

**Skagit County Forest Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes/Summary
Wednesday, February 4, 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: Skagit County Commissioner Joe Burns, Eric Johnson, FAB Coordinator, Matt Comisky, AFRC, Jefferson County Commissioner Heidi Eisenhour, Nick Kunz, Skagit County Conservation District

January 7, 2026, Meeting Minutes. Approved

Skagit County Commissioner Joe Burns and Forest Advisory Board (FAB) Introductions

Recently appointed Skagit County Commissioner Joe Burns joined the meeting and provided a brief introduction and overview of his background. Forest Advisory Board (FAB) members provided self-introductions and discussed their roles and backgrounds in forestry, connection to Skagit County, and history with FAB.

Legislative Updates on Forest Management

FAB Members discussed legislative updates, focusing on Representative Tom Dent's (R) proposed legislation (HB 2620) and the recent legislative hearing that discussed the legislative concerns about the NP rule and its impact on the forest industry. *House Bill 2620, Restoring collaboration in the forest practices rule-making process for the benefit of long-term protection of natural resources and the forest products industry* was proposed legislation that responds to concerns about the recently adopted Forest Practice Board's Np Buffer Rule and the negative impact on the forest industry and the need for better

economic analysis in rule-making processes. The proposed legislation has two basic components:

- Requires analysis of alternatives and the economic viability of the timber industry in riparian buffer rulemakings.
- Requires the Forest Practices Board to repeal and restart the recently adopted riparian buffer rule in accordance with the new analysis requirements.

FAB members expressed frustration with the lack of economic analysis in the rule-making process and highlighted the need for better collaboration between agencies. The group also touched on the importance of considering economic viability of the forest industry and rural communities in the development and consideration of forest management policies.

FAB members noted that Representative Christine Reeves (D), the Democratic chair of the committee, asked tough questions about adaptive management and economic impacts of decisions. The group also touched on the lack of progress in stopping the addition of tribal representatives to the Board of Natural Resources, with opponents of the proposed legislation facing criticism for opposing the bills. They concluded by discussing the potential for some bills to pass this year, including one related to updating timber sales processes and another regarding an audit of county forest board lands.

Forest Management and Permit Challenges

The meeting covered several key topics, including Skagit County Board of County Commissioners (BoCC), submitting two communications on forest related issues:

1. BoCC submitted a letter to the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Service supporting the DRAFT EIS on a Forestwide Thinning Project, with suggested changes/considerations.
2. BoCC submitted a letter to the Washington State Board of Natural Resources for the proposed Atonal Timber Harvest.

They also addressed issues with permit processes for oversized vehicles, highlighting communication challenges between state and county authorities. The conversation ended with plans to meet with Heidi Eisenhour to discuss questions related to adaptive management and future decision-making processes.

Sustainable Forestry Tours for Commissioners

The group discussed organizing tours for county commissioners to showcase sustainable forestry practices and legacy forests. Joel offered to host tours at Pilchuck Tree Farm and Jamie offered Grandy Lake, respectively, with the goal of demonstrating the benefits of

active forestry management and the sophistication of modern sawmills. They agreed to involve Nick for coordination assistance and to include a sawmill demonstration as part of the tour. The tours were seen as an opportunity to educate commissioners and build support for sustainable forestry practices.

Board of Natural Resources

FAB members were briefed on the Board of Natural Resources (BNR) activities including having a series of special work sessions focused on the Eastside Sustainable Harvest Calculation. One of the decisions before the BNR was to establish the discount rate for the Eastside Sustainable Harvest Calculation/Plan. Despite concerns raised by Commissioner Randy Johnson and the absence of consultation with the technical advisory committee, the board approved a discount rate of 1.5%.

Several timber sales were approved by the BNR, including the Atonal Timber Harvest sale in Skagit County on February 3, 2026, noting there was opposition from some board members and testimony due to “legacy forest” concerns. There continues to be concerns from a few members of the Board of Natural Resources about cutting certain age/size trees, regardless of those trees not being classified or surveyed as old growth, and fully complying with all laws, regulations, and policies.

Jefferson County Commissioner Heidi Eisenhour

Jefferson County Commissioner Heidi Eisenhour, and the County Representative on the Forest Practices Board, joined the meeting virtually to discuss forest-related issues in Skagit County. FAB Members introduced themselves and welcomed Commissioner Eisenhower.

Chair Hillery provide a quick overview of the Skagit County Forest Advisory Board's role in advising county commissioners on forestry legislation, rules and regulations, issues affecting the viability of the forest products industry and production, and income for the county and junior taxing districts.

Commissioner Eisenhour shared her background in natural resource work and land conservation, highlighting her experience with forest practice applications and collaborative efforts.

Commissioner Eisenhour engaged in an excellent dialogue with FAB members and responded to several questions.

Commissioner Eisenhour responded to a question about abstaining from voting on the Np Buffer Rule and citing her discomfort with a non-consensus recommendation coming from TFW Policy Committee. She explained her decision to abstain from the NP rule vote on the

Forest Practices Board (FPB) due to the extensive amount of material to review and the fact that she had just been appointed to the FPB (10 days prior to the vote), emphasizing the complexity of achieving consensus among diverse stakeholders.

Commissioner Eisenhower was asked about the inherent balancing act in Forest and Fish policy and what her philosophy or thoughts were about the best way for the TFW Policy Committee to achieve consensus in the future to avoid non-consensus policy recommendations coming from the TFW Policy Committee to the Forest Practices Board.

Commissioner Eisenhower spoke of her philosophy on achieving consensus in the TFW Policy Committee specifically noting that consensus is challenging in decision making but worthwhile when achieved, and she expressed a desire for a middle ground in decision-making processes. Commissioner Eisenhower also discussed her approach to understanding the diverse perspectives on during the rulemaking process, emphasizing her plan to listen to groups and make necessary adjustments.

She noted the financial struggles of junior taxing districts due to reduced timber harvests and expressed her commitment to engaging with these districts to gain their perspectives and suggested bringing together the affected timber counties from Western Washington for a conversation about proposed rules, and noted that the most recent rule making and the time constraints that prevented her from doing so during following her appointment to the Forest Practices Board just 10 days prior to the Board Meeting/vote.

Community Forests

Commissioner Eisenhower was asked about her perspectives on Community Forests and she shared Jefferson County's experience with forest management, noting that they recently dedicated their first community forest, Chimacum Ridge, and have conducted four timber harvests that covered the cost of their forestry program. She emphasized that revenue is an important part of forest management to support county government and expressed interest in hearing from others about what works and what doesn't in managing community forests. She discussed how community forests could be a potential win-win approach, though it was noted that some examples like Teanaway and Nisqually have not yet delivered a sustainable flow of fiber.

Enhancing Forest Management Collaboration

Commissioner Eisenhower emphasized the importance of direct communication and offered to visit Skagit County to better understand forest management practices. The group discussed scheduling a field tour to showcase their work and address misconceptions about forest and timber management. They also explored ways to present scientific data on forest management practices to counter political opposition. Discussion ensued on

improving communication and collaboration between the Skagit County Forest Advisory Board and the state's forest management agencies and providing education opportunities.

Commissioner Eisenhower was thanked for participating and she encouraged FAB members to reach out to her as well as being open to participating in a tour in Skagit County and coming back.

Next steps/Action/Follow Up

- Eric will reach out to BoCC and Commissioner Eisenhower to see if they are available/interested in participating in a forest and/or mill tour. Joel, Peter, and Jamie indicated they would take the lead in working on the tour. Nick was suggested to be included to coordinate logistics as needed. Eric would support some of the coordination with the BoCC and Commissioner Eisenhower.
- Several FAB members suggested sharing information about the “OLC Conference” (olympicloggingconference.com/about.asp) with the BoCC and encourage them to think about participating. Eric will share this with the BoCC.
- Eric will confirm with Clallam County Commissioner Randy Johnson regarding his participation at the Wednesday, March 4th FAB meeting. Discussion topics are expected to include –
 - Current Board of Natural Resources Issues
 - Eastside Sustainable Harvest Plan
 - Reconveyance of County Forest Lands
 - Declining Revenue from County Forest Lands Managed by DNR
 - Forest Development Account Concerns
- Eric will obtain and distribute the WFPA/WFFA trial schedule to FAB members.
- Eric will provide an update on the Mount Baker Snoqualmie Forest Forestwide Thinning Project Draft EIS Timeline to FAB.
- At a future meeting we will discuss more about CMER Committee membership and qualifications.
- Check in with County Engineer Tom Keller regarding the options and impacts of the upcoming Highway 99 North Bridge closure on log truck traffic and coordination with the industry.