



**SKAGIT COUNTY FOREST
ADVISORY BOARD**

Jamie Hillery, Chairman
Peter Janicki David Nielsen
Al Craney Chuck Parker
Gordon Iverson Tim Raschko
Kris McCall Aubrey Stargell
John Gold Steve Tift
Dave Chamberlain
Kendra Smith, Staff

Minutes

January 10, 2024

Present: Kris, John, Peter, Aubrey, Jamie, Dave C, Gordy and Al. Absent: David, Steve, Tim and Chuck
Guest: Nick Kunz, Jessica Espy, and Matt Comisky

- I. Minutes: Amending that Gordy was present then, Dave moved and John seconded to approve December minutes. Passed unanimous.
- II. Cascade River Tier III Update: DOE issued the CR 103, the final step for rule making placing portions of the Cascade River under the Tier III designation. DOE provided comments to the public comments provided. They did not address many of the questions posed by those opposing this designation. There was discussion on whether this should be appealed. An appeal would show how the County opposes this action without better vetting, data or research on the justification and potential impacts. Some FAB members believed that regardless of a successful appeal, an appeal would show reasons the WAC should be changed for future use of this designation process. That could then be taken to the legislatures with the request to change/amend the current rule outlining the criteria for designating and approving a Tier III designation. The FAB made the following motion: The FAB recommends the County Commissioners discuss with legal counsel the pros and cons to considering an appeal of the DOE decision to designate portions of the Cascade River as Tier III under WAC 201A-330. The FAB noted the basis for an appeal would be to question 1. Did the DOE adequately involve local governments and its wishes and 2. What constitutes a majority of support. Jamie moved and Dave seconded the motion. Passed unanimous.
- III. Education updates: Nick provided updates for the next teacher workshop. The theme will be Fire and Land Management and will be 2 ½ days. He noted there will not be a WSU Coaching for the small landowners this year. This is generally a joint effort involving WSU Ext. and the Conservation District. It has been very successful and one of the few ways individual property owners can get educated on management plans, forestry, and estate planning that also affects forest taxation. WSU Ext. supposedly cut forestry from their scope of work based on a 10% cut to all contractors. The FAB made the following motion: The FAB recommends that the County Commissioners reinstate forestry back into the WSU EXT scope of work next year and following years during the next budget cycle and to make budget cuts across the entire contract scope and not just forestry. Al moved and Jamie seconded. Motion passed unanimous. Jessica noted she was working on the pollinator project in the NW Region and will be helping with school programs involving forestry.

- IV. BNR Update: DNR staff presented the OARR (Outdoor access and Responsible Recreation Strategic Plan) plan update to the BNR discussing the goals, which did not include acknowledgement of the Trust mandate. The DNR wants to get separate funding for recreation outside of competing for grants. Recently DNR has experienced large volumes of users and the issues that come with that such as parking, restrooms, trash, trail maintenance vandalism. FAB noted that when the Forest Service stopped sales these same things happened and they have now shut down trails due to a lack of funding. That has probably in part pushed more recreationalists onto DNR lands. The FAB has no problem with recreation as long as timber sales are not impaired, that the recreationalist understand these are trust lands first and foremost. That the DNR include the beneficiaries and the Jr taxing districts in the conversations. They don't want separate funding for recreation because they are concerned sideboards to protecting the timber sales will be eliminated (or not strong enough). The conversation then centered around the need for volume to the mills and this was dropping with every new DNR timber sale and project proposal. The Natural Climate Solution Act (from the 2023 Legislative Proviso -part of the \$70,000,000) presentation was given, showing the counties and areas identified for the 2,000 acre of carbon storage trees. It was a bit more than 2,000 ac and the FAB noted that the polygons around the streams will take even more lands off base. A quick calculation for those lands in Whatcom County will amount to approximately 80 MBF (million board feet) of timber volume will be removed. This has significant impacts to the surrounding mills and infrastructure. Once a county sends a letter of concurrence back to the DNR those lands are off base whether or not transfer lands are identified and purchased. The FAB noted that a third-party appraisal needs to be done on the lands being transferred. Questions were asked about the modeling for the SHC and a violation of individual locality.
- V. TFW Policy update: Work being done on the language for the new Type Np rule. Discussions on including science outside CMER and how to do it were the big topics. FAB will discuss more next month due to time.
- VI. California Fire Study out of Berkeley: FAB noted that this was a great study and only proved what they have been preaching for a long time. Fuel loads need to be reduced and good forest management an absolute.
- VII. NW Forest Plan update: Feb 2 deadline to make comments on the proposed amendments to the NWFP. The Plan was revised on a fast track primarily to account for the continued loss of the Northern Spotted Owl. The Plan lists 4 areas of impact, Barred Owl taking over habitat, wildfires destroying the NSO habitat, forest diseases hurting habitat, and logging. FAB noted there has been little to no logging in our area for years and the NW Forest Plan in place today has not met the volumes that were supposed to come off the lands in the matrix areas. The motion was made to recommend to the BoCC to send a comment letter to the USFS primarily addressing the need for active forest management to deter wildfire and disease to help promote NSO habitat and that any amendments to the NW Forest Plan should understand the ramifications of and potential consequences and to oppose any new

language that impacts the ability to have healthy forest management. Aubrey moved and Gordy seconded. Motion passed unanimous. The FAB noted that the commitment within the current Plan for the amount of volume to come off the matrix lands has not been met. There was discussion again about the absolute need to find replacement volume for the mills to keep operating.

VIII. Role of the FAB Coordinator: Several FAB members (Jamie, Dave, John) met with 2 of the Commissioners and County Administrator, to discuss what they felt were the most important tasks for a coordinator to do in order to support the FAB and the educational role to the County Commissioners. The three FAB noted it was the impact of timber in Skagit County, economic impacts (volume) and the efforts to maintain volume, need to nurture relationships in Olympia more important than in-person and every month FAB meetings. The 3 said they wanted to formalize these thoughts to the Commissioners and give it to them after the next meeting.

IX. Adjourn 9:12 a.m.