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, Brett Greenwood, Carter Manning

DRAFT Meeting Minutes/Summary
Wednesday, October 7, 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	
Brett Greenwood	X	
Carter Manning	X	

Others present: Skagit County Commissioner Joe Burns; Jessica Epsy, Hampton; Matt Comisky, AFRC; Nick Kunz, Skagit Conservation District; Katie Whittier, cfm advocates; Eric Johnson, FAB Coordinator

Forest Advisory Board Meeting Minutes/Summary
September 2, 2026, Forest Advisory Board (FAB) Meeting Minutes. Approved.

Brief Meeting Recap

The meeting of the Skagit County Forest Advisory Board focused on:

- Forest Management
- Trust Land Management Issues and Revenues
- Reconveyance
- Proposed DNR management rate increase for Forest Development Account

- Presentation and Dialogue with Katie Whittier, cfm advocates, on the Trust Lands Stewardship Initiative.
- Department of Ecology's Outstanding Resource Waters rulemaking

Correspondence Review

Members reviewed recent correspondence supporting the USFS Travel Management Plan Update EIS and proposed timber sales (Gallnipper, Nottingham, Big Whoop) in Skagit County.

Education Update

Nick provided an update on the Forest Health Advisory Tour, which included visits to locations near Lake Campbell, Heart Lake, and Little Cranberry Lake, focusing on cedar mortality, old growth remnants, and post-fire recovery.

Nick also mentioned an upcoming forestry orientation event for high school students on November 10th at Skagit Valley College, seeking additional professional foresters to participate. Joel offered to help if needed.

NP Rule Litigation Update

The group had a brief update on litigation brought by Washington Forest Protection Association and Washington Family Forest Association regarding the new Type NP Forest Practices Rule. Skagit County Board of County Commissioners jointly filed an Amicus Brief in support of WFPA and WFFA litigation. While Thurston County Superior Court Judge Schaller ruled in favor of the state, she has issued a stay of her decision pending action by the Court of Appeals.

State Forest Transfer (SFT) Reconveyance Discussion

The group continued to discuss the potential reconveyance of SFT, often referred to as "county trust forestlands" from DNR back to counties, with Eric sharing insights from conversations with commissioners and council members throughout the state about possible legislation being considered by different jurisdictions. It was noted that Grays Harbor County has a successful forest management program, as it never re-conveyed their forestlands in the 1930s. Under current state law, a county can seek reconveyance of their county trust forestlands for parks and recreation purposes. DNR still retains timber management rights and requires counties to share receipts with original beneficiaries.

There are differing views on whether DNR should retain timber management responsibilities or allow counties to manage their own timber lands for preservation, conservation, and forest harvest/products. Matt noted that other beneficiaries might

oppose county efforts to change land management practices as well as reconveyance. Some believe that the reconveyance would have a significant negative impact on the management and financial solvency on the federally granted land and other trust management activities. The discussion concluded with Eric providing an update on other reconveyance efforts, noting the Association of Counties is seeing legal analysis regarding the lands affected by the Habitat Conservation Plan.

Board of Natural Resources

Eric noted that at the October 6, 2026, Board of Natural Resources meeting, three proposed timber sales located in Skagit County were approved:

- Gallnipper Timber Sale
- Nottingham VRH VDT Timber Sale
- Big Whoop VRHRMZ WMZ Timber Sale

Combined, these three timber sales will distribute, at a minimum, an estimated $1,333,500 to eight different entities/beneficiaries encompassing seventeen different funds.

The meeting reviewed DNR's financial struggles, with Matt noting they are considering implementing quarterly payment processes for timber sales but not shorter contracts. The Commissioner of Public Lands reviewed his proposal to increase the Forest Development Account management rate from 25% to 27% and increase the Resource Management Cost Account management rate from 31% and 32%. The proposed increases will be considered by the Board of Natural Resources at their next meeting (November 3rd).

Carbon Credits and Conservation Easements

The group discussed concerns about the suggestion that carbon credits and conservation easements could replace timber sales as a way to generate revenue on county trust forestlands. John highlighted that conservation easement payments would be a one-time revenue source, which could be challenging politically.

DNR Management Rate Increase Discussion

The committee discussed making recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners regarding the proposed 2% Forest Development Account Management Rate Increase (from 25%-27%) and share thoughts regarding content, questions, and information to include in such a letter.

The group shared concerns and thoughts about DNR's management fee increase proposal and harvesting levels. John emphasized the importance of asking questions to ascertain if DNR/BNR are acting with undivided loyalty to trust beneficiaries, beneficiaries individually,

and current versus future generations. Seek information to understand DNR's competency and intent as a fiduciary. Eric noted there are upcoming meetings with DNR officials to discuss the fee increase and potential sunset provisions. Commissioner Burns expressed disappointment with the fee increase request, stating that DNR should increase harvesting levels to offset costs.

The group asked that a letter be prepared for the Board of County Commissioners to consider regarding the proposed Management Rate Increase; John making a motion and Kris seconding it. Motion carried.

Trust Lands Stewardship Initiative Presentation

Katie Whittier, cfm advocates, presented her work on the Washington Trust Lands Stewardship Initiative, which aims to address forest management and state forest trust land issues. The Initiative seeks to create partnerships and a coalition to elevate the voices of trust beneficiaries, seek clear financial accounting, and reframe the public narrative around trust lands.

She explained how the decline (collapse in some areas) of the timber sector has affected local economies and communities, highlighting the need for a broader approach beyond just trust land beneficiaries. Katie discussed her shift from focusing solely on legal solutions to building a movement for systemic change in forest policy, emphasizing the importance of community capacity and infrastructure in revitalizing the timber sector.

Katie discussed the importance of managing forests more actively to address wildfire risks, sharing her personal experiences with fires in various locations. She outlined the Washington Trust Lands Stewardship Initiative's goal to build political diversity around forest management by creating a decentralized network of credible voices from diverse sectors advocating for forest health. The initiative aims to shift the focus from traditional timber management versus preservation debates to a combined approach of stewardship, community resilience, and renewal, using wildfire as one organizing principle to bring together previously disconnected constituencies.

Katie invited participants to help her in organizing tours, presentations, and building coalitions. She specifically asked for advice on Washington Trust Lands Stewardship Initiative's approach and potential risks, as well as guidance on messaging around conservation versus preservation. Nick emphasized the importance of involving beneficiaries and clarified that conservation should focus on "wise use" rather than preservation, while Steve highlighted the need to address federal forest management challenges, noting that over 50% of Washington's forest lands are federally owned.

Katie discussed the importance of charismatic leaders and environmental groups in advancing forest management policies, noting that both moderate environmental groups and climate-focused organizations could be moved toward supporting good forest management practices. Eric suggested engaging the Association of Washington Cities due to their interest in wildfire impacts on urban areas and economic concerns, which Katie agreed to explore further. Nick described a successful STEM education program for teachers on forest management that has received positive feedback and support from industry partners and the Commissioner of Public Lands. The discussion also touched on biomass opportunities, with Carter from Sierra Pacific sharing insights about their co-generation facility.

Eric highlighted the broader impact on forest economy, community employment and contributions, business stability and culture, noting we should not solely be interested in the revenue to the trust beneficiaries. Rather we need to think about the overall social and economic health of the forest industry and our communities.

The group expressed their appreciation for the work Katie is doing and will look for ways in included Skagit County moving forward.

Infrastructure Loss Impact on Timber Operations

The group discussed concerns about forest product/industry infrastructure loss and its impact on forest management and mill operations. Jamie and Joel expressed reluctance to change rotation ages due to ownership preferences for long-term approaches, while Peter Janicki raised questions about how reduced state timber sale/volume affects private tree farms and mill operations.

The discussion highlighted tensions between potential short-term benefits from reduced state timber sales and the long-term risks of losing forest product infrastructure, with participants noting that current market conditions have been relatively stable despite expectations of significant changes.

Outstanding Resource Waters

The group also briefly discussed the Department of Ecology's Outstanding Resource Waters Rulemaking and perhaps the County Planning Department should be engaged in this issue as it potentially relates to land use planning.

Follow Up and Actions

Eric

- Draft a letter for the county commissioners to consider sending to the Board of Natural Resources/Commissioner of Public Lands regarding the proposed Management Rate Increase.
- Reach out to the new Northwest Region Manager, K.C. Briggs, to schedule a separate meeting for the FAB group, potentially in conjunction with the Board of County Commissioners, in October, November, or December.
- Connect Katie Whittier with Nick to discuss the STEM program and potential collaboration on outreach and education.
- Follow up with the Department of Ecology about the Outstanding Resource Waters Rulemaking to determine if the county planning department should be involved.

Nick

- Forward additional information to the group regarding the forestry orientation for high school students on November 10th.

Jamie

- Review Eric's draft letter before it is sent to the county commissioners.

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