

12 December 2009

To the Kittitas County Board of Commissioners:

We, the members of the Teanaway Valley Family Farm (TVFF), would like to respond to the American Forest Land Company's proposal to redesignate their land in the Teanaway Basin. Our family, for which TVFF is named, has lived in the Cle Elum-Roslyn area since 1899. TVFF owns approximately 220 contiguous acres in the Teanaway Valley, and for many decades we have been active in the community and have taken steps to preserve the character and long term health of this valley and the people who live in it.

At the very least, AFLC's plan must be deemed premature. As is stated in the Yakama Nation's statement, Kittitas County is presently out of compliance with the Growth Management Act. The legal issue must be resolved before continuing with the Teanaway Subarea Plan. The County is also out of compliance with the Critical Areas Ordinance and thus risks losing state funding and its eligibility for state grants. Teanaway River groundwater issues remain unresolved; availability of water is unknown and it would be negligent to act on any request to convert water rights until a comprehensive groundwater study and plan has been completed and approved for the Teanaway Subarea. Additionally, the County's Flood Plain Map is currently using data from the 1970's, rendering that information obsolete. Furthermore, the County has not addressed the time consuming process of updating its Shoreline Master Program, due in 2013. These legal requirements must be addressed before considering AFLC's plan.

Even if the County resolves the above issues, there is no basis for approving the AFLC plan. The plan, on its face, shows the AFLC's disregard for the impact on critical habitat and threatened and endangered species. Bull Trout and Steelhead populations are already severely reduced from their historic levels, and the plan plainly thwarts the efforts of the Yakama Nation to restore these levels in the Teanaway Basin. The health of the Teanaway River itself is of profound importance to the overall ecological health of the valley, and the AFLC will be hard pressed to show that storm water runoff from the proposed development will not have a negative impact on the health of the river.

As a political matter, the AFLC plan shows at best ignorance of and at worst disregard for the interests of the current residents of the valley. Our opinion is that the kind of development proposed by AFLC would be better directed toward Urban Growth Nodes already established in the county. An important question to ask is: is there any possibility that the urban village could succeed without major government (i.e. tax payer) dollars? What exactly is AFLC's business plan? And lastly, who are the people who would populate this development and why? As commercial forest landowners, we favor a future for forest land that includes continuing, sustainable harvests, carbon sequestration, transfer of development rights, and/or bio-fuel and bio-energy production rather than conversion to an urban use for which there is no current or foreseeable demand.

TVFF recognizes that the Teanaway Valley is a unique and precious place. That does not mean that we oppose any plan of an absentee owner to profit from the land. We support

the highest and best use for the land, but the AFLC plan is not it. The AFLC and a few individuals in the valley may expect to make money on the plan, but after the AFLC has left, who will be accountable for the long term costs? The County has a duty to work for the long term benefit of all its residents and landowners, not just a few. We believe that in order to fulfill that duty, the County must reject the current AFLC plan.

Respectfully submitted,

The Teanaway Valley Family Farm