



WHATCOM COUNTY

WASHINGTON

Planning & Development Services
5280 Northwest Drive Bellingham, WA 98226
PDS@co.whatcom.wa.us
360-778-5900

MEETING
Surface Mining Advisory Committee

**Hybrid Meeting: Zoom (details below) and
NW Annex Conference Room
Whatcom County Planning and Development Services
5280 Northwest Drive, Bellingham, WA 98226**

**Date: January 28th, 2026
Time: 3:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)**

Whatcom County PDS is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Individuals who require special assistance to participate in the meetings are asked to contact Lucas Clark at Lclark@whatcomCounty.us at least 24 hours in advance.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81887836179?pwd=aGhoalpCM2luVUNnSndKbXFmRktDUT09>

Meeting ID: 818 8783 6179

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TO: Surface Mining Advisory
Committee

FROM: Lucas Clark, Planner II

DATE: January 28, 2026

SUBJECT: Meeting Agenda

1. Roll call/Determination of Quorum
2. Agenda Review & Approval
3. Election of Chair and Vice Chair
4. Review/Approval of Summary from 12/4/25
5. Open session for the public to speak on surface mining issues
6. Industry/staff reports on Mining Industry News
7. Old Business
 - a) Updated Mineral Resource Study
 - b) Review MRL Designation Criteria
 - c) Discuss streamlining the process for moving MRL-designated lands to production, including evaluation of current permitting timelines and possible improvements.
8. New Business
 - a)
9. Adjourn

Attachment #1



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5280 Northwest Drive Bellingham, WA 98226
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TO: Surface Mining Advisory
Committee

FROM: Lucas Clark, Planner II

DATE: December 4th, 2025

SUBJECT: Meeting Agenda

10. Roll call/Determination of Quorum
11. Agenda Review & Approval
12. Review/Approval of Summary from 09/24/25
13. Open session for the public to speak on surface mining issues
14. Industry/staff reports on Mining Industry News
15. Old Business
 - a) Updated Mineral Resource Study
 - b) Review MRL Designation Criteria, suggested two paths of criteria (County and Private citizen applications)?
16. New Business

17. Adjourn

Attachments:

- 1) Meeting Summary December 4th, 2025

Whatcom County Surface Mining Area Committee (SMAC)

Attendance Sheet

Date: December 4th, 2025

Location: Zoom and Northwest Annex Conference Room @ Whatcom County Planning and Development Services office at 5280 Northwest Dr, Bellingham, WA 98226

Start Time: 3:00PM

Quorum: Yes No

Attendees – Members	Affiliation	Present
Vacant	Civil or geotechnical engineer with no direct or indirect financial business ties to the industry	
Ryan Devries	Surface mining material user	Y
Mr. John Byers	Geologist	Y
Mr. Lane Stremmler Chair	Citizen who lives in close proximity to active mining or mineral overlay areas	Y
Brent Cowden	Member of the surface mining industry	Y
Mr. Jordan Van Werven	Member of the surface mining industry	Y
Kathleen Greenbaum	Forestry	Y
Carl Isom-McDaniel	Potable domestic groundwater supply	Y
Vacant	Ecologist	
Vacant	Environmental Consultant	
Vacant	Agriculture	
Elected OF		
Staff		
Lucas Clark		Y
Andy Weiser		
Public		
Nicci Grimm	Environmental Manager, Granite Construction	

Quick recap

The meeting began with introductions and an agenda review, including approval of the previous meeting summary. The group discussed updates on mining industry news and mineral resource studies, focusing on the need for updated reports and the challenges of meeting construction standards with current aggregate quality. The conversation ended with discussions about improving the process for designating new mineral resource lands and the need for an Aggregate Study.

Summary

Meeting Introduction and Agenda Review

The meeting began with a roll call. The agenda was reviewed, and the summary from the previous meeting on September 24 was approved.

Mining Industry Study Updates

The meeting discussed updates on mining industry news, including a new study on the Chuckanut formation. Clark reported progress on the MRL designation Heat Map that is being prepared by SCJ Consulting. The group reviewed previous mineral resource studies from 2003 and 2014, considering the value and necessity of updating these reports every 10 years. They debated whether to invest in a new study and whether to focus on permitted resources rather than just MRL.

Whatcom County Mineral Resource Update

The group discussed updating mineral resource data for Whatcom County, with Stremmer proposing to get a quote from Elements for a 10-year update to parallel the 2014 report. With an emphasis on permitted resources that have actual value, noting that most rock in the county isn't on the MRL or guaranteed to be permissible. The group agreed to pursue both an official updated report and an internal industry-provided estimate of permitted aggregates, with Stremmer planning to investigate the county's procurement process for the Elements contract.

Whatcom County Sand Supply Challenges

The group discussed the availability and quality of sand and gravel in Whatcom County, noting that with an annual extraction of 3 million tons, the supply would last less than 10 years, which falls short of legal requirements. They emphasized that even inferior-quality rock cannot meet current construction standards due to high clay content, which leads to poor functionality in wet conditions. The discussion highlighted the need for higher-quality materials to meet current construction codes and specifications, contrasting with the flexibility allowed in other regions.

Limestone Usability Classification Study

The group discussed the limitations and usability of limestone for various applications, noting that only certain types meet hardness specifications and pH requirements for specific uses like concrete and driveway surfaces. They identified a need for a more targeted study to classify limestone resources based on their usability and potential uses, rather than providing a general overview.

Rock Quarry Access and Study

The group discussed the availability and use of rock quarries in Whatcom County, clarifying that while DNR permits exist for logging roads and small quarries, these resources are not typically accessible for county projects. They agreed that an updated aggregate study is needed, with Stremler tasked to obtain pricing for this from Elements, which could then be presented to the council. The discussion concluded with an understanding that while an updated study would be beneficial, it would need to go through proper channels for approval.

Volume Study and Resource Assessment

The group discussed updating a volume study and resource assessment, with Cowden suggesting a two-part approach to determine actual volumes and quality of permitted materials before making recommendations to the Council. Stremler proposed working closely with SMAC and developing guidelines for modifications, while Greenbaum and others agreed to get an accurate picture from a third-party vendor rather than relying on industry estimates. The team decided to start by gathering data on permitted volumes and resource quality, with Lane offering to obtain a rough cost estimate for the study.

Mineral Resource Land Designation Streamlining

The group discussed streamlining the process for designating new mineral resource lands. They agreed that while the current system is laborious, any streamlined process would still need to include necessary environmental reviews and checks, such as the SEPA checklist.

Next steps

- Lane: Reach out to Element Solutions to get a price quote for updating the aggregate resource study, specifying the limited scope (focus on current permitted/usable volumes and resource quality), and report back to the group.
- SMAC (group): Develop detailed guidelines for the updated study scope (e.g., breakdowns by usability, permitted status, quality) to provide to the consultant when the study proceeds.
- Whatcom Staff (or appropriate staff): Determine the county procurement/bidding requirements and dollar threshold for this type of study and report back to the group.
- SMAC (group): At next meeting, discuss and potentially recommend to Council the update of the aggregate study, including estimated costs from Element Solutions, and specify the desired scope and focus on permitted/usable resources.

- SMAC (group): Add to the agenda for the next meeting a discussion on streamlining the process for moving MRL-designated lands to production, including evaluation of current permitting timelines and possible improvements.

Adjourn: 4pm