

## Commissioners help expand Teanaway access

### Multi-agency deal involves land, water and habitat

BY TONY BUHR  
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The Kittitas County Board of Commissioners approved funding to support the purchase of property and water rights in the Teanaway Community Forest last week in a multi-pronged deal that involves the state and nonprofit organizations.

The property was purchased from the Teanaway Valley Family Farm owned by the Crosetto family, said Peter Dykatra, special deputy prosecutor for Kittitas County. The property will be purchased by the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife. The county contributed about \$382,000.

As part of the agreement, the county will put in a parking lot for people to access the Teanaway Community Forest, Commissioner Obie O'Brien said. It also will work with WDFW on floodplain and habitat restoration.

"Although there is a lot of talk about water, we're not buying water," O'Brien said. "We're also getting in stream flow. We're getting floodplain restoration.

"We're also getting a parking lot and a public use area and a lot of opportunity for the public to be in the Teanaway."

The county will receive 81 acres of consumptive water from the transaction, Dykatra said. The county will put 72 acre feet into the historic mitigation program it has to protect senior water right holders during droughts. Eight acre feet will be put

into future mitigation for building permits.

As part of the agreement, 38 acres will be fallowed, he said. The land will be open for unfettered access by 2022.

It was not easy for the county to reach the agreement with the multiple agencies, he said. Dykatra has been working as a water and property attorney for over 15 years and this is the most complex agreement he's ever seen.

The county's contributions will be paid for through a grant it received from the Washington State Department of Commerce, he said. The

grant was provided for improvements to the Teanaway Community Forest and the county had close to \$500,000 remaining from that grant.

If the organizations had not purchased the property, it would have been developed, Dykatra said.

#### ORGANIZATIONS

Several other groups are participating in the purchase including the Washington Water Trust, the Washington Association of Land Trusts and the WDFW.

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Arden Thomas, a project manager with the nonprofit Washington Water Trust, thanked the commissioners for working to reach the agreement.

Under the arrangement, the Water Trust will receive approximately 260 acre feet of water to maintain in streams flows in the Teanaway, she said.

"It has been a focus of our organization's work," Thomas said. "Our goal is that the Teanaway rivers will flow and not have obstructions to fish."

Mike Livingston, the Region 3

director for WDFW, said he was proud to be part of partnership that was being used as an example for counties across the state and within his organization.

"It has just been a tremendous lift and effort," he said. "There is fish, wildlife and floodplain access."

The property officially will be a part of the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area, but it will be managed as part of the Teanaway Community Forest, Livingston said.

#### COMMISSIONERS' REACTION

Commissioner Laura Osiadacz said one aspect of the purchase that was ignored during the hear-

ing was the benefit to public safety.

"It will be a great asset for getting people off the road when trying to access the Teanaway," Osiadacz said. "I'm really excited for getting this completed and creating enhancements for the public good."

Commissioner Paul Jewell said the agreement has been in the works for a long time. Many people put a lot of effort into making it a reality.

"This is a very small piece in a very large project that in many ways I think could be a show piece for others," Jewell said. "The fact that this went forward is a miracle. It goes a long ways back."

#### SCHNEBLY WATER PURCHASE

Kittitas County commissioners also discussed a pending water purchase from Craig and Nancy Schnebly last week. Peter Dykatra, special deputy prosecutor for Kittitas County, said the meeting had been called to finalize the purchase, but it was discovered more work needed to be done to finish the contract.

"So we need to work through all the divisions of those water rights," Dykatra said. "We haven't developed those documents yet, but we will be working on that with the Schneblys and their counsel."

The purchase will cost the county \$2.5 million, he said. It involves water rights on four routes of Coleman Creek

and provide the county with 602.3 consumptive acre-feet of water. The Schneblys will retain 83.2 acre-feet of consumptive water use for 10 years.

The county plans to put 360 acre feet into its historical mitigation program to help protect senior water right holders during droughts, Dykatra said. The other 243 acre feet will be put into the county's water bank for future development.

The commissioners voted unanimously to close the public hearing instead of tabling the matter. Closing the public hearing will allow the commissioners to create a new public hearing when final approval is ready and put out a new public notice, Commissioner Paul Jewell said.