

**Skagit County Forest Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes/Summary
Wednesday, March 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, Jessica Espy, Clallam County Commissioner Randy Johnson, Terry Sapp, Chair, Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board, Skagit County Public Works Staff

February 4, 2026, Meeting Minutes. Approved

Road Repair Projects Update

Skagit County Public Works staff presented and discussed several road repair projects and their associated challenges. The first project discussed was the Concrete Sauk Valley Road Bank Stabilization Project Skagit County Public Work and their request for federal funding for the project. FAB also reviewed updates on the Jordan Creek bridge replacement project, which is facing delays due to high construction costs. They discussed the complex permitting process for road repairs, particularly when it comes to environmental regulations and fish habitat protection.

Timber Sales and DNR Finances

The Board of Natural Resources pulled all timber sales from their March 3, 2026, meeting due to a State Court of Appeals “Wishbone Ruling”, which required DNR to consider alternatives during the SEPA process. A special meeting for the Board of Natural Resources is scheduled for March 16th to reconsider previously considered timber sales as well as new timber sales with appropriate environmental SEPA process completed. Matt Comisky

spoke to his concerns about the Forest Development Account (FDA), which funds management of county trust lands. The account is in serious decline and projected to reach zero by the end of the fiscal year. The board discussed the financial challenges facing DNR and the impact of reduced timber sales, with some blaming the purchasing community for the situation.

Clallam County Commissioner Randy Johnson

Clallam County Commissioner Randy Johnson, and the County Representative on the Board of Natural Resources, provided background on the Clallam County's timber industry, which employs 1,700 people and is one of the major employers and source of family wage jobs. He discussed his experience on the Board of Natural Resources (BNR), highlighting the diverse opinions on timber harvesting and the challenges of balancing economic needs with environmental concerns. Commissioner Johnson also touched on recent legislative attempts to add tribal members to the BNR and allow DNR to authorize long-term ecosystem service agreements on state forest lands including on State Forest Transfer Lands, both of which did not pass. He concluded by mentioning ongoing issues with timber sales, including a recent court decision that halted current sales and required the DNR to seek re-approval from the Board of Natural Resources.

Commissioner Johnson shared information on the work going into the preparation of the environmental impact statement for the “Eastside” sustainable harvest calculations, emphasizing challenges with optimization models and constraints. Commissioner Johnson talked of the significant challenges of managing state transfer lands and the importance of educating the public about their purpose and revenue generation.

A significant portion of the meeting was a discussion on the concerns about declining timber revenue from State Forest Transfer Lands, with Commissioner Johnson highlighting that local mills need a consistent and stable supply of local logs from local forests. Clallam County explored the possibility of the County regaining control over forested lands that the County were required to transfer to the state in the 1930s, noting this would require legislative changes and could face legal challenges. The discussion included a historical context from 1930s when counties transferred lands to the state, with Clallam County Commissioners at the time believing they would become “tax-free” and be able to deliver public services just through timber revenue that they received.

Commissioner Johnson discussed the formation and importance of the Clallam County Revenue Advisory Committee (RAC), which unites various junior taxing districts to advocate for timber harvest revenues and highlighted the RAC's recent unanimous decision to send a letter to the state regarding timber revenue concerns, noting strong

participation from school districts. Commissioner Johnson described RAC's ongoing concern about potential land set-asides and a significant shortfall in timber harvests that will impact County and junior taxing district's ability to deliver services. FAB members inquired about the committee's formation process and its potential as a model for other counties (like Skagit County).

While Clallam County considered pursuing taking back ownership and management of their State Forest Board Lands, they ultimately decided, at that time, against it due to complex issues. Commissioner Johnson expressed personal interest in managing county lands but acknowledged the numerous challenges involved.

Skagit County Timber Management Concerns

Following Commissioner Johnson's presentation, FAB discussed concerns about DNR's management of Skagit County's 84,598 acres of State Forest Transfer Lands, including the impact on County and School District revenues. Over the past decade, revenue has declined from \$14-\$15 million annually to Skagit County Trust Beneficiaries to \$3-\$4.5 million annually.

FAB discussed the possibility of Skagit County taking back control of these lands. The discussion highlighted that local control would allow some counties not harvest their forest lands, while others like Skagit County, could manage them sustainably for revenue and a local log supply. FAB members suggested that Skagit County should investigate the original trust land transfer agreements and deeds to better understand the context of these land transfers and look into the potential breach of duty by the state as the trustee.

NP Litigation and Buffer Rule Impact

FAB members discussed the active litigation brought forth by Washington Forest Protection Association and the Washington Family Forest Association regarding the Forest Practices Board adopted buffer rule for non-fish (type Np) streams. There was a motion to recommend to the Skagit County Board of County Commissioners to support Skagit County joining other affected Counties in a joint amicus brief.

Next steps/Action/Follow Up

- Authorized Chair Hillery to send a letter of support to Senator Cantwell and Congressman Larson regarding Skagit County Public Work's congressionally directed spending request for the Concrete Sauk Valley Road Bank Stabilization Project (Milepost 3.7). Eric will discuss it with County Administrator/Deputy Administrator and prepare DRAFT letters accordingly.

- Will seek additional feedback from Commissioners on what they would like to see and discuss on the April 17th Forestry Tour. One idea shared was to provide both visual maps as well as on the ground examples of the recently adopted Np buffer rule to demonstrate the concerns of the impact and illustrate other methods to protect riparian function without new increased buffer widths.
- Board members should think about inviting members of Skagit County's Agricultural Advisory Board to participate in the April 17th Forestry Tour and explore other cross-board coordination and education.
- Eric will make sure that April 17th Forestry Tour is on each Commissioners' calendar.
- Board recommended that Skagit County coordinate and participate with other counties on an Amicus Brief supporting the Washington Forest Protection Association and the Washington Family Forest Association petition to the Court that the Forest Practices Board adopted buffer rule for non-fish (type Np) streams is unlawful. Eric will discuss with County Administration on how to proceed.
- John Gold and Eric agreed to bring back to FAB a draft a motion/recommendation for the FAB to review in regard to conducting historical and legal review of Skagit County's transfer of county lands to the State of Washington and the subsequent State management of this County asset and trust land. The intent is to garner historic and current information to assess if the State of Washington and the Department of Natural Resources are fulfilling their fiduciary responsibilities to the trust beneficiaries and understand what paths exist to possibly seek reconveyance or increased local control of Skagit County's 84,598 acres of State Forest Transfer Lands.