



**SKAGIT COUNTY FOREST
ADVISORY BOARD**

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Minutes May 13, 2019

Present: Ken, Steve, Chuck, Lisa, Gordy, Tom, Al, Dave, Aubrey, Paul and Tim. Absent: Fred

Guest: Bill Blake, Manager of the Skagit Conservation District

- I. Introductions: Bill Blake had asked to come and address the FAB regarding the District's funding for ag and forestry issues.
- II. Minutes: Ken asked the minutes be modified to better reflect what he said regarding grizzly bears. Tim moved and Ken seconded to approve the minutes with the amendment. Approved unanimously.
- III. General Discussion (Dave asked to keep this to 5 minutes due to guest speaker):
 - a. FAB discussed their presentations and trying to make certain time slots before the Commissioners. The FAB had hoped to be giving their short presentations on Tuesdays at 11:30 but Commissioner Janicki had asked to have them get scheduled for specific times rather than at public comment time. FAB trying see what can work with what the Commissioner's office has provided for times.
 - b. There were some thoughts about the mineral overlay and how this is a very integral part to forestry (i.e. road construction). Removing this would not be good.
- IV. Bill Blake's Presentation: Mr. Blake noted that since his last appearance before the FAB he had been working with the Drainage Consortium to try and find support for a county-wide tax to help out funding for the Conservation District. He felt they have resolved their issues. He noted that NRCS is part-time and shared with San Juan, Whidbey, Skagit and maybe Whatcom with "soft dollars" that may dry up soon. The District does not have funding for an FTE for forestry, like they did with Al, and they believe and hope the FAB agrees that one is needed. This is in-part what the funding would go towards, though he admitted that the persons would only be paid about \$50,000/yr. The FAB noted that this would not retain seasoned and knowledgeable individual to do the work they seem to want to have done (which also includes working on the Firewise program that gets dollars from Skagit County). The tax would be on every parcel at \$3.00. There are more folks in the cities so most of the forestry dollars would go towards urban forestry with some towards helping small landowners with traditional forestry. Bill gave a presentation on the breakdown of how the District would spend the revenue.

Gordy asked why independent (with some of those being retired) foresters couldn't be put on a list that the Districts provides, who can help develop small landowner forest management plans. This would help on costs and help employment opportunities for foresters. Ken asked if Skagit County FAB should recommend to the BoCC to enforce forest open space tax exemptions (like San Juan County and others) to help manage the forest lands, provide some revenue to SC and meet the requirement of being in a tax-exempt classification. He believes only 20 (or less) is actually being managed. Ken suggested some ways to go about this. Such as...send a card in the mail stating that one would lose their tax exemption if they don't implement their forest management plan.

FAB all asked Bill if more dollars could be moved towards a forestry position and helping forestry. They also asked why go through all of this if they are going to barely have enough to pay someone to work on forestry issues.

FAB would like to have a follow up discussion at one of their next meetings on the open space tax exemption. FAB talked about writing a recommendation letter to the BoCC on this issue. They believe that if landowners get a tax benefit they should be required to manage their forest plans that they provided to get the exemption.

V. FPB Update: Tom Nelson gave an update.

- a. On Type N the Board accepted Policy's recommendation for more time to get more all of the related Type N studies finished and analyzed before moving forward with a Rule.
- b. Water Typing- the Tribes still want to move ahead with an Anadromous Floor, however, there is no science to support this. He said the FPB acknowledged that the Potential Habitat Breaks (PHBs) were not yet well flushed out by DNR staff and certain elements from some of the caucus had been ignored and needed to be evaluated. This could mean the PHB would be 80+ feet up stream than where it should be. The FPB will be creating a subcommittee and there will be a special meeting in June to approve a specific Board motion on this.
- c. Clean Water Assurances (CWA)- DOE gave a presentation and indicated that things were not great because the milestones for the HCP have not been met. However, from another perspective, many have been (about 80%). Heather Bartlet gave the update and said that they had an antidegradation standard that needs to be met (this is very hard to meet). Tom noted that WFPA is going to go do some of their own testing and try to work with DOE. WFPA is now starting to talk about considering "smart buffer" (something the FAB has since its inception) rather than the "one size fits all".

VI. Adjourn 9:10

- VII. Note: a couple of FAB members talked afterwards about a proposal from the land trust to buy some land that is in rural reserve but forested. Dan Berentson had asked what the FAB's thoughts were on this but time ran out and it had not been on the agenda.