



**SKAGIT COUNTY FOREST
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**Minutes
2-15-24**

Present: Dave, Jamie, Chuck, John, Tim, Gordy, Kris, David Peter, Al, Aubrey, and Steve
Guests: Nick Kunz and Matt Comiski

1. Minutes: John moved to approve, Tim seconded Approved unanimous
2. NW Forest Plan and USFS Older Growth amendments: Comments were due Feb 2nd. Discussion around the webinars and the presentations. USFS admitted to not accomplishing one of the 5 goals set forth by the Clinton Administration to ensure a sustainable forest industry community. They also acknowledged that they have not put up or harvested sales that had been promised in the original plan. Skagit County submitted comments as recommended by the FAB on the NW FP as well as provided comments on the potential amendment of the Older Growth Plan (also due on 2-2-24). The impact of fire with the drier seasons/climate was the primary item concern as it affects not only the NSO but communities and the environment (including carbon stored). Requested the USFS define "older growth" so a workable plan can be established. The Plans don't acknowledge travel corridors, which are believed to be essential. Discussed the extermination of the Barred Owl as a means of bringing back the NSO.
3. Education: Nick reported of the WFFA tours, the update on the PEI/DNR "Fire and Land" workshop July 10-12, and that NRCS has quite a bit of funding for cost sharing on projects. RCO is now allowing for conservation easements to have some harvesting done within them. Robert Walters is the new firewise hire for the Conservation District in Whatcom and Skagit.
4. BNR and State Lands: All sales approved but the BNR revoked its January decision for one of the sales (Cabbage Patch) in Thurston and Grays Harbor counties. They are giving Thurston until Sept to come up with a plan to set these lands aside from management. There are appeals on two other sales right now (Carrot and Crocker). Presentation on profit/loss for the year was given. Commercial real estate is not doing so well. Management costs are still going up. 30MBF will be lost to the NW Region with the proposed removals in the SHC. Carbon workgroup has met 3 times. Presentations given on 2 types of modeling for carbon sequestration and storage and then discussion on what scenarios should be modeled. Conservation wants one to be all lands set aside, but they do not want to have the current HCP modeled. Scenario discussions have included thinning, rotation length, silviculture, and site class to date. 16 scenarios max will be considered.

5. TFW: Western Gray Squirrel listed on State threatened/Endangered list, so DNR needs to take action. The habitat has not yet been identified. The squirrel is doing fine in all other locations outside of western Washington (north and south). Water typing is moving forward and not coming up to doing the environmental review and economic impact study. Every caucus has now put an economist at the table for review. Type N has some discussion about sensitive sites, PIPs, orphaned streams and those that go underground with (and without) a stream channel. This discussion was promised at TFW to Skagit County and others and has still not occurred. DNR struggling with how to write a rule that doesn't change the status of these streams (FPB said only Type N streams receive a Rule change).
6. DNR training on the MM new rule. There were some questions and discussion as to what triggers a stand review with respect to SEPA. Discussion on using E-DNR for fish presence.
7. Bridge Repair: FAB members noted more bridges that require repair, and a permit can't be obtained for operating loads. Peter is compiling a list with Jamie. FAB will review it one more time and send to the Public Works department. There is a bridge in Whatcom that is accessed in Skagit and vice versa, which is important to getting to the mills. FAB was wondering if the two counties could cooperate.
8. Adjourn: 9:10