



THE DIRT

Class 45 Applications are Open!

AgForestry is the only program in Washington State focused on developing adult leaders in agriculture, forestry and natural resources. If you know someone with leadership potential, is up for the challenge, and is willing to commit to a leadership journey that will profoundly grow them both professionally and personally, encourage them to apply and/or refer them to us: [Referral form here](#).

There are three more Q&A sessions for applicants to learn about requirements, expectations, cost, scholarships, and benefits. Prospects may sign up for a session by [clicking here](#). Attending a Q&A session is required for applicants to ensure an understanding of the demands and rigor of an 18-month program spanning two years with 13 seminars that occupy 58 days. See the Class 45 seminar schedule [here](#) and see the list of available scholarships [here](#).

FINE PRINT:

Applications are accepted until April 15.

Steps to apply:

- a) Attend one of four [Q&A sessions](#)
- b) General Application
- c) Essay Questions
- d) Self-Evaluation
- e) Employer Release and Reference
- f) Three References
- g) Resume
- h) Signed Memorandum of Understanding

Class 43: Vietnam or Bust!

Class 43 embarks on their international seminar to Vietnam on January 28 with the first day starting at the U.S. Embassy, then to the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum Complex, and the infamous “Hanoi Hilton”. The foreign culture immersion includes floating markets, vegetable production, rubber plantations, port visits, and a national park. The international seminar objectives are to experience natural resource industries as well as the economic, social, and political systems, explore, discuss, and analyze significant natural resource policy issues, gain perspective on future trends and emerging issues, and not the least of which is to step out of their comfort zone: learning to handle prolonged stress, long days, new culture, and potential discomfort.

The rich history of Vietnam along with the history of its relationship to the U.S., both in exports and culturally, will provide Class 43 the opportunity to consider their leadership with new perspectives as well as develop an understanding of those they may have the opportunity to work with in the future. Class 43 continues to grow into their leadership as they move toward their April 21st graduation!

Class 44 Digs Deep into Public Policy

Kicking off Module Two: Leadership in Public Policy, Class 44 traveled to the University of Washington Evans School of Public Policy and Governance to gain insights into navigating the policy process and how to make a difference through advocacy. In their policy groups, the class created maps of stakeholders and influencers around the issues they are considering tackling for their projects. Participants built on what they learned in Module One as they explored adaptive leadership and wrestled with how they can grow to increase their effectiveness.



“The deep dive into the frameworks of public policy and social equity afforded our team with the gift of difficult questions and introduced concepts we continue to wrestle with. While daunting, we believe navigating these challenging ideas will strengthen our approach to enact positive change through our group project.”
-Maggie Elliot



“Our group is aware of the need for a conscious effort to try to approach public policy with equity in mind. Who does this policy affect that isn’t represented in the conversation? How can we get all the stakeholders involved for the best collaboration and fairest outcome? The complexity of public policy was exposed, and the power and influence mapping formalized and expanded on some of the work that many of us do naturally, but pushed us to think deeper into the process.”
-Megan Schultz

Class 44 continued...



"The seminar in Seattle left our group with more questions than answers, which we interpret as a sign of learning and growth. Equity discussions inspired us to more thoroughly consider how our group could positively impact underserved communities through our policy project. We walked away from this seminar with a better understanding of how we will define our project scope and set achievable goals. Overall, the Seattle seminar left us inspired, focused, a little intimidated, and better connected to each other through our shared leadership journeys."

-Natalie Sahli



"Going into (the seminar) I knew very little about public policy and all that goes into the formation, adoption, and implementation of policies. The classroom setting let me focus on some of the challenging topics at hand, like equity, diversity, and environmental justice. A take away was what I could apply towards my group's budding policy project. Things like how the cycle of a legislative session goes, or the rules surrounding committees and their influence over bills, or to talk to committee "staffers" as they will know all the ins and outs of the history surrounding certain policy topics, and how to map out all the key players that might be involved in a proposed policy. All these and more will definitely help me and my group get things accomplished!"

-Colin Towne

Collaborative Leadership Project

The genesis of the AgForestry Leadership Program is from one of many waves of change stemming from the aftermath of the "Fish Wars". The concept of "collaborative leadership" was born when Nisqually tribal member Billy Frank Jr. shifted from fighter to problem-solver. To honor him and the subsequent work of many, the Puget Sound Institute is working on a video with an oral history and documentary produced with the UW Center for Urban Waters (CUW) and TVW (our state's version of CSPAN), with assistance from advisors/co-executive producers Jim Waldo (CUW Board Chair) and David Troutt (Nisqually Tribe).

The project is to document the 50-year history of natural resource collaboration in Washington state in order to learn from and continue work to meet current challenges; the roles played by agencies, tribes, ag, forestry, and other resource industries and groups, universities, NGOs, practitioners, and others. The project comes as milestones are approaching; the 50th anniversary of the Boldt Decision and multiparty collaboration on natural resources, the 40th anniversary of salmon co-management, and the unveiling of Billy Frank, Jr statue at the US Capitol.

While designed for fundraising, this short video captures a glimpse of the impact of that time: <https://www.pugetsoundinstitute.org/about/collaborative-leadership-project/>

Alumni in the News

Juli Tuson (Class 36) was elected Mason County PUD Commissioner District 1 which includes the southeastern section of the county and was elected to serve as secretary of the board.

Maury Balcom (Class 7) was inducted into the Mid-Columbia Ag Hall of Fame and awarded the Stewardship Award for serving his community and long displaying leadership in agriculture. A third-generation farmer, he is founding board member for the Washington State Wine Commission, has served on the board for Washington Winegrowers Association, Washington State Water Resources Association, TRIDEC, and the South Columbia Basin Irrigation District.

Harold Cox, former AgForestry board member, was also inducted to the Mid-Columbia Agriculture Hall of Fame and awarded the Pioneer Award for significant influence on the development of agriculture and service to his community. A long-time farmer and rancher, he served on the Paterson School Board, Franklin County Planning Commission, Washington State Cattlemen's Association, Washington Cattle Feeder Association, Washington Association of Wheat Growers, Agriculture and Forestry Education Foundation, Tri-Cities Cancer Center, Benton-Franklin Fair, and Rodeo 4H & FFA Market Stock Sale.



Cherie Kearny (Class 31) was appointed to the Washington State Conservation Commission to serve as the second governor-appointed commissioner on the 10-member board.

"I am honored to be appointed to the Commission. The appointment is a beautiful fit for my love for Washington and the vast diversity of flora, fauna and human communities that make it so rich. A favorite part of my AgForestry experience was driving across the state each month to learn a new perspective on our natural resources and people. Those experiences contributed indelibly to my curiosity and expertise, and it is an honor to direct my energy now toward supporting the great work of our conservation districts across the state."

In Remembrance



Ed Zurcher (Class 14) passed away January 11, 2023

Shared about Ed in a 1991 reference for Class 14, "He is an honest, 'straight-shooting' individual, who's not afraid to ask the hard questions."



Paula Eakin (Class 36) passed away December 20, 2022.

"Paula is dedicated to achieving the best possible outcome from every endeavor in which she is involved. She is a stickler for ethics,..., and strives for elevating quality in all she does." – from a reference on Paula's Class 36 application



Dennis Tompkins (Class 3) passed away August 18, 2022.

Shared about Dennis in his 1980 AgForestry applications; "The way I see it, Dennis Tompkins has the ability, know how, and inborn leadership already in motion that being a member of Class III would be icing on the cake. Dennis would be a thought provoking, creative, positive class member."

Up Coming Events

- Thanks to the Washington Forest Protection Association for hosting a reception and dinner with Class 44!
 - Thurs., Feb. 16: 6-8:30 pm
 - River's Edge Restaurant, Olympia (Business Casual)
- Class 43 Graduation - Spokane
 - Fri., April 21 - 2023 in Spokane
 - Registration Details will be shared after the new year

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