



**SKAGIT COUNTY FOREST
ADVISORY BOARD**

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**Minutes
September 13, 2023**

Present: Aubrey, Chuck, Kris, Peter, Jamie, Dave, Gordy, David. Absent: Tim, Al, Steve and John. Guests: Matt Comiski and Commissioner Janicki

- I. Minutes: Dave moved to approve; Kris seconded. Passed unanimously.
- II. The chair asked to move the action item to follow discussion updates.
- III. Updates: The WDFW is pursuing rule-making language to change hydraulic permits in response to climate change. Finny bridge was completed and now only needs guardrails. Opened September 13th, 2023.
- IV. Discussion:
 - a. BNR – Field Tour update- The BNR had a 2-day tour rather than its typical Monthly meeting. The tour was up in the Skagit and Whatcom forests. The topic was recreation. Matt gave the update noting the DNR staff did a great job talking about recreation and how it can fit with timber management. They stayed on topic as they visited sites with heavy recreation and logging. This was the kickoff to the recreation planning the DNR is undertaking, utilizing mainly grant dollars. It was noted that there was a rally that was ignored as tour participants moved to another site.
 - b. Education: Vale Tree Farm hosting a kid’s tour. Over 2,000 expected. AFRC will be hosting a booth. SW Washington Skill Center will be present for K-12. Clallam (?) County has programs and work force opportunities for students. Touch base with Matt for more information.
 - c. DNR Region meeting: Next meeting scheduled for October 11th after the FAB meeting. It was noted that the DNR is close to 30 days for permit approvals, so not much different. There have been improvements in geological reviews and permitting. That has been contributed to a new staff person, Maddy Anderson, who appears to be going by the book when making calls in the field.
 - d. Homeless: Note that it may be getting worse due to the predicted economy. The question of whether paid security is worth it is being debated. In Snohomish a SWAT team has gotten involved, however there does not appear to be many positive results. This will be a continued discussion.
 - e. BNR September meeting had 16 sales approved. DNR picked up a good block through a land transfer. The FAB noted that replacement lands should be off Federal lands otherwise it impacts the volume. The Blanchard Strategy needs to be followed. No net loss to the land base. Sustainable Harvest discussion did not occur.

- V. DOE Tier III – Action item. A subcommittee of John Gold, Steve Tift, and Jamie Hillery, met and after a discussion with Tom Uniack, with Washington Wild and a proponent for the designation, noted that a comment letter opposing the designation was still appropriate but should include questions for the DOE that have not been answered (Tom Uniack had suggested the questions after noting his disappointment to the County’s position). Tom had noted that he had intentionally removed all DNR lands from the designation boundary because he didn’t want to impact timber sales. The DOE had been asked many questions during its Public Comment workshops, yet answers were vague, or not answered and even changing over several meetings. This in and of itself was very disconcerting to all of the FAB members, noting that having a rule put into place without certain questions answered was just wrong. Janie moved and Gordy seconded recommending to the BoCC that they send a letter to DOE opposing the Cascade River Tier III designation. During discussion of the motion, the FAB made the following list of questions they believed needs to addressed and on the record for the DOE to answer as part of the rule-making, and then was added by friendly amendment, which was accepted by both Jamie and Gordy, to be included in the letter from the BoCC. The FAB asked that the following questions be included in the letter and for the record:
- a. Why does the DOE not have a GIS map for our consideration versus a pdf file?
 - b. How accurate can the map, especially at the scale provided to the public?
 - c. How can the DOE state they have done “extensive research” on these designations when they don’t have an adequate map? When they don’t know the number of acres within the designated boundary? when they don’t know the number of miles of tributaries/
 - d. Have you contacted the private landowner within the designated boundary?
 - e. With the ‘research” done, what is the baseline for evaluation?
 - f. Why does the DOE want an added layer of protection?
 - g. If the DOE “did not identify **immediate or likely future impacts associated with the proposed rule amendments, as implementation of baseline laws and rules is likely to be protective of the proposed ORW-designated waters under likely current and future circumstances. We base this determination on current activities identified for each waterbody and surrounding lands, in conjunction with existing permitting requirements, federal and state laws and rules, and local regulations.** Then why wouldn’t all those protections be adequate for any future activities? Especially with the requirement of utilizing SEPA or NEPA?
 - h. What specific activities would be exempt from environmental review or existing regulations that could potentially impact water quality?
 - i. Can a natural disaster affect how the DOE will interpret the antidegradation policy?
 - j. Can this Antidegradation Policy change?
 - k. What is the problem this designation is fixing?
 - l. Is there research and data indicating a fix needs to occur?
 - m. Can you measure the fix you are attempting to provide if there is one?
 - n. Has the DOE considered future the need for energy efficient resources potentially present?

- o. Has the DOE considered that there may be future threatened habitat that might require a strategy that this would prohibit?
 - p. What is the definition of “relatively pristine”? As state in WAC 173-201A
 - q. How many rivers and associated tributaries would the DOE consider to be ‘unique’
What constitutes “unique” as stated in WAC 173-201A?
 - r. How would this designation potentially affect downstream waters? Would this allow the DOE to make policy and/or decisions on downstream waters?
 - s. Can the DOE tell us what rivers would not be considered, giving examples, based on the current WAC 173-201A criteria?
 - t. Does the DOE know the impacts of future recreational uses?
 - u. The USFS periodically does campground improvements and redevelopment. Is this going to be considered an allowable use and without additional restrictions and limitations?
 - v. Has the DOE considered the costs of maintenance, parking, and toilet facilities as recreational uses increase? Who would be responsible for these costs? Is the DOE aware of what the DNR is going through due to increases in recreational uses? Are they willing to do the same to offset any impacts from their decision to designate the Cascade as a Tier III water for its recreational uses?
 - w. Does the DOE understand the research that goes into a Forest Practice Application? Can they explain it?
 - x. How does fire management, including roads, get built without additional regulatory layering?
 - y. Who is responsible for overseeing this designation when permitting any activity?
 - z. Why does the current Wild and Scenic designation not provide enough protection?
- VI. Meeting Adjourned 8:59 a.m.