

Teanaway committee talks motorized use

County pushes for discussion as part of recreation plan

BY TONY BUHR
staff writer

After months of tiptoeing around the issue, the Teanaway Community Forest Advisory Committee delved into the topic of motorized use during a meeting Thursday.

The Kittitas County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously to send a letter in support of some motorized recreation use in the Teanaway to the committee earlier in the week. Commission-

ers think motorized use in Kittitas County is good for tourism, and would like to see additional routes around Cle Elum for safety purposes, said Commissioner Laura Osiadacz.

"(We want) to start a conversation that hasn't had a lot of discussion at this table," Osiadacz said. "It is to really to dive into it and maybe have some uncomfortable conversations."

The Teanaway Community Forest Advisory Committee is in the process of creating a recreation plan that identifies trail systems for different activities. The committee is looking at impacts to threatened species, geological suitability and

land management requirements that might limit potential trail systems.

Osiadacz said the county commissioners support motorized use because recreation is a major draw to the county, and visitors benefit the local economy.

"We know there are going to be hiking trails, we know there are going to be biking trails and we know there is going to be horseback riding trails," she said. "But the one thing that really hasn't been determined is whether or not there is going to be motorized access."

People unable to access scenic landscapes or historical areas via horseback or dirt bikes shouldn't

be barred from entry into the community forest, Osiadacz said. The committee has an obligation to make sure it is accessible for all citizens and that discussions should include Jeeps and ATVs, not just dirt bikes.

The county also has concerns about a lack of exits from Lake Cle Elum and the Teanaway, she said. Both areas have only one real road which landowners and recreation users can use in case of wildfires.

"Lake Cle Elum and the Teanaway both are in a very dangerous locations because there is one way in and there is one way out," Osiadacz said. "So part of our transportation plan is to have an egress."

Darcy Batura, central cascades community coordinator for the Nature Conservancy, asked why the county needed to focus on motorized use in the Teanaway Community Forest. About 75 percent of Kittitas County consists of public lands and some areas, such as south of Interstate 90, already allow for motorized use.

"This landscape is only 50,000 acres. It is not that much and we've heard about the conservation significance," Batura said. "So I understand that everybody wants their place, but why does it have to be put here?"

More TEANAWAY | A3

Teanaway /

from A1

The Nature Conservancy contracted with the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife in July to enforce rules barring motorized use on the Cle Elum Ridge except the Sasse Mountain Trail.

Osiadacz said while the county supports motorized use in other areas, those places don't have advisory committees working on recreation plans. Also the Teanaway Community Forest sits near several towns and cities in Kittitas County meaning it can provide important access between those communities.

"This discussion is happening now and that is why the county is giving their position on what

is happening now," she said. "Because if it isn't discussed now, it probably won't be discussed."

Earlier during the meeting when discussing suitability maps for trail networks, The Wilderness Society representative Kitty Craig said the committee needed to remember the Teanaway Community Forest was purchased with more than just recreation in mind. Goals include protection of animal habitat and water and fish habitat restoration opportunities, she said.

"I think we just have to get comfortable with that reality because this is not just a blank slate where we're planning for recreation," Craig said. "We're planning for all of these all other factors that might add to the complexity."



BRIAN MYRICK / DAILY RECORD

Mammoth Rock in the Teanaway Community Forest in late June. An advisory committee discussing a recreation plan for the new state forest delved into the topic of motorized use this week.