



**SKAGIT COUNTY FOREST
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**Minutes
April 9, 2012**

Present: Chuck, Paul, Ken, Al, Dave, Steve, Tom, Gordy, Fred and Aubrey

Absent: Lisa and Tim

Guest: Doug Couvelier

- I. Meeting call to Order 7:04
- II. Minutes: Paul moved and Ken seconded the approval of the March 12, 2012 minutes. Passed unanimous.
- III. Discussion Items:
 - A. County Code Update: Commissioners informed Kendra that they asked Planning to move the Rural Forest Initiative (RFI) up on their work load list and it is their hope that it will be worked on this year. They were impressed that the FAB had written code language. Kendra will talk to Planning to see what progress is being made. FAB noted that they would like to invite the new Planning Director to the June FAB meeting for introductions. Kendra will work on that once the new director is on board.
 - B. Forests Fish Policy update: Kendra attended the CMER science presentations and reported back on the various topics discussed. Several of the presentations were similar to the ones given to Policy on the Type N hard rock study and the amphibian study- both of which were analyzing the effects of the Forest Practice Rules (50' buffers for 50% of the stream on type N and protection of the perennial initiation point-PIP) compared to clear cuts and a standard no cut reference. The results of the various studies showed findings of water temperatures lowering over a couple of year period as understory developed, sun light being beneficial to some species of salamanders, areas with harvests had greater amount of wind throw and some turbidity and rise in temperature of streams after initial harvests. The buffer study was not conclusive due to confusing performance targets and more years of data collecting appears to be necessary. This study was to determine the magnitude of change in tree mortality, wood recruitment, channel debris and shade and soil disturbance. In the amphibian study it was generally observed that intermediate levels of canopy openings appeared to be either benign or beneficial for most species if other stressors are minimized. The Type N Basalt study is not finished and it is hoped that this will add more information to the other studies. There was one presentation on forested wetlands that was in its infancy but was looking at the impacts of harvest on those wetlands. Another study was on the results of the riparian hardwood conversion study showed that there was fairly high mortality rate of conifer seedlings and the economics may deem this approach unfeasible. Also, CMER is working on a way to share data electronically for various studies (Information Management System).

Dave asked the question...were the amphibian studies on old growth? If not were there amphibians present on the test sites which must therefore have already been harvested at least once-showing that amphibians do survive harvests.

Paul reported on a study that was in the Northwest Woodlands publication showing that fallen trees that don't hit the streams, but rather bridge them, offer shade and places for the fish hang out. Also some sediment is necessary and areas without it have brought gravel in for fish spawning. Kendra will send this report to the FAB.

Ken brought up Cumulative Effects were hot topic in 1989 Lake Roesiger controversy when large clearcuts were simultaneously permitted on both sides of the lake. DNR won the appeal but the event triggered changes to regulations which took more land out of production for protections. Ken felt rates of harvest constraints are a good idea and may have prevented the controversy. Tom countered that the landowners could lose all discretion for size, type and timing of harvests with this type of regulation. The watershed analysis then followed and finally to the FPR in affect today.

C. RFI: See above.

D. Illabot Creek: Jon Vanderheyden withdrew his determination to decommission the road due to 6 appeals that were received. The FAB noted that Paul Wagner did an excellent job bringing forward all of the facts as to why the road should not be closed. In doing his research he showed how it would not be cost effective for the closure. Paul said he would develop a harvest plan to pay for maintaining the road. Comments were made that it was unfortunate that the USFS had no staff left to do this type of work. The Commissioners wrote a letter asking for Vanderheyden to reconsider his decision and supported the appeals.

E. USFS Plan: The Revised Plan has been released and it clearly states that a variety of aspects must be taken into consideration when developing each Forest Plan. This includes environmental, recreational, forest health, jobs, economics and public involvement. There was discussion about the implications. Paul reported on a letter sent out by the Pacific Northwest Region office to all District Supervisors basically saying they needed to expand sales up by 20% over the next 3 years and that they need to make sales more operationally feasible. This has come on the wave of the revised Planning Rule and at a time with the reauthorization for Secure Rural Schools has expired and a funding source needs to be developed. There was discussion about the State Lands timber sales not being as large for the next decade in Skagit as they have been this past decade and so the loss in revenues will need to be made up...opening up harvests in the Mt Baker Snoqualmie National Forest (MBS) will be necessary. FAB noted that it will be important to stay engaged with the local USFS. Kendra will send the letter to FAB and has sent it to the BoCC. FAB suggested a stewardship contract for USFS since they don't have staff anymore; however, this may only enable them not to come up to speed and do the work that they need to do.

F. Silviculture Challenge bet UW and UBC: It was noted that David Forde at UW commented on how negligent the USFS has been. It does appear that the USFS may be changing positions to some degree. Kendra will send a copy to the FAB. A economic study was gone by EDAS about 15 years ago, that Don Wick can't find, and the FAB would like to look at again. Folks will look around to see if they can find a copy.

It was suggested that an agreement with USFS the County and the DNR should be drafted to allow the USFS to get out of the NEPA conflict and help the trusts, manage the forests and get some revenue back to the USFS for management.

G. Weidner visit: Members of the FAB will meet with Bob on May 1st at 8:00 and will have maps and information sent to him for his preparation. Some discussion as to what he was offering, wanted, needed. It appears that he will be asking for some financial support to help get some timber sales put up in the Skagit area of the MBS by proposing a pilot in the area. Tom offered that by working on a commission it may be a financial solution.

The FAB then discussed the last three items and how they were interconnected. Bob Weidner is looking for matrix lands that could be used for a pilot project and either the area used for the Silviculture Challenge or up near Cascade Ridge were suggested.

H. Blanchard Advisory Group: Both Tom and Kendra attended the meeting where the DNR gave an update on the Blue Comet sale (\$about \$560,000 to the trusts and 1.6 MMBF to the mills) and the proposed Acorn sale (40 ac and 90 ac units with a trail), which will be offered near December. The DNR also said Goldmark is no longer considering putting the core into a NRCA since it doesn't fit legally fit that category. It will still be managed similar to one but allowing the prescriptions from the adopted Strategic Plan. Decommissioning unused roads were discussed as part of the Plan and the required RMAP rules. The topic of the 54 acres of older growth cedar with a fern understory is still heavily debated as to whether to put it into the core or manage it under the DNR rules for State Lands. The trees are about 105 years old but the stand does not provide sensitive habitat. The core was not to exceed 1600 acres and the money for compensating the trusts is still in limbo.

I. General Interest: Gordy mentioned that the rules between the different regions really are being applied differently. He saw a FP permit for 80 acres with 1/8 mile of road and nothing marked on the permit. It was still approved.

IV. Adjourn 9:06 a.m.