

DAILY RECORD

◆ COVERING KITTITAS COUNTY FROM THE CASCADES TO THE COLUMBIA ◆

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People gather to discuss land

By **TIM ENGSTROM**

About 65 people gathered at the Kittitas County Fairgrounds on Thursday evening to discuss the next 100 years of land use.

After a brief presentation by the Cascade Land Conservancy, the people were divided into three groups: one for community land, one for Cascades land and one for water. It wasn't hard to guess which group would have the most tumultuous discussion.

"Water is apparently flammable in the West," said Todd Cottrell, a trustee for the Cascade Land Conservancy.

The land-trust organization held the town-hall meeting to start a process that eventually will form a document that points out shared interests among the many groups that have divided land-use plans for the region. The hope, said Cascade Land Conservancy Director Gene Duvenoy, is that politicians and others making land-use decisions can refer to the document and see where the shared interests are.

The water discussion focused on the values of lifestyles, culture and landscape, Cottrell said. The group wanted to protect open spaces and keep sustainable agriculture. The most important element, he said, was to keep the conversation going despite the adversarial relationship that has formed among groups with water interests.

Trustee Kelly Clark reported the results for the Cascades discussion. Those involved wanted to maintain diversity in the Kittitas County environment, wildlife corridors, the necessary resources to maintain recreation and quality of life. They also wanted to better coordinate the transition of land away from the lumber industry so sprawl doesn't occur.

"A lot of people want to see opportunities for our grandchildren that we had for ourselves," Clark said.

Tami Walton, also a trustee, said the discussion about community land focused around maintaining the quality downtown areas in Kittitas County cities.

"A lot of people want to move here because of that, and people want to be able to keep their ranch, not dividing and subdividing," she said.

Planning is a big issue, Walton said, so the county doesn't become a location for big retail box stores that kill downtowns and hurt the quality of life.

The Cascade Land Conservancy will hold a follow-up panel discussion at the Hal Holmes Community Center in Ellensburg on May 27. Comments from Thursday's discussion will be compiled by the conservancy and printed in the Daily Record before the panel meets.

"We must come together and decide what warrants conservation," Duvenoy said.

Town hall meeting schedule:

Pierce County: 6 p.m. last Monday at The Mountaineers in Tacoma.

Kittitas County: 6 p.m. yesterday at Kittitas County Fairgrounds in Ellensburg.

Snohomish County: 6 p.m. June 3 at Everett Station in Everett.

King County: 6:30 p.m. June 8 at Pickering Barn in Issaquah.

Panel discussions schedule:

Pierce County: noon May 19 in Tacoma.

Kittitas County: noon May 27 at Hal Holmes Community Center in Ellensburg.

Snohomish County: noon June 23 at The Manor in Everett.

King County: noon June 25 (Location to be announced)