

September 18, 2025

The Lincoln County Board of Commissioners met for a meeting with Riley Larson, a representative from Senator Tim Sheehy's office, on September 18, 2025, in the Lincoln County Courthouse, Libby, Montana. Present were Commissioner Teske, Commissioner Hammons, Commissioner Duram and Administrative Assistant Nikki Fox.

Zoom participation: NONE

9:39 am Present was Riley Larson

On September 18, 2025, the meeting began with Riley Larson giving an introduction of herself and outlined the purpose of the meeting, which was to connect with the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners to help create an "open door policy." and open discussion with Commissioners. Commissioner Duram inquired about Riley Larson's jurisdiction. She confirmed covering the Northwest area. Commissioner Teske asked if Riley had been updated by her predecessor. She confirmed she had. Commissioner Teske discussed current land conveyance issues, noting that Senator Daines' office had originally planned to carry the bill, but it now needed to be carried by Senator Sheehy for this area. The main topics discussed included three areas in Lincoln County that are on federally owned land and leased by the county: Libby Shooting Range, Troy Airport and The Yaak Community Hall. Commissioner Teske expressed difficulties related to the leases and provided Riley Larson with relevant documents. Commissioner Teske brought up the status of the lawyer who is on contract to help push the land conveyance through legislation. Commissioner Duram mentioned the West Kootenai Fire Hall was not part of the current bill, leading to a discussion on its potential inclusion in future bills.

Riley Larson requested information on any other issues the Commissioners would like to discuss.

Commissioner Teske opened a discussion on the dual Superfund site that is currently being handled by the EPA and LASOC, which seems sufficient for now. Commissioner Teske mentioned issues regarding forest funding, including a cutback in grant funding, the impact of private sector land, and how these challenges were affecting Lincoln County. He noted uncertainty about the bill's status in the Senate.

Commissioner Duram raised concerns about the status of SRS funding and its historical importance, representing about 1/5 of the county's budget. He expressed frustration with delayed funding for the current year. Riley Larson reassured the Commissioners that addressing SRS funding is a top priority for Senator Sheehy's office, and that he serves on the committee handling it.

Commissioner Duram discussed his desire to establish a biomass plant in Lincoln County, emphasizing its potential benefits. He also explained challenges related to timber sales, particularly how timber sale time frames can extend beyond 7 years, and how Equal Access to Justice has affected the timber industry. Commissioner Duram further explained that this legislation led to Canada to be able to provide and produce within the logging industry, essentially crippling the timber industry within Lincoln County. Commissioner Duram specifically pointed out the impact of policies such as the Endangered Species Act and Wilderness policies on Lincoln County's economy, while specifically discussing the Trego Hall Renovations. He noted that only 8% of the land in Lincoln County can be taxed, with 75% owned by the federal government. He also mentioned that the county currently receives only \$0.42 per acre in PILT funds, far less than other counties. Commissioner Duram reiterated it's not a single policy having a major impact, but instead the combination and compound of multiple policies. Commissioner Duram further the discussion on the county's need for federal funding. □ Commissioner Hammons shared that Lincoln County was once one of the wealthiest counties in Montana but has suffered due to the combined effect of these policies. And how it led to the demise of the logging industry in Lincoln County. Commissioner Teske added that these issues affect more than just Lincoln County and stressed that there is an abundance of untapped renewable resources. Commissioner Duram explained the demographics of the 3 area within Lincoln County, how the lack of economic development was affecting each area and stressed the effect of the combination of multiple policies.

Commissioner Duram discussed major wildfires in Lincoln County, particularly highlighting the West Kootenai area fire in 2017. Commissioner Hammons stated that specifically the West Kootenai area, which was delayed in becoming part of the Firewise project due to 12 years of litigation. The fire caused catastrophic damage. Commissioner Teske added that litigation related to Forest Service sales is hurting the local economy by sending logging services out of the county or state.

Riley Larson briefly provided background on herself. Commissioner Teske shared his background and history and provided an overview of Commissioner Hammons' experience. Commissioner Duram gave a description of his background.

Riley Larson concluded the meeting by announcing she would return in October to visit the Superfund site and provide updates. Commissioner Teske mentioned the availability of Mobile Office Hours for Riley Larson and how other Senator representatives have utilized them. The process for scheduling mobile office hours was discussed. The Commissioners invited Riley Larson to attend other local meetings of interest, including the Republican weekly meeting and a potential meeting with the Sheriff.

10:13 am Adjourned

LINCOLN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Brent Teske, Chairperson

ATTEST: _____
Nikki Fox, Administrative Assistant