on the draft expires and in June sent to state legislators as scheduled, the recreation component of the plan still has life, meaning it will remain in draft form.

Said Downs, “The advisory committee will continue to meet for the next 18 months to refine that part of the plan.”



A MAJOR MILESTONE. After a year of work the state’s first ever community forest has a draft management plan and SEPA ready for public review and comment. State agency officials joined members of the Teanaway Community Forest Citizens Advisory Group and the general public to celebrate the occasion in an open house at the Swauk-Teanaway Grange held on Thursday, April 9. Pictured (L-R) at the event are Karen Arnold, Eric Winford and Jerri Downs.

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State agencies weigh in

Mike Livingston, WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife's lead mentor on the draft management plan, said he's pleased with the milestone. "The committee is satisfied with their product. They put in a lot of work to get here and I'm excited we have a plan to lead us to the ultimate goal of restoring the forest and providing a place for people to recreate."

Livingston reiterated the scope of the draft plan, as he and his colleagues have done through the public process launched on March 31 last year.

"[As directed], this [draft plan] has [evolved] into a high level document that will serve as the framework for more detailed, step-down plans [driven] by common goals."

Livingston indicated that in the next 18 months the recreation component of the

plan would likely mirror the *framework* of the recreation plan created for the Naneum Ridge to Columbia River Recreation Plan.

"That was completed in January and it will serve the advisory committee as a useful tool."

Rick Roeder, Dept. of Natural Resource's lead mentor on the draft management plan, had this to say: "The entire process has been a great conversation. I believe the committee has really digested the issues. They've interacted will between themselves and the two state agencies. That interaction is why we were able to put together a quality proposal."

Roeder said all totaled, during their year-long deliberations, advisory committee members processed 1,600 public comments on the draft plan.

"We're asking the public to continue offering feedback on the draft plan and the SEPA through the comment period deadline

on April 21."

Roeder said a signing celebration of the final plan would likely take place in June, though he said details are not yet available.

Winford comments

DNR's **Eric Winford** was hired in 2013 to act as the agency's lead facilitator at the advisory committee level.

With the signing of the final plan in June his term of employment expires and, as he said, he moves on to seek employment with the agency in another capacity.

"It was a demanding job," he said. "I was hired full time in 2013 and I have to say we all worked very hard through marathon monthly meetings lasting six to eight hours to get the draft and the SEPA completed. There's still work to be done, but I think we've come a very long way."