



Skagit County Forest Advisory Board

www.skagitcounty.net/NRForestAdvisory

Chair: Jamie Hillery

Members: Dave Chamberlain, Al Craney, Gordan Iverson, Kris McCall, Joel Dryen, Aubrey Stargell, Steve Tift, Peter Janicki, John Gold

Meeting Minutes/Summary

Wednesday, July 1, 2026

Attendance:

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

Others present: Skagit County Commissioner Ron Wesen; Matt Comisky, AFRC; Carter Manning, Sierra Pacific ; Winslow, Department of Natural Resources; Cory McDonald, Department of Natural Resources; Eric Johnson, FAB Coordinator

June 3, 2026, Forest Advisory Board (FAB) Meeting Minutes. Approved, with Correction that FAB Member Janicki was present.

Brief Meeting Recap

The June Forest Advisory Board (FAB) meeting focused on several key agenda topics including:

- Reviewing both recent and upcoming educational tours
- Discussing potential new FAB Member recommendations/nominations
- Examining Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) land bank transactions

Other topics covered included updates on:

- Timber Sales by the Board of Natural Resources

- Reconveyance Discussions
- Amicus Brief Status
- Eastside Sustainable Harvest Calculations
- Forest and Fish Adaptive Management Program, particularly Hard Rock Phase III Study and Potential Recommendations by TFW Policy Committee

Educational Tours

The group discussed both the recently conducted Women in the Woods Tour as well as upcoming educational tours that are planned:

Woods Tour Planning Meeting

Joel reported on the Friday, June 26th “Woods Tour” that was attended by 23 members of the public along with an additional 20+ representatives from the Department of Natural Resources and other organizations. The tour began with a gathering and overview at the Arlington Boys and Girls Club with tours of forestry operations at the Pilchuck Tree Farm and on State Trust Lands managed by the Department of Natural Resources. Participants were able to view an active logging operation, discuss wildlife management and protection, the timber sale process, view a recently thinned and harvested timber sale. A wide range of silviculture activities were discussed and viewed at both the Pilchuck Tree Farm and on the State Trust Lands. Commissioner Burns was able to join the tour.

Teacher Event Planning Discussion

This tour will include stops at Blanchard State Forest, Pacific Rim Tone Woods, and Baker Lake.

DNR Forest Health Advisory Committee Tour

Forest Health Advisory Tour in the Skagit County is scheduled for September 22nd including viewing Anacortes Forest fire site and Pilchuck Tree Farm to highlight forest health and management issues and demonstrate the facets of active forest management versus a neglected forest. Nick is working on the tour with Jen Watkins (DNR) and Jenny Coe (State Conservation Commission).

Reconveyance

FAB had short discussion on several activities and items associated with “reconveyance” of County Forest Trust Lands.

Eric provided information:

- Regarding legal analysis underway on whether County Forest Trust Lands could be removed from the conditions of the Habitat Conservation Plan if reconveyance back to the County occurred;
- On a question from Commissioner Burns associated with the cost counties pay for DNR to manage the Skagit County Trust Lands and how that management fee compares to what private forest landowners and others pay. Eric noted that a Joint Legislative Audit Review Committee Report from 1996 provided some information that answers this question:

<https://leg.wa.gov/jlarc/AuditAndStudyReports/Documents/96-5.pdf>

This study did compare management costs between DNR, private companies, Grays Harbor County, and other states, which indicates DNR's management fee/costs being more expensive.

- Framing a question for legal analysis about what statutes or policies are the Department of Natural Resources and/or the Board of Natural Resources not complying with to fulfill their fiduciary obligations as required in the “Skamania Decision” by the Washington State Supreme Court.

The discussion also covered concerns about fire suppression responsibilities and funding if lands were reconveyed to Skagit County.

Forest Advisory Board Membership

Jamie introduced Carter Manning as a potential candidate to fill a vacancy on FAB. Carter expressed a willingness to be nominated as a potential FAB member to the Board of County Commissioners. Eric noted FAB nominees will be forwarded to the BoCC for consideration and that there is still interest to find a nominee to represent trust beneficiaries.

Timber Sale Proposal Discussion

The group discussed the proposed Prairie Mountain Variable Retention Harvest Timber Sale and recommended that the Board of County Commissioners support the timber sale and send a letter to the Board of Natural Resources, stating such support. A draft letter was distributed for review. FAB members asked that carbon sequestration benefit factors be included and that revenue projections be increased to reflect average bids that are in excess of the DNR appraised value estimates.

Amicus Brief Updates

The group discussed the ongoing legal case seeking to repeal the Forest Practices Board adoption of the Np Buffer rule. Matt noted that approximately 17 entities (Including Skagit County) have filed amicus briefs, individually or jointly, and that opponents are fighting strongly to keep beneficiary organizations out of the case. Eric offered to forward relevant court documents to the group.

Land Exchange Proposal Presentation

Bob Winslow with the Department of Natural Resources, presented a detailed overview of a proposed land exchange involving common school trust property in Richland for an equal-valued set of DNR land bank properties across five counties, including Skagit County. The presentation covered DNR's land bank system, the four-step process for land repositioning, and specific details about both the common school properties in Richland to be disposed of (lots 6A, 7A, and 8A) and the land bank properties in Skagit, Snohomish, Kitsap, Clark, and Benton counties to be acquired for the common school trust. The next steps involve considering public input, analyzing alternative uses of land, and preparing a proposal for the Board of Natural Resources' consideration.

Bob explained that DNR's land acquisition process involves internal review and approval by the Board of Natural Resources, which includes public comment opportunities for transactions over \$250,000. He clarified that land bank properties are purchased with land bank funds and can be transferred, with compensation, to generate revenue for trust beneficiaries. In this specific case, K-12 education is the beneficiary. Bob described how DNR appraises properties using present value analysis and considers long-term investment value and typically seeks to acquire younger age-class forests that align with habitat conservation plans. The discussion highlighted that there are public opportunities to comment on transactions to the Board of Natural Resources.

FAB members expressed concerns that DNR acquires properties at over-market price real estate values for timberland and this creates challenges for private forest land ownership and makes it difficult for private buyers to compete to purchase forestlands in Skagit County. FAB members believed that if this land stayed in private forest ownership, it is more likely to be harvested and contribute to the forest product industry than if the state acquires and places the conditions and encumbrances of the Habitat Conservation Plan on this forestland. There was frustration from FAB members about the conversion of private land to public ownership in Skagit County.

Forest and Fish Adaptive Management Program

The meeting also covered updates on the Timber, Fish and Wildlife Adaptive Management Program on the CMER Committee and TFW Policy Committee, particularly regarding a non-consensus science document on amphibian declines in the Hard Rock Phase III Study. The Timber Fish and Wildlife Policy Committee is working through options on how to proceed on next steps now that the Hard Rock Phase III Study is completed.

Other Updates

A brief update on the on Mount Baker- Snoqualmie National Forest's Forestwide Thinning Environmental Assessment was provided with a desire to invite a representative of the Forest Service from the Darrington Ranger District to an upcoming FAB Meeting.

Actions and Decisions

- Jamie will follow up with Carter Manning about FAB membership, including a resume/letter of interest for FAB and Board of County Commissioners consideration.
- Eric will check with Commissioner Burns about potential School Board member for FAB.
- Eric will forward amicus brief materials to FAB Members.
- Consider drafting a resolution to support all proposed timber sales that are in Skagit County and consistent with implementing the Sustainable Harvest Plan.
- FAB voted to recommend that the Skagit County Board of County Commissioners sign a letter to the Board of Natural Resources supporting the Prairie Mountain Variable Retention Harvest Timber Sale.
- FAB members would like to invite the Darrington Ranger District Camden Bruner to an upcoming FAB Meeting.
- Eric will coordinate having a representative from the National Association of Counties Center for Public Lands at the August FAB Meeting.
- Eric will send the PowerPoint on the proposed DNR Land Exchange to FAB Members