

CPPC Monthly Meeting Notes 7.26.22

Attendees: Gary Berndt, Larry Leach, Darcy Batura, Mitch Long, Patty O'Hearn, Tonya Morrey, Judy Hallisey, Cathy Cook, Keegan Fengler, Howard Crabtree, Pam Hawk, Peter Dykstra, Jane Kiker, Vince Pruis, Melissa Speeg, Nancy Lillquist

Recap

- Commissioner of Public Lands, Hilary Franz, meeting on the Cle Elum Ridge
 - 1st part of the day included a discussion between The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and DNR leadership
 - 2nd section included testimonials from community partners (Yakama Nation, Yakima Basin Integrated Plan (YBIP), Mountains to Sound Greenway (MTSG), Kittitas Conservation Trust (KCT), county commissioner, and more)
 - Framed why TNC leaned in on this project and exemplified community effort and future opportunities
 - Conveyed passion and heart and was well received
 - Ended with Hilary Franz saying "I'm in!"
 - Thank you to everyone who participated
- 'Shark tank' in Olympia: Larry
 - 4 minutes to describe funding needs and the project's importance
 - Made the cut to get into DNR's decision package for '23-25 for \$3 mil operating costs for Teanaway Community Forest (TCF), Cle Elum Ridge (CER), and Klickitat Community Forest
 - One of the conditions in the DNR letter to KCT was the program is fully funded and this is the first step for the governor and legislature to put it in their budgets
 - Conditions will be pretty well met after this
 - Fall tours to follow to show legislators the project and gain support

TCF Overview (Vince)

- Acquired 50,241 acres in 2013 due to YBIP efforts for water supply and climate change
- In one session the decision was made for a \$100 million purchase with a \$10 million loan
 - Fast timeline and community seemed to have less input
- Managed by DNR in consultation with WDFW along with an advisory committee of community members (statewide)
 - Many committee members from non-profits and recreational groups on the west side of WA led to hesitancy to trust the forest (composition has since changed with more Kittitas County members)
- First state community forest and very large in comparison to other community forests
- 5 goals of the management plan, dictated in legislation
 - Water supply & watershed health
 - Working lands for forestry and grazing
 - Maintain and expand recreation where appropriate
 - Conserve and restore vital habitat

- Support strong community partnerships and engage stakeholders in land management
 - Community outreach and outreach to legislatures, looking forward to coordinating with CPPC
- Vince Pruis 509-818-7565 vince.pruis@mtsgreenway.org
- Larry's preference is to expand TCF instead of creating a sister forest
 - Sees TCF as the Yakima Basin's community forest
 - The economy of scale when we can tap into the expertise of both agency
 - Do not need to go through a lengthy management planning process (which takes 1-2 years)
 - Same players sitting at each table with similar landscape management goals
 - Easiest route management wise
- Mitch originally had the perception that TCF was not a local effort, learned that's not the case. Incorporating the ridge into TCF provides the benefit of eliminating the struggle to figure out ownership and brings our communities closer to TCF
- Darcy works closely with Larry to manage the lands on Cle Elum Ridge and TCF, makes sense for it to be seamless and from a watershed perspective. Every community forest is different with different management plans, have not seen a situation where the Teanaway Advisory Committee requests something from DNR and it is not upheld by them
- Will future phases go through the same process for acquisition, operating funds, and management? Also ORV use?
 - Larry included operation costs of future phases in the operating funds request. DNR and the advisory committee work well together. Seen commitment from the community to make this work.
 - Currently, the advisory committee desires use to be predominantly non-motorized with the exception of dirt bikes on forest access roads and the scenic driving route. Motorized recreation comes with a significantly larger price tag than non-motorized recreation and would require more funding to support that.
- Jeff Tayer's comments to Hilary Franz on the ridge spoke to community involvement and why combining with TCF is a benefit. The Cle Elum Ridge represents the last parcels needed in a conservation strategy that's 25 years in the making. 20 years ago there were 200,000 acres leaving private timber that needed a conservation plan or would be divided into smaller parcels for development. On the verge of preserving 98% of those acres in community/conservation ownership. TCF was a big block at the highest risk. The owner was going through development strategies. Yakima Basin Integrated Plan (YBIP) came at a critical time to find a new pathway. Originally planned to have WDFW own/management, local commissioners and communities requested DNR to own in partnership. Adding to TCF continues the long-term conservation strategy.
- Gary was a county commissioner and member of the original TCF advisory committee, and at that time there were less than 4 people that lived in KittCo on the committee. Is that still the case?
 - Now the majority live in Kittitas and Yakima County

- Gary preaches local control and that this project is critical to the upper county economy. He built the management plan minus the recreational component. People left recreational planning meetings feeling discriminated against.
- What does local control look like? The closest we got was with this nondescript, defacto group. Gary does not have answer but must be considered.
- Local communities should have a voice when setting priorities
- Important not to only listen to the loudest voices but also the science. The TCF management plan aligns with the goals of Cle Elum Ridge.
- Many people say “This is mine. Manage this for my user group for free.”, but that’s not how the community works. Need to ask: How is it possible, how do we protect the land, and how do we pay for it? The Cle Elum Ridge is at a high development risk. We can spend a lot of time talking about recreation, but we need to protect this resource first.
- Having 2 separate community forests does not change the flow of recreation or wildlife on land that does not follow political boundaries. We need to consolidate lands to perform management in an effective way.
- Melissa said while fundraising for the community forest effort, motorized users asked about using the Cle Elum Ridge. They agreed that the most important thing is to preserve it. People in the community with the ridge in their backyard would like to see it maintained and not developed.
- Must think about the past and consider perceptions. Combining the lands into one whole piece saves money and increases management efficiency. We should position ourselves and create a visual story to counter the myths that exist out there.
- Issues with non-motorized recreation too, which are affecting tribes. Washington is loving the land to death. Often caused by non-motorized users Recreation management requires evolving efforts.
- We are currently at an incredible spot with a protection strategy.
- Heard concerns about TCF recreational management from the community. There are questions from the community and buy-in from the community revolves around recreation. Some people do not have a lens of conservation. Folks with conservation lens do not always get to have the loudest voice.
- Larry said he will do homework on the recreational piece and bring it back to the group.
- No one is saying we need to stop and address this, but it needs to be a part of the strategy. Melissa will develop an anonymous Google form (to be shared later) so that people can share their questions, input, concerns, and what they are excited about. Should include opportunities for economic benefit through the management of the community forest. Maybe we need to reach out to businesses to see how we can benefit them. Anonymous comments will be given to Larry, Nicky, Vince, and potentially Martha. They will use that feedback to develop a presentation for the next meeting to further support our discussion.

Fundraising (Mitch)

- Suncadia Fund: got \$50k out of \$200k, encouraged to come back in 6 months
- \$462 from Rotary golf event, good turn out for in-person fundraising
- Close to \$58,000 in the bank account
- Engaging in other philanthropic efforts to secure match for other grants
- Looking to grow an endowment

Timeline activity

- Advocacy Timeline (Larry)
 - Decision packages to the office of financial management by September
 - Governor's budget will be released in December
 - The legislative session begins in January
 - Scheduled to end in April
 - Should know by then if we are successful in receiving funding
 - Operations budget will be available in July 2023
 - Then talk to Jane about the status of grants and transfer of land
- Timeline (See photos below. Photos are in order of placement.)
 - Green: outreach
 - Orange: advocacy
 - Yellow: funding
- Followed by a short discussion on the need to have a couple of the same people in the outreach group and the advocacy group to ensure each group's work is coordinated with the other.



