

Natural Resources Tribal Summit 2014



Impacts from the transport of non-refined fossil fuels, increased consultation on management of forests, improving fish habitat and ensuring tribal access to state-owned lands were highlights of discussion at the Department of Natural Resources' 2014 Tribal Summit. Representatives of 25 tribes met with Commissioner of Public Lands Peter Goldmark and DNR executive and regional staff for a robust exchange on a wide array of shared concerns. The meeting, developed jointly with tribal partners, was hosted by the Swinomish Indian Community at the Swinomish Casino and Lodge in Anacortes.

Non-Refined Fossil Fuel Transportation:

Existing and potential impacts from transporting coal and fossil fuels across tribal and state lands and waterways were a leading topic. Tribal leaders expressed concern about adverse and lasting impacts to resources guaranteed by treaties. Spills and other transportation catastrophes could have generational impacts for all who live, work and recreate in Washington.

Lummi Chairman Tim Ballew II implored Commissioner Goldmark to relay the tribes' concerns to other state officials and urged him to set a management example that other agencies can follow. Swinomish Chairman Brian Cladoosby, encouraged tribal leadership to unify around the fuel transport issue.

Commissioner Goldmark acknowledged the weighty challenges presented by transporting oil and coal via rail and ship to Washington and stressed the importance of ensuring those transportation plans undergo comprehensive environmental reviews.

Forest Practices:

Tribal leaders, including Councilman Jim Peters of the Squaxin Island Tribe and Phil Rigdon, Superintendent of the Natural Resources Department, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation requested more consultation in the adoption, interpretation and implementation of forest practice rules. Specifically, the tribes called for more funding to support the Forests and Fish Law, adaptive management and to monitor compliance of harvests.

They also said Forest Practice Applications need more stringent conditions to protect cultural resources and expressed the need for ongoing research to address identified and potential gaps under the Timber, Fish and Wildlife Agreement and adaptive management program.

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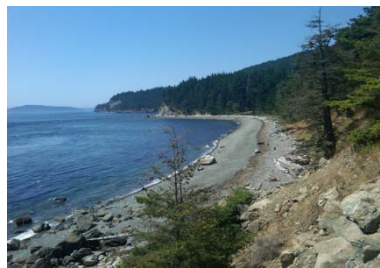




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Tribal leadership requested the state take a firmer stand with forest landowners to ensure standards are met and maintained and requested DNR explore and publish parameters for implementation of rules relative to cultural resources protection within the context of forest practice applications.

Tribes expressed the critical need to consider variations in environments statewide when developing and implementing rules. Makah landscapes, for example, are variable from those found in the traditional lands of the Spokane. Tribes would like rule-makers to be considerate of region-based needs.

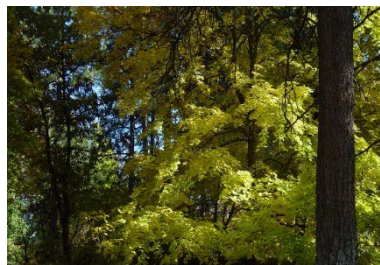


It was also noted that many forest practices rules were developed prior to current scientific consensus of the impacts of a changing climate.

DNR officials agreed tribes face challenges from forest management and apologized for any lack of communication. The agency committed to improving communications in the future, and to develop cultural resource protection protocols that would be explicit enough to stand up to appeal. DNR staff also spoke to the need for a coordinated approach to fiscal challenges.

State Resource Management

Tribal leaders called for more input on timber harvests, noting that poor harvest practices can result in long-term damages to resources. Access to state lands to monitor impacts from contracted use is seen as critically important by tribal leadership. They specifically requested communication prior to harvests on state lands and requested assistance for access to state lands land-locked by private property.



Tribal Access

Tribal leaders stressed the importance of accessing state lands for cultural practices and to harvest traditional plants, roots, berries, wildlife, cedar bark and bough and firewood.

DNR committed to ensuring appropriate access and to communicating with tribes about neighboring timber harvest sites.

Fish Passage

DNR was urged to continue and expand programs to remove barriers to fish passage, and to aid industrial and individual landowners to maintain and manage roads in manners friendly to fish habitat. Leaders of eastern Washington tribes, though, noted culverts can act as effective barriers between native and invasive species.

DNR has removed 2,250 barriers from its list, with 596 replaced by passable structures and 770 removed or abandoned. Another 643 barriers were removed from the list because they were on streams that do not bear fish. The balance of barriers were determined to be the responsibility of other road/land owners.

Enforcement

Both tribal and DNR leadership spoke of how cooperative relationships can maximize their limited enforcement resources and help minimize abuse of resources. Tribal leaders proposed state and tribal enforcement agents be cross-deputized and work under mutual aid agreements. DNR explained the limits of its enforcement authority and encouraged tribes to notify the agency's enforcement officers when they witness resource abuse.

