

**RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS
SKAGIT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Monday, April 20, 1998**

8:30 a.m. – 2:30 a.m. Bus Tour of Park Lands and Proposed Timber Sale Sites.

3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Public meeting – Proposed Timber Sales Sites (Hearing Rooms B&C)

The Skagit County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, April 20, 1998, with Commissioners Robert Hart, Ted W. Anderson, and Harvey Wolden present.

PUBLIC MEETING – Proposed Timber Sale Sites.

Chairman Hart opened the public meeting.

Jon Aarstad, Parks & Recreation Director, clarified several questions that had been raised during the tour. He explained that the County needs to develop supportive funds to develop parks. He stated that some facilities in the Parks inventory have not been used as full-fledged parks and are not actively maintained by Parks crews. These are not indicated by any type of signage. Mr. Aarstad explained that these parcels are potential revenue sources and will be reforested. For the benefit of those who did not attend the tour, Mr. Aarstad stated that one of the issues facing the County when developing a park is to have the necessary funding available to maintain such a park after it is developed. He explained the number of acres within the County that are set aside as trust lands. Many of these parcels of land are set aside for timber farming and parklands. He outlined the hand-out that was made available to those in attendance and had been made available to everyone on the tour.

John Gold, Forestry Consultant, explained the particulars of the proposed timber harvest and fluctuation of log prices. He stated that it is difficult to pinpoint exactly in time the exact value of the proposed harvest.

Mr. Aarstad distributed a map of Ann Wolford Park and reviewed the areas of the land that were toured. He stated that there is still a large amount of habitat that will be retained in this area.

Mr. Aarstad next distributed a map of the Cascade River site. He explained the location of the park and the details of the tour today. He explained the various plans for the areas of the park. A gentlemen from the audience asked about the drainage and creeks in the area. Mr. Gold explained that there are no Class 3 or 4 creeks in this area.

Mr. Aarstad stated that the funding from timber sales would go in to a dedicated park acquisition fund. He added that recent accusations that funds would go elsewhere are inaccurate. He stressed that the Board has indicated that this money will go back into acquisition on a capital basis, not maintenance or operations.

Mr. Aarstad reviewed the overall six-year capital facilities plan. He explained that there are various parks that have evolved and the Board has assisted Staff with developing various plans through the County.

Chairman Hart asked those assembled to give the Board suggestions that would be helpful in looking to the future of Parks in Skagit County. He stressed that the Board is receptive to the public's ideas in this regard. He asked for suggestions for the long term development of County parks to manage our property efficiently for future generations.

Vic Showell, Bellingham, stated that if the Board puts this matter to the vote, it would be blown away 50-1.

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He stated that the Forest Service is against the proposal. He stated that any future uses of parks should not have campfires allowed. He suggested levying fines on drug and alcohol driving convictions at the rate of \$500 each so that taxes would not be raised. This money could be used for parks development. He stated that the plan for Ann Wolford will fragment the park land and offer no protection for the elk herds. He further suggested levying a 1% tax on the Harrah's Casino to assist with financing parks development. Upon query from the Board, Mr. Showell indicated that he does not own property in Skagit County, but he is currently negotiating to purchase property near the Ann Wolford Park.

Commissioner Anderson stated that the County has no authority on the Indian Reservation.

Commissioner Hart stated that everyone wants someone else to pay. He emphasized the need to discover how taxpayers will support the need for additional park lands and improvements to existing parks.

An unidentified woman asked Mr. Showell what his plans are for developing the property he is contemplating purchasing called the "Hurn" property.

Mr. Showell indicated that he is in the process of purchasing the "Hurn" property, and that perhaps in five years from now he will build a small house. He stated that his main desire is to preserve the elk habitat and that he is not planning on doing any agricultural activities at that location.

Tom Harvill, resident of Snohomish County, stated that he has a vacation home near Marblemount, and that he is a volunteer with the Nature Conservancy. He stated that today's tour was very helpful and well-organized. He stated that his overriding concern is the preservation of critical habitat. He indicated that while neither of the sites could be called old growth or critical, they are home to elk and salmon. He expressed concern about the creation of roads and silting. He indicated that the return proposed is very minimal for the damage that will be done by logging these sites. Mr. Harvill further indicated that there is a need to get people involved to raise the funds necessary for further parks development. He asked about sources of funding, including establishing a user fee at the Swinomish Channel Boat Launch.

Diane Bednarz asked if has always been the policy to log County parks, or is this proposal something new. She stated that she does not remember voting on this issue.

Chairman Hart stated that Skagit County has 83,000 acres that it has turned over to DNR that is constantly harvested. He indicated that other parcels are also harvested. He stated that there has never been a case when a designated park in Skagit County has been logged unless there have been safety issues.

Ms. Bednarz asked for clarification if these parcels would be logged again in the future.

Chairman Hart commented on the management plan for County-owned lands with no public access or plan for development.

Carol Carnahan stated that she has owned her property north of Concrete for 25 years. The maps pointed out the river front access. Here the County has an opportunity to have two natural area parks with significant riverfront access. She commented on the Squires Park area, and stated that she can see these parks as being natural parks with nothing but trails. Further, these would become parks much different than the manicured Steelhead Park. She commented on the negatives aspects of clearcutting.

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She stated that she belongs to three different hiking clubs and that such clubs sometimes institute a \$25 trail fee for the maintenance of the trails.

Nancy Donovan, botanist for the Forest Service, stated that it looks that these two areas are riparian areas that are large parcels in a very fragmented river system. She stated that the elk biologist has always talked about how critical Hurn's field is to elk habitat. She commented that when you clearcut, you take away any sort of diversity, which is critical to smaller species.

Commissioner Anderson asked if she had actually looked at this area and walked the grounds. She stated that she had not.

Chairman Hart stated that the Forest Service has been approached about a land swap that would be more advantageous to both sides.

Ms. Donovan stated that Jim Chu should be approached by the County as he has great ideas for raising monies in this regard. She asked the Board to consider other options for these areas.

Chairman Hart stated that the County is looking for any options to obtain funding.

John Gold stated that there are mature forests at both of these sites, but they bear little resemblance to species composition from previous times. He stated that there is not representation of the shaded tolerant species that were once there, and we can all appreciate that the areas are very nice places and there are obvious habitat benefits that are being provided by such a closed canopy forest. He indicated that these are not pristine areas.

Doyle McClure, Skagit Audubon Society, stated that they are interested in groups getting together to provide trail maintenance. He stated that the notion that parks should be logged for fundraising is absurd. He stated that he has served 9 months on Mr. Aarstad's citizen's committee, and determined that the development was not consistent with public opinion expressed in the 1993 survey. Mr. McClure stated that the people are speaking to you over and over, asking you for just this type of park property. It doesn't need much development. He indicated that certainly access is necessary, but there are problems and responsibility for those in the County who want to use the park and who want to assist with the development and maintenance.

Mr. McClure next spoke about the importance of integrity in government and that what has happened the last couple of months is shoddy. He stated that the data that was brought forward was not valid. He discussed the stop work order which was placed by the DNR, and that the Department of Ecology is the authority that must discuss the shorelands issues.

Mr. Gold indicated that Mr. McClure was a part of the ID team, and had reviewed the recommendations that were made. All of the recommendations were adopted and modified accordingly.

Mr. McClure stated that all of the letters that the ID team reviewed relating to Ann Wolford and Cascade opposed the proposed action. The County needs to seriously look at these.

Chairman Hart indicated that the County is still waiting for a response back from DOE, and noted that DOE did not find it interesting enough to attend the ID team meetings. He indicated that the County is certainly looking at all options and that it is very convenient for DOE not to attend the meetings and then

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appeal afterwards. We will keep the record open and will proceed with our appeal.

A brief discussion ensued on the particulars of the appeals.

Tom Solberg, 1725 Minnie Road, Alger, stated that he supports the proposed logging operations. He briefly discussed the logging proposals. He stated that whatever the County does to these areas will be an improvement. Further, he suggested that those who want the parks should pay a user fee. He stated that there is nothing more fanatical than some of these environmentalists. He stated that he took off from work to give the Board a different point of view.

William Bates, LaConner, expressed appreciation to the Board for the opportunity to see these two parcels today. He commented briefly on previous bad land use management practices that have affected salmon streams. He stated that our kids out to decide what we should do with these parks. He stated that maybe the money is better used for more jail facilities or a domed sports facility. He stressed that these should be taxpayer decisions. He asked the Board to set up a bond issue to decide this matter.

Nancy Johnson, Marblemount, questioned Mr. Aarstad about the capital facilities plan for the Parks Department.

Chairman Hart mentioned that the groups represented here today should focus on developing trails and furnishing signage. Road building and access is not a volunteer operation.

Ms. Johnson stated that she feels that she is regarded as a "bad guy" because she is expressing her concerns and opinions. She stressed the need to work together. She asked if Seattle City Light had been contacted regarding habitat restoration. She stated she would rather have habitat restoration than logging. She asked if there are any funds from the farmland conservation or other pots of money within the County, available for Parks development. She asked about tourism monies, as a park in these locations would certainly be an enhancement to the highway.

Commissioner Anderson stated that the very best use of the land would be if the Forest Service or Nature Conservancy bought the land and left it in its natural state. He expressed the difficulties in getting commitments from these types of entities. He stated that Ms. Johnson is not viewed as the enemy, but that the Board is exploring for better alternatives, and that nothing is locked in granite.

Chairman Hart asked the group assembled how do we get you out to the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board meetings while these ideas are being developed. He stated that as a governmental process, we need to get people early on to get out and attend meetings.

Brenda Cunningham, Mount Vernon, thanked the Board for arranging for today's tour and meeting. However, she reiterated that aside from the bio-diversity issue, the number one thing concern is the loss of public trust. This proposal had to be stopped by another agency posting a stop work order, and that

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really bothered her. She acknowledged that there are notices about meetings in the newspaper, and stressed the need to participate. She stated that people are the government.

Commissioner Anderson stated that this has been a totally open process, and that he frankly gets sick and tired of being accused that there is a clandestine movement afoot. He indicated that there has been no attempt to hide this from the public.

Commissioner Wolden commented that the Board gets updates from the Parks Department on a monthly basis, and that such updates are listed on the Commissioners' Agenda and published in the newspaper. The County spends several thousand dollars per year publishing our agenda so that people can be informed. In addition, future public hearings have been added to the agenda to try to keep people informed. He stated that if the Board did not want to hear from the public, they wouldn't have hired two school busses and invited you to go on today's tour.

Ms. Cunningham expressed her hope that the Board realize how many people are committed to park lands.

Mr. Aarstad stated that during preparation of the Parks Comprehensive Plan, public meetings in various areas of the County were held, and the total people attending the meetings was 36. Every effort is made to get people involved. There will be additional meetings when the Comprehensive Plan is brought before the Planning Commission. He expressed the frustration waiting for the public to show up and give input.

Jane Wilson, Conway, stated that it appears that there is a mindset for logging these areas.

Chairman Hart clarified, saying there is a mindset to find some income for long-term parks. He stated that this is not the only alternative, just one we are looking at.

Ms. Wilson asked what other parks will be acquired?

Chairman Hart stated that in the long term we need a plan developed for where we want parks in the future. We are investigating where we need parks, what types of parks we need, and what population centers need to be served. Perhaps these should all be included in the national park system. He stated that the County does not have much old growth timber left in the lower part of the County. He expressed the need to have monies available to find partners to help fund park purchases. If we are short on park lands today, we definitely will be short in 100 years.

Ms. Wilson stated that she thought the parks toured today were beautiful because there are no signs. She stated that if people knew the parks were there, people would be willing to pay a user fee. She stated that the areas are beautiful the way they are, with perhaps some trail development. She asked if there are any other logging areas that do not have river access.

Commissioner Wolden stated that there are many strong feelings, and that the Board would love to be able to enhance the parks that we have. He stated the need to raise money to enhance existing parks, reforest these areas, and develop these parks in the future. He detailed the areas of the park to be considered under this foresting plan. He expressed the need to go to our legislators and say that Skagit county needs a 1/10th of a % sales tax increase dedicated to go to Parks. He estimated that would be approximately \$1,200,000 per year. He urged those present to work together and proposed this to our legislators. He encouraged those in attendance to send the Board their feelings in writing.

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Charles Pruitt, LaConner, thanked the Board and Parks Director, for the explanation of work being proposed. He stated that these places are very gorgeous restful places and are full of different things of interest. He stated that the lack of use is just because no one knows where it is. He expressed interest in knowing where all the parks are in the County and where future acquisitions are planned. He stated the need to ask the people who live in the neighborhoods of these parks whether they like them and want them there.

Stoney Bird, Mount Vernon, stated that he did not go on the tour, but feels that these undeveloped parks are quite valuable. He stated that the proposal to log is a proposal to tax, as it is taking value from the land and from the people who would want to use the land in the condition it is now. He suggested setting up a trust or foundation or some sort of conservation easements. He stated that Commissioner Wolden's idea of a 1/10% of a % tax sounded like a wonderful idea. He expressed the need to save the Parks against any future commissioners.

Chairman Hart indicated that a foundation is being created in this regard, and that this is definitely a way to protect long-term assets.

Harlan Meyer, manager of Cascadian Farms, suggested that there is no need to destroy a forest by taking the trees out of it. She commented on the Smartwood program. She stated that the County could provide a shining example of preserving our forests for our children and grandchildren. There is a great deal that can be done upriver to maintain our forests and a variety of ways of maintaining our life as it is up there. She stated that a park that is clear cut is no park at all. She briefly discussed the salmon endangerment in Washington State.

Tom Goldman, Concrete, stated that he is not opposed to logging, but is not in favor of clearcutting near the river. He stated that this land is earmarked for use as a park, and he liked the idea of park user fees. He stated that this seems like a budget-driven proposal.

There being no further public comment forthcoming, Chairman Hart closed the meeting at approximately 5:45 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT.

Chairman Hart made a motion to adjourn the proceedings. Commissioner Wolden seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON



Handwritten signature of Robert Hart in cursive script.

Robert Hart, Chairman

Handwritten signature of Ted W. Anderson in cursive script.

Ted W. Anderson, Commissioner

Handwritten signature of Harvey Wolden in cursive script.

Harvey Wolden, Commissioner

ATTEST:

Handwritten signature of Patti J. Chambers in cursive script.

Patti J. Chambers, Clerk of the Board
Skagit County Board of Commissioners