

**Skagit County Forest Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes/Summary
Wednesday, May 6, 2026**

Attendance:

Member	Present	Absent
Chamberlain, Dave	X	
Craney, Al	X	
Iverson, Gordon	X	
Hillery, Jamie, Chair	X	
McCall, Kris	X	
Nielsen, David		X
Dryden, Joel	X	
Raschko, Tim		X
Stargell, Aubrey	X	
Tift, Steve	X	
Janicki, Peter	X	
Gold, John	X	

Others present: Jessica Espy, Hampton; Nick Kunz, Skagit Conservation District; Eric Johnson, FAB Coordinator, Department of Natural Resources, Northwest Region Staff; Laurie Bergvall, Chris Hankey, Mark Arneson, and Cory McDonald; Matt Comisky, AFRC

April 1, 2026, Meeting Minutes. Approved

Brief Meeting Recap

The Forest Advisory Board meeting focused on Department of Natural Resources’ (DNR) management of Skagit County’s State Forest Transfer Lands and current challenges with timber harvest volumes and revenue. Four DNR representatives (Laurie Bergvall, Chris Hankey, Mark Arneson, and Cory McDonald) presented data showing how DNR was/was not meeting Skagit County's sustainable harvest target of 25 million board feet per year.

DNRs’ presentation, and dialogue with FAB members, highlighted how policy changes, including the Marbled Murrelet strategy and increased scrutiny of structurally complex forests, are contributing to reduced harvest volumes and revenue. FAB Members and DNR staff discussed concerns about DNR's financial situation and staffing reductions, while also exploring potential alternative revenue streams that may or may not be applicable in Skagit County.

Skagit County Forestry Tour - County Commissioners

Joel, Peter and Nick provided a report to FAB members on the successful April 17th Skagit County Board of County Commissioners tour that focused on forestry management and the economic value of forestry to Skagit County. The tour included stops to discuss Np rule issues and featured strategic locations that demonstrated forest management practices and highlighted the impact of proposed regulations. The tour included stops at active logging sites, discussed reforestation processes, and showcased the economic impact of forest management. FAB members expressed their appreciation to Joel, Peter, and Nick for all their work in preparing and planning for the trip, as well as to Commissioners Wesen, Browning and Burns for spending the day learning more about forest management.

Woods Tour Planning Meeting

Jessica Espy provided a quick update on the annual Woods Tour on June 26th in Snohomish County, indicating that planning would begin in earnest by the end of the month.

Teacher Event Planning Discussion

Nick provided an update on plans for an upcoming event targeting teachers, schools, superintendents, elected officials, and public leaders, with a capacity of around 60 attendees. Nick noted that stops would include Blanchard Mountain and Baker Lake. Teacher workshop is scheduled for July 14-16.

DNR Forest Health Advisory Committee Tour

Nick outlined plans for a Forest Health Advisory Tour in the Skagit County area on September 22nd including visits to Pacific Rim Tonewoods, a mill tour at SPI, and potential site visits in Anacortes to demonstrate the effects of active forest management versus a neglected forest. Nick was meeting with Jen Watkins (DNR) and Jenny Coe (State Conservation Commission) in April to discuss logistics.

Board of Natural Resources (BNR)

The Board of Natural Resources authorized the “Coyote” sale in Skagit County at their May 5th meeting. This State Forest Board Transfer Lands proposal included 145 harvestable acres, 3,697 mbf, \$ 811,000 minimum bid.

“Np Rule” Amicus Brief

The Skagit County Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) approved, upon review, participating in an Amicus Brief pertaining to the Forest Practices Board adoption of the

“Np Rule”. The County will participate with other counties/junior taxing districts but will not be taking the lead.

State Forest Transfer Lands Reconveyance Discussion

There was follow up discussion regarding reconveyance of State Forest Transfer Lands from the April meeting. The group acknowledged the challenge of managing trust lands for all beneficiaries across the state given the varying perspectives among counties.

The Skagit County Board of County Commissioners will be discussing this issue with FAB Chair Hillery and others at a meeting in June. Eric explained that while some counties like Clallam have done more analysis in this area than other counties, there is statewide interest from many timber counties in looking at potential changes to the reconveyance statutes/RCWs/Process. The group discussed challenges with current management systems, including how revenue from trust lands is distributed and the impact of delayed sustainable harvest calculations.

Department of Natural Resources, Northwest Region, Presentation and Discussion

Much of the meeting focused on a presentation and discussion on DNR's timber management in Skagit County. DNR Staff (Laurie Bergvall, Chris Hankey, Mark Arneson, and Cory McDonald) presented and engaged FAB members on a variety of issues associated with managing State Forest Transfer Lands in Skagit County. Chris and Mark presented an overview of federally granted trust lands, the state forest transfer trust lands, and sustainable harvest calculations. They discussed the challenges of meeting targets over the past decade, including a significant gap between planned and actual harvest volumes that result in arrearage, and the impact of new directions on structurally complex forests. DNR staff acknowledged they are aware of the frustrations of certain decisions related to additional conservation related set-asides impacting county and junior taxing district revenues.

DNR and FAB members discussed the Skagit County timber revenue challenge noting the decadal over decadal decline in the Sustainable Harvest Plans (SHP) as well as past and projected arrearage. Several themes emerged during the discussion:

- Early harvests at the start of the 2015 – 2024 decadal harvest period were based on the previous decadal harvest plan projections before the new SHP was approved by the Board of Natural Resources.
- Since 2020, harvests are significantly less than the projected annual 25 million board feet harvest levels because earlier years were much higher than the 25 million board feet.

- There is, again, going to be a projected arrearage of nearly one million board feet this decade in Skagit County.
- There is concern by FAB members about the sustainability of operations for DNR not achieving adequate revenue to support operations and about staffing reductions at DNR due to declining revenue. DNR staff confirmed they are not always filling vacancies and using temporary positions to maintain operations at times.
- FAB members and DNR Staff discussed challenges with current timber marketing strategies and the impact of reduced harvest levels on mill infrastructure and local economies.
- FAB and DNR shared thoughts on contracts, bidding, and alternatives to current business contracts. Most believed that longer-term contracts provide more value than short-term sales to both contractors and trust beneficiaries.
- There was discussion in exploring alternative revenue streams like commercial property management leases, that are not currently being considered for Skagit County.
- There were questions and discussion of the new SEPA requirements for proposed timber sales.
- The group also addressed the 77,000 acres under Commissioner of Public Lands Upthegrove's order. Dialogue sought to understand the challenges in categorizing stand structures for management purposes through this order and seeking clarity in the purpose to these new protections.
- That only 42,804, or approximately 50% of Skagit County's 84,598 State Forest Transfer Lands are deemed operable acres available for harvest and timber production. How many additional acres will be set aside by Commissioner Upthegrove's order?

FAB members expressed their appreciation to Laurie, Chris, Mark, and Cory for not only the presentation and discussion but also for the work that they do at DNR.

FAB Membership

The group discussed board membership, considering both the transition of current members from the Board and the addition of potential new Board Members.

Clean Energy Advisory Group

FAB members received written information about the Clean Energy Advisory Group and the opportunity/request to have a FAB Board member participate on the Group. A representative from the Skagit County Planning and Development Services will attend the June 3rd FAB meeting to present more details and information.

Actions and Decisions

- Eric will discuss with Chair Wesen regarding reconveyance work session presentation in open session or individual Commissioner meetings.
- Eric will provide meeting invitation to Washington State Association of Counties' May Timber Counties Caucus.
- Eric will invite Robby Eckroth to the June FAB meeting to present/discuss the Skagit County Clean Energy Advisory Group.
- Any FAB member interested in participating in the Clean Energy Advisory Group is encouraged to attend one of the open houses set for June 9th or 10th.
- Eric will investigate the process, review county policy/resolution, and discuss with County Administrator the replacement of FAB members and recruitment/appointment of new ones.
- Eric will discuss with FAB the possibility for ongoing/scheduled check ins and updates with DNR Northwest Region staff to assure good communication and exchange information on DNR activities and issues.
- FAB members: at future meeting discuss how the group can help DNR with advocacy, education, and outreach to support trust beneficiaries and timber harvest objectives.