

**Special Meeting of the Board of
County Commissioners
Tri County Forest Group
Friday December 20th, 2019 1:00 p.m.**

**Location: Tri County Economic Development District 986 S Main St. Colville, WA 99114
Meeting Room**

Introduction of Attendees:

1. Amanda Rowton, Clerk of the Board, commissioners@co.ferry.wa.us
2. Merrill Ott, TCMRA
3. Allena Rowton, Rowton Family
4. Nathan Davis, Ferry County Commissioner
5. Johnna Exner, Ferry County Commissioner
6. Stan Christie, TCMRA
7. Steve Fountain
8. Bobby Whittaker, NEWFC
9. Bob McKellar, DNR
10. Josh White, USFS
11. Kevin Arneson, Boise Cascade
12. Steve Kiss, Pend Oreille Commissioner
13. Tiana Luke, Conservation NW
14. Shelly Short, State Senator
15. Mike Petersen, Lands Council
16. Bart Ausland, USFS
17. Scott Neilsen, Stevens County Cattlemen
18. Steve Parker, Stevens County Commissioner

Call to Order

Commissioner Steve Parker opened the meeting at 1:05 p.m. The attendees introduced themselves.

USFS Open house

Commissioner Steve Parker attended and spoke with Chris French. Stan Christie also attended and was able to speak with Julie River.

Road Proposal Travel Management

Merrill Ott presented the WATV report. He discussed the difficulty of finding WATV data. It is often buried in other reports. He discussed the data on licensing & fees. DOL information was presented for the 2016-2019 in Ferry County, Pend Oreille County and Stevens County. The presentation also covered the economic impact. Commissioner Steve Parker said that he was pleased with the presentation and really just wanted to get the conversation started.

It is approximately \$45.00 per person to participate in an OHV activity per day. Merrill Ott went to discuss the fact that it is a fairly inexpensive way to explore our mountaintops. Stan Christie wished he had these numbers when he spoke to Julie River at the open house meeting. Stan informed Julie River that we haven't had any access to FS roads. She wasn't aware of that. Stan said that it is not going to grow in Ferry County if we can't access the FS roads. Growth is what we are hoping for. Merrill asked Shelly Short if there was something more that we could do to get the word out. Shelly Short

said these numbers put financial viability to the topic which gives it the credibility it deserves. Scott Neilsen discussed the Parks and Rec fund and gas tax. When you see the numbers you think it would have better funding. Mike Petersen discussed hunters and a 6 million dollar impact. HE said the numbers presented seem to fit right on. Stan Christie discussed the NOVA funds. NOVA grants are a result of the funds collected through the gas tax. Bob Whittaker recommended John Snyder as a good resource. He is in economic development for recreation for the Governor's staff. Retained receipts were used for a single track motorcycle path repair. His interests include motorcycle and back country skiing and he is concerned about user conflicts.

Commissioner Steve Parker said that he is a horseback rider and was doing a fundraiser. They were climbing up a gravel road and could hear ATV in the area. They came in a line and pulled off to the side. They yielded for the horse riding group. He was surprised and blessed by it.

Tianna Luke said she needs a large amount of planning with more usage. There was a lawsuit in Okanogan and wants everyone to be aware that a review needs done or a lawsuit can happen.

Commissioner Steve Parker said there is a 20 year wave of people retiring. They will be showing up in the recreating community. Kevin Arneson said the OHV may have a positive impact on forest health. The Commissioner of Public Lands proposed an increase on the insurance policy. Shelly Short hasn't seen the bill yet but Kevin is correct regarding the fee for fire prevention on the ground work.

Leclerc Creek Grazing Allotment Contract

Scott Neilsen said that during the Forest Plan Revision process we were able to have a meeting where we talked about the Leclerc Creek Allotment. That grazing project has had a ton of criticism. They were doing their environmental analysis on that allotment. They were concerned that they were doing a different analysis. Change to him is not good. You want an EA. An EIS is admitting there is an impact. They objected to the EIS. Travis said there is nothing to be afraid of with the EIS. He doesn't feel like it was a transparent process. In the end we think it is a bad decision. The decision was removal from the allotment. There were no problems discussed on why they removal was recommended. Scott would like a recommendation from this group at least can we begin to work on that. Steve is currently still operating on that allotment.

Steve Fountain said that this is the one allotment that gets the grass and gets the rain. It's an ideal allotment. He said the option he was given was in Ferry County. He has been on that allotment for 50 years. They won't say why. It is the environment. They asked everyone but the cattlemen about it. There was a comment period. There is nothing wrong with the permittee. Steve Parker prefers the current allotment holder. There is a vested interest. Shelly Short said the tribe has special areas that are special to them. The decision by Rodney Smolden was remanded back. Steve Fountain still has the allotment. Where is the Forest Service going from here? There is a bull trout population on part of the allotment. After reading the EIS, I see no reason to take them off. They felt like they wouldn't do their work with cows up there. Where is the Forest Service going from here?

Steve Parker asked if the EIS is available.

Josh White responded that it is available with the justification and written decision. Steve Fountain said the way they did the EIS made the changes cost prohibitive. They wanted to fence the creek. When you read the EIS it is option c and d that he was trying to work on.

Josh White said the 2005 Rescission Act analysis for grazing allotments created a need to do EIS. Shelly Short said Congress gave direction and NEPA was never done, it was an administrative process. Josh White said that a lot of the allotments had no NEPA done. The

Rescission Act and schedule allows them to still graze. Scott Neilsen said the Forest Service is in a hard spot. They didn't want to come forward with a lot. The Colville has a great grazing staff. Part of what our problem is the grazing staff didn't have any say in the EIS. Josh White said there is a comment period when you do an EIS. Commissioner Steve Parker said that this is a great project for this group to shed some light on. Cattle increase the habitat health. Stan Christie said the ATV people are behind Steve Fountain. ATV money goes to helping the cattlemen. Commissioner Steve Parker said this would have an impact on Ferry County and there are probably people in Ferry County that would like those allotments. Mike Petersen is going to ask around about the details.

A to Z project

Scott Neilsen discussed the Mill Creek A to Z and how it may be impacting the grazing allotment. Josh White said it is the first he has heard of this issue. Mike Petersen would like TEDD to come in and talk more about it. Commissioner Steve Parker asked about the management of the Little Pend Orielle Wildlife Refuge. It is a big chunk of Stevens County.

Closing Comments

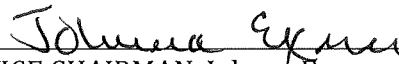
Commissioner Steve Parker presented a packet. Scott Neilsen asked about the Forest Plan. Josh White said that they are operating on the new plan. Stan Christie asked what the latest was on the Tonasket. Josh White said it is the same and they were waiting for the next fiscal year.

The next TCFG meeting is January 17th, 2020.

BOARD OF FERRY COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FERRY COUNTY, WASHINGTON



CHAIRMAN, Nathan Davis



VICE CHAIRMAN, Johnna Exner

none

MEMBER

ATTEST:



Clerk of the Board, Amanda Rowton