

Citizens Advisory Committee gets marching orders at historic first meeting

Teanaway Community Forest

by Jim Fossett

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ELLENSBURG – Monday evening (March 31) Commissioner of Public Lands **Peter Goldmark** kicked off a three hour-long meeting, the first of ten such meetings Citizens Advisory Committee appointees are slated to attend through June 2015, the deadline set for Version 1.0 of a plan aimed to manage 50,000 acres the state purchased last October and named the Teanaway Community Forest.

"It's a jewel to many. It's a home to many. It's a destination to many – but it's loved by all," Goldmark said, addressing the 20 committee appointees.

Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) director **Phil Anderson** followed Goldmark focusing on the "passionate interest" the project has drawn from locals and others outside the county.

"I can't believe how many turn out for these meetings, how many are interested in the future of the Teanaway Community Forest. In my experience it's unmatched and I believe it also shows how a diverse population with diverse interests comes together to work things out."

Committee's Charter: Develop High-level Plan

Anderson concluded his remarks with a piece of ad-

vice repeated to the committee at several junctures: "Don't get mired in details," he said.

By way of expanding on that comment WDFW Region 3 Director Mike Livingston informally outlined the committee's charter.

"You'll be charged to come up with a high-level, strategic management plan that complies with the legislation and [harmonizes] with the Yakima Integrated Plan."

With that said, he offered the committee a couple of examples, emphatically re-emphasizing the high-level nature of the committee's chores that lie ahead.

"For instance, you won't be deciding how many toilets and fire rings a campsite should have or

how campsites should be configured.

"In terms of forest management, you will not be detailing site-level prescriptions.

"All of that exemplifies what we mean by too much detail, especially at this point. The June 2015 deadline is going to come very fast and there's just no time to get mired in detail.

"In general, you will be defining high-level goals, objectives and strategies, and defining high-level criteria for campgrounds. And you'll be developing crite-

ria for reducing fuels and for restoring streams, among other things."

Out of the starting gate on an untested track with no precedent to use as a guideline, though Livingston's examples somewhat served to orient the committee, it was clear that even at this first meeting – characterized by meet-and-greets, swapping phone numbers, establishing meeting dates and times – some on the committee still appeared to be chomping at the bit to get going.

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"Do we get a list of things we need to do?" asked committeeman **Dale Bambrick**.

Replied Livingston, "Good question and the answer is yes. We'll help you along with a framework and a structure we'll distribute to each of you before scheduled meetings. Those will give you some parameters.

"On another note, we have in place an interim management plan that will carry us through June 2015 when your management plan is due."

Interim Management Plan

Livingston implied the interim management plan in place today aims to scope, study – and address in certain cases – things that need to be done right away.

"We're assessing and in some cases addressing roads, gates, bridges, bathrooms and fences in need of repair.

We're looking at noxious weed control and campground vandalism.

"Most important of all we're establishing an increased presence in the region with an emphasis on outreach and education. That's important to locals and visitors alike, 'because we're the new owners and we want to get off on the right foot."

Livingston added that among other things evaluating policies for recreation, grazing and protocols for restoration and species preservation are also on the plate.

As for how the state will underwrite the interim management plan and the administrative costs associated with the Citizens Advisory Committee, he said all of that would be addressed at the next meeting.

"That's when we'll take a closer look at the \$5 million the state set aside for Kittitas County in order to compensate for loss of property taxes when the 50,000 acres changed hands."

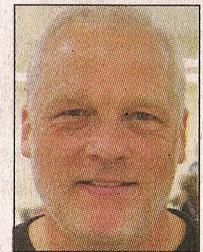
Before Livingston concluded his comments he assured the committee and the hundred or so attendees at the meeting that not much would change in the next



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STEVE JUSTHAM

year. "We won't require a Discovery Pass this year. The whole issue of permits is something we'll have to walk through together.

"As far as accesses are concerned, things will remain pretty much the status quo.

"I would remind you that we inherited a lot of easements with this land purchase that will take some time to sort out, but if any residents have concerns about private property issues I encourage them to come forward and talk to us outside the framework of the Citizens Advisory Committee."

Contrary to the information provided last year, it does appear Citizens Advisory Committee meetings will provide for a short public comment period after each adjournment.

From the getgo the policy has been to allow the public to observe the committee while in session.

Meeting Schedule

Meetings have tentatively been scheduled for the second Thursday of every month at the Swauk-Teaway Grange, 1361 Ballard Road West, Cle Elum.

Monday's meeting was held inside the Teaway Room at the Kittitas County Fairgrounds in Ellensburg simply to provide a larger seating area.

At this writing the next meeting is scheduled for the Grange on Thursday, April 10, but the committee hasn't yet decided on a time.

Next month's meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 8, 4:00-8:00 p.m. also at the Grange.

Citizen's Advisory Committee facilitator **Lisa Dally Wilson** cautions anyone interested in attending a meeting should first visit dnr.wa.gov for meeting updates, changes and cancellations. The same website has all the current historical data readers just joining this discussion will need to understand what's going on with the Teaway Community Forest.



HISTORY MADE. The Teaway Community Forest Citizens Advisory Committee, made up of 20 appointees, held its first meeting at

Kittitas County Fairgrounds in Ellensburg on Monday, March 31.

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