

**Skagit County Forest Advisory Board  
Meeting Minutes/Summary  
Wednesday, January 7, 2026**

**Attendance:**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>
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:** Eric Johnson, FAB Coordinator, Matt Comisky, AFRC, Tom Weller, Skagit County Engineer

**December 10, 2025, Meeting Minutes.** Approved, with one addition: Forest Advisory Board (FAB) members had requested extending an invitation to Forest Practices Board Member and Jefferson County Commissioner Heidi Eisenhour, who represents county on the Forest Practices Board.

**Forest Advisory Board Introductions**

Forest Advisory Board (FAB) members and Eric Johnson, the new FAB Coordinator/Facilitator provided self-introductions. Members discussed their roles and backgrounds in forestry, connection to Skagit County and history with FAB.

**Infrastructure Damage and Funding Update**

Tom Weller, Skagit County Engineer, presented an update on infrastructure damage from recent weather events, highlighting significant issues on State Route 530, Cascade River Road, and Jordan Creek Road. Weller emphasized the need for a robust temporary bridge at Jordan Creek and expressed concerns about the potential denial of federal recovery funding affecting the County’s ability to pay for the bridge replacement and road repairs.

**Skagit County Infrastructure Projects Update**

Tom Weller also discussed several infrastructure projects in Skagit County, including a culvert repair near Baker Lake Road and upcoming construction projects on Thomas Creek Bridge, Stevens Creek culvert, and South Osterman Creek culvert repair. He mentioned that WSDOT is working to open Highway 530 (FAB members noted there was one lane open) and that the Marblemount Bridge rehabilitation project will resume in March.

### **Permit Challenges and Road Closures**

The group also discussed with County Engineer Weller weight limits on bridges and the process for obtaining permits to transport heavy equipment across them. The group discussed challenges with obtaining permits for oversized loads due to bridge restrictions, with Peter explaining the complicated process and Tom offering to schedule a meeting with interested FAB members after January 22nd. They also addressed issues with Francis Road, where Peter described being stuck in "permit purgatory" due to funding expiration and permit approval delays. Finally, Joel reported on a significant landslide that closed Suiattle River Road (FSR 26), with individuals being stranded and emergency access routes being established.

### **Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Draft Environmental Assessment (EA), Forestwide Thinning Treatments Project (FWT) Comments**

FAB members discussed preparing comments for the Skagit County Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) to consider regarding the environmental assessment for a MBNSF Forestwide Thinning Treatments Project EA. Eric noted the time sensitivity of submitting comments, with a January 12th deadline. It was agreed to support the project particularly noting the importance of project outcomes to local rural economies. FAB wanted to include comments associated with the following areas for the BoCC to consider in a comment letter:

- Prioritize older timber stands and initiate projects on the oldest stands first.
- Support increasing diameter for tree removal of 26" DBH and make it clear that 26" DBH is determined at the time of timber sale bid, not time of harvest.
- Recommend appropriate riparian protections should be those found in the regulatory framework of the Washington State Forest Practices Act and the State of Washington's Forest Practices Habitat Conservation Plan (FPHCP).
- There needs to be additional development of rock sources, pits and quarries, to minimize excessive hauling and road building costs, reduce carbon emissions, and achieve cost effective projects
- FAB disagrees that the implementation of this project action will have adverse impact on Puget Sound Spring Chinook Salmon, Puget Sound Steelhead Trout, or Puget Sound Bull Trout.

- FAB is concerned about the ability of the USFS to implement the commercial thinning treatments proposed within the Draft EA given both the MBSNF current funding and staffing limitations.
- For the project to be successful, allow year-round timber harvest operations under certain rules, regulations, and best management practices.
- Projects must be economically feasible and designed to assure a profitable margin for potential bidders, desired environmental outcomes, and positive economic benefits.

### **Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Financial and Timber Updates**

FAB received updates on DNR's State of the State lands financial report, which showed concerning trends in the FDA account that might require an increase in the DNR Management Fee. There are upcoming Board of Natural Resource work sessions on building the framework and modelling for Eastern Washington sustainable harvest calculations and that will likely be what is used for the Western Washington decadal sustainable harvest plan.

### **Timber Revenue and Trust Options**

The group discussed concerns about declining timber revenue and sales, and if DNR is optimizing revenue to the trust beneficiaries. FAB discussed exploring the possibility of counties seeking reconveyance of state-managed lands, with Eric suggesting this could be a strategy to explore and discuss with the Board of County Commissioners. Matt highlighted legal questions around deed modifications and HCP implications. The board agreed to schedule a future discussion about trust options and discuss with Clallam County Commissioner Randy Johnson regarding the work Clallam County did to study this issue.

### **Actions and Decisions**

- Eric will draft a comment letter regarding the *Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest's (MBSNF) Forestwide Thinning Treatments Project Draft Environmental Assessment* by Thursday, January 8 for review and approval by the Skagit County Board of County Commissioners (BoCC). Letter must be submitted to the MBSNF by January 12<sup>th</sup>. Draft letter should include key points discussed by FAB.
- FAB Members are encouraged to submit individual comments on *Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest's (MBSNF) Forestwide Thinning Treatments Project Draft Environmental Assessment*. Comments may be inputted and sent via the provided weblink.

- Eric will forward the DRAFT “Hampton” comments on the *Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest’s (MBSNF) Forestwide Thinning Treatments Project Draft Environmental Assessment* with FAB Members. The letter shall not be distributed by FAB Members.
- Was agreed to schedule a meeting with Skagit County Engineer Tom Weller and his staff with interested FAB members and possibly others in the forest industry sector to discuss the current oversized/overweight vehicle permit process and suggest system improvements.
- FAB Members would like to invite Skagit County Engineer Tom Weller to the April FAB Meeting for a more detailed update on road/infrastructure project construction, design, and planning.
- Extend an invitation to Clallam County Commissioner Randy Johnson to attend an upcoming FAB Meeting to discuss:
  - The Board of Natural Resources — how Skagit County can be most helpful and effective on Board of Natural Resources issues, and the issues, as the county representative on the BNR, sees coming up that are facing counties and the BNR.
  - Clallam County's work/experience in studying the potential to reconveyance of county lands that are managed by DNR - and the work that your Clallam County Trust Lands Advisory Committee did about 10 years ago.
- Extend an invitation to Jefferson County Commissioner Heidi Eisenhour, who represents Counties on the Forest Practices Board to an upcoming FAB meeting.
- Joel Dryden agreed to be nominated by FAB to the Board of County Commissioners to serve on the Skagit County Climate Action Impact Advisory Committee to represent and bring the forest product industry voice to this group. Eric will forward this nomination to Skagit County staff to be considered by the Skagit County BoCC.
- FAB Members agreed to continue to meet on the first Wednesday of each month, 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Eric will work to secure the Board of County Commissioners meeting room for FAB meetings.
- An invitation will be extended to new Skagit County Commissioner Joe Burns to attend an upcoming meeting of FAB.

NEXT MEETING:      Wednesday, February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2026