



## Pend Oreille County

# Board of Commissioners

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District #1

*Mike Manus*  
District #2

*Stephen Kiss*  
District #3

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March 27, 2017

Harold White, Regional Administrator for Operations  
Washington State Department of Transportation  
2714 N. Mayfair Street  
Spokane, WA 99207

RE: Highway 31 Closure

Dear Mr. White:

As commissioners of Pend Oreille County, we are concerned about the continued closure of Highway 31 one mile south of Metaline. The roadway was closed Thursday, March 16 and has yet to be reopened. The closure causes the use of an 18-mile detour over a weight restricted county road which is also impaired by a one lane bridge.

Highway 31 is a commercial vehicle route to and from British Columbia. The towns of Metaline, Metaline Falls, and Ione have been bypassed by the detour causing a negative economic impact. Getting food and fuel to Metaline and Metaline Falls is a challenge due to the weight restricted detour route. These communities would be blocked completely if the overloaded county road were to fail. The county's largest private employer, the Pend Oreille Mine, which is north of Metaline Falls, has also suffered negative impacts.

Also impacted is the response time for our EMS providers because of a slower (speed limit of 25-40 mph) detour road. Thus, an ambulance being delayed an additional 45 minutes puts the patient at risk. This Board suggests an escort car for emergency vehicles rather than rerouting.

There has been no official communication to the county from Department of Transportation as to a possible timeline for reopening the road; and, apparently, no plan for either a short- or long-term repair. This area has been prone to mud slides since reconstructed in the early 1960's. This Board suggests the Department of Transportation reevaluate the slide and consider using the flaggers already in place to open the road to one-way travel with continual observation of changing conditions.

Additionally, this Board is requesting a Detour Agreement be established effective March 16 outlining WSDOT's responsibility to restore Sullivan Lake Road to its existing conditions prior to it becoming the detour route. Pend Oreille County does not have the funding to initiate repairs associated with the detour. Any information you can provide regarding a plan for reopening as well as an agreement for repairs will be greatly appreciated.

PEND OREILLE COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

*Absent*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Karen Skoog, Chair

*Stephen Kiss*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Stephen Kiss, Vice-Chair

*Mike Manus*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mike Manus, Commissioner

c: Senator Shelly Short  
Representative Joel Kretz  
Representative Jacqueline Maycumber