



# Impact Report

Prepared by:  
Class 44



# Tyler West



Shadowing Rep. Keith Goehner as part of Class 44's Olympia seminar.

My AgForestry journey has touched nearly every aspect of my life, furthering my development as a leader: professionally and personally. From the first seminar it was clear AgForestry would be an experience that challenges and stretches me to build leadership skills, understand myself and the experiences that shape me, deepen relationships, and broaden perspectives. My areas of growth center in defining and living my values, finding my voice as a leader, and improving my public speaking ability.

The Personal Leadership Module challenged me to define my values and reflect on how I communicate them to my team in an authentic way, both through my actions and my words. Understanding that values are important to building trust and establishing a shared vision, AgForestry has enabled me to share with those around me with intention. This practice is boosting my confidence as a leader and is improving the way I build and nurture relationships. I am finding many opportunities for value-based conversations, and I am becoming more comfortable sharing with my teammates in meetings, informal conversations, moments of team successes, and learning opportunities. In turn, these conversations have opened the door to opportunities to provide and receive feedback more openly, which is further strengthening relationships and building trust. These impacts are shaped through the unique mixture of learning, collaborating, reflecting, and practicing that AgForestry has instilled in our class.

# Rosa Dekker



*The Entrance Hall in the White House.*



*The Albert Einstein Memorial.*

This journey has been very impactful. I'm starting to know myself better and I'm learning how to self-regulate. Taking deep breaths and feeling my feet under me have helped but allowing myself to be vulnerable has helped the most.

The trip to D.C. to the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the tour of Gettysburg's Battlefield brought many emotions and made me vulnerable when trying to express myself. I now know being vulnerable is not a sign of weakness, but a song of courage. By opening up I have not only accepted myself as is, but I'm allowing others to see me for who I am. I'm surrounded by wonderful people who have allowed themselves to be vulnerable and that's bringing us closer.

# Natalie Sahli



*Public Lands Commissioner Hilary Franz (center) with Class 44 members Carrie Nelson (left) and Natalie Sahli (right)*

Our public policy module experience was a fast-paced and fun journey. It is amazing to see how closely I am positioned as a citizen and as a professional to the political process. These seminars demystified the public policy process, making the system more accessible. Ultimately, I feel empowered to affect change in my district, state and country. I feel ready to take my career to the next level, knowing now that this once mysterious world runs on regular, dedicated, passionate people like myself.

Throughout the first two modules, there were themes on (in)equity and justice that have further challenged the lens through which I view our systems and my place of privilege. We can do better as a society for our community and for the environment. I will never forget these lessons. I will move through the rest of my career and life more mindful of how I can work to improve the systems within my power: how I can move from a role as bystander to advocate and supporter.

Overall, I am grateful to benefit from the education, confidence and perspective bestowed by AgForestry Modules 1 and 2. The value of what I have come to discover for my professional and personal life through this program comes second only to the amazing friends with whom I have shared the first part of this journey. Only halfway into this program, it is hard to imagine a month passing without time with these wonderful people. I very much look forward to our upcoming adventures and to treasuring every moment with Class 44.

# Amber Itle



These experiences illuminated the lack of diversity in my own field of veterinarian medicine: currently the whitest profession in the U.S. I now see that part of my charge as a leader is to deconstruct barriers that sustain racial inequity in veterinary medicine and animal agriculture.

Jewel Bronaugh, USDA Deputy Secretary said, "Every leader comes for your time." The recent experiences in Ag Forestry empowered me to know that my time, is now.

-Amber

The three seminars in Module 2 that focused on leadership in public policy was beautifully orchestrated, each part building on the foundations of the last starting in Seattle, then Olympia, with the full impact hitting hard in Washington DC. I learned in Seattle that navigating the policy process is in no way linear, requiring courageous adaptive leadership and collaborative governance strategies. Case studies and panels addressing organizational justice challenged me to think about ways to incorporate equity into decision-making. The seminar was instrumental in my understanding of the way systems can benefit some but create inequities for others.

In Olympia, I experienced the beautiful chaos of policy by shadowing a career tribal lobbyist. I learned how key influencers can leverage trusting relationships to get results for minorities. He showed me the benefits of the multiple streams framework that challenge our legislators to find the lowest common denominator to come up with a policy to address a "problem" but avoid an "issue."

In D.C., the American Indian, African American History and Culture, and the Holocaust Memorial Museums encapsulated the disparities and resulting tragedy attributed to unaddressed "issues" of inequity and racism. I also saw capable and courageous leaders of Native American, Pakistani, African American, and Hispanic decent represented at USDA and the US Army for Civil Works, bringing new and diverse perspectives to create more harmonized governance systems.

# Andy Perleberg

“Defuzzification” describes my leadership training so far. Examination of personality types, communication preferences, and ethically-based decision factors positively influenced my perspective and improved my behavior. Direct exposure to principal communication routes, and mentally mapping the relationships between 1) media, 2) state and federal agencies, 3) non-governmental organizations, 4) advocacy groups and lobbyists, and 5) elected officials— facilitated my stakeholder engagement in current legislative action. Though still unfolding, both the senate and house committees acted favorably, and one bill passed the floor with the other expected to as well. With this legislation executed, wildfire risk will be reduced by a workforce of contractors prepared to mitigate hazardous conditions. Module 2 advanced my capacity, developing knowledge and skills I needed.

I have observed changes in my decisions, actions, and behaviors, but impacts are far from inclusive due to the earliness of this program. Real impacts torment the status quo and expand my window of discourse. It’s doubtful I will ever be expected to consider unthinkable or radical policies, but I find myself considering the acceptable with more interest and optimism. Other skills I have demonstrated include becoming a better listener, empathetic learner, patient colleague, and tactful communicator.



*How torn Alexander Stephens must have felt! Doing right follows justice, law, and morality, whereas doing wrong is an act that does not follow morality and justice. Politicians are forced into acts of give and take— to distribute the greatest benefits or reduce the costs to the greatest number.*

“I am more multi-dimensional. Previously I was satisfied being a specialist and advisor. I have become a more faithful collaborator and find consensus not the path that is desired but rather consent. I have received praise for ‘getting to yes’ – a decision that is good enough – instead of expecting stakeholders to mold outcomes through tedious process.” - Andy

# Justin Stang



“Remembering our commonalities and building relationships with compassion, generosity, and trust have become fundamental to my outlook.” – Justin

*Justin practicing for his next job while meeting with Congressional staff.*

The effects of the first two modules on my leadership journey have been profound. I am so grateful to see the threads and themes of AgForestry Leadership on a daily basis. I have also gained the tools and skills to see them through a new lens that allows me to enhance and improve the world around me. Module 1 highlighted who I am and who I could be as a leader in very aspirational terms. Module 2 expanded that information into how I can use my newly honed abilities to interact with existing policy structures to maximize my impact as a leader.

Moreover, the aspects of mindfulness, self-regulation, emotional intelligence, and the way my DiSC personality processes this information in conjunction with other people's personalities have been revolutionary for me. I now actively think about my words and actions and try to see in real time just what I'm reacting to and how it's making me feel. This zoomed out level of self-awareness has the potential to change every single relationship in my life, both personal and professional, and I hope will continue to make me a better listener and person.

I have been so encouraged through this experience to see that underdogs matter, optimism is a force multiplier, and that equity always needs to be part of the solution to any problem. Remembering our commonalities and building relationships with compassion, generosity, and trust have become fundamental to my outlook. I have come to cherish and value the time growing with my classmates and am so excited to see all the ways our AgForestry Leadership journey will continue.

# Eric Dixon



*Eric as Session Manager in DC.*

“Building relationships with as many people as possible opens doors for enhanced communication and collaboration.” – Eric



*From the top of the Washington Monument.*

The AgForestry journey thus far has been both challenging and rewarding in many ways. Starting in Pullman, I was thrust into a group of 17 new strangers from throughout the state unknowing that we would shortly become friends and staunch supporters of each other's journeys. Next, the Spokane seminar really reinforced the importance of effective communication and that I must be able to clearly and effectively tell my story to get a message out there. In Wenatchee, we learned about emotional intelligence and how our personalities influence our leadership style. This has allowed me to better accommodate differing personality types and adjust my leadership tactics to suit. The Seattle and Olympia sessions really opened my eyes to the workings of state government, the policy process, and how to advocate for, and enact change. Finally, the DC trip unveiled the intricacies of national government and emphasized the concepts of relationships and communication.

Casting a wide net and building relationships with as many people as possible opens doors for enhanced communication and collaboration. Whether it is with peers, lobbyists, agency members, or members of congress and their staff, building relationships allows you to get a foot in the door and have a voice. Additionally, it is our responsibility as representatives of the natural resource industry in Washington State to educate and advocate. We must continually share our stories, express our issues, and provide creative solutions to all of those around us. The leadership journey is life long, and I am looking forward to continuing it through the remainder of the AgForestry program and many years after.



# Megan Schultz



“Leaders, however small, can make huge changes!” – Megan



Module 1 started out with me deeply questioning what sort of leader I was, and what kind of leader I wanted to be. By interacting with and hearing stories from my peers, I was able to define the leadership skills that were important to me: honesty, communication, and integrity. Using the LPI and DiSC personality profiles, I have been able to identify those traits in myself that I want to grow, and those traits that I need to work on. I have applied skills learned in AgForestry such as asking questions instead of providing answers and encouraging my coworkers on a job well done instead of criticizing where things fell down. As a result, I have already seen positive results in my workplace. Leaders, however small, can make huge changes. A positive impact on even one person is worth the effort.

Module 2 and our trip to Washington DC hammered home the public policy process and the realization that leadership to affect change really can make a difference. Our workshop at the battleground of Gettysburg surprised me and opened my eyes to the fact that the basic principles of leadership remain unchanged and enduring over time. Seeing the war and military memorials around DC left me humbled and grateful for all that our soldiers have sacrificed. While our nation’s past is far from perfect, I am proud and honored to be an American and to do my part as a leader to fight for a better world for all.

# Tiffany Pitra

"My perception of how difficult it would be to engage with our government leaders was completely wrong!" – Tiffany



*Visiting the US Army for Civil Works, and spending time with Jaime Pinkham (Class 9), brought home the many ways I can engage as both a citizen and as a leader.*

Module 1 encouraged me to focus inward to determine what kind of leader I want to be, and to truly face opportunities for growth as a leader of a small team. For me, this looks like spending more time thinking about another's perspective before going into a meeting and committing to *listening to understand*. By preparing in advance and arriving with an open mind rather than a narrow agenda, I've been more successful in collaborating with other departments, advocating for others, and communicating my point of view in a way that's truly heard.

In Module 2, the call to action hit hard. Spending time at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum and the National Museum of African American History and Culture allowed me to reflect on where we've been and determine that *we are all responsible for promoting equity and justice in our communities*. On numerous occasions in Olympia and D.C., I stepped back and thought, "This is so much different than I imagined." My perception of how difficult it would be to engage with our government leaders was completely wrong! Over and over, we were told to tell our stories, proudly represent our industries, and *just show up* on behalf of others. There really are no excuses: How can I use my privilege, my resources, and my voice to amplify those who aren't currently heard? I have a feeling the next 12 months will enlighten me even more.

# Ryan Baye



"We all know the 'Golden Rule' - treat people the way you want to be treated. Looking back on the first two modules of AgForestry, I am more inclined to follow the 'Platinum Rule' - treat people the way they want to be treated."

- Ryan

During our Olympia Seminar, it was reinforced again and again how intimidating our state's legislative process can be to outsiders and first-timers. It made me all the more determined to use my own knowledge and previous experience of working for the Legislature to bring the people's branch closer to the people, to benefit my organization and our cause.

I joined AgForestry, in part, to better prepare myself to be a leader. I never realized the role of a leader would be so focused on those who are looking to you, understanding the way they see the world and acting accordingly. I walked away from our Wenatchee seminar with this kernel of knowledge, after our class explored various types of personality assessments and how every individual approaches their individual job performance as well as group dynamics. Since that snowy December session, I've incorporated this new mentality into my interactions with coworkers to tweak my interactions to better reflect what I believe my colleagues desire. Or by simply asking them.

Awareness of others also expands into feelings, as learning the importance of emotional intelligence was another focus of the Wenatchee seminar that hit home with me. It never felt "touchy feely", but acknowledging our emotions effect our work seemed simultaneously simple and mind-blowing. It makes sense; I know I act and think differently when I'm excited versus when I'm angry.

By incorporating empathy into my leadership, I feel I better connect with my coworkers and meet them at their level. This in turn is improving group dynamics and overall performance, to make my organization's investment of my participation in AgForestry worthwhile.

# Tammy Edmonds

"This experience has taught me how to get involved and to have my voice heard."

- Tammy

*Tammy on the set of NonStop Local news during the Spokane seminar.*



The AgForestry leadership program has helped re-ignite my voice. From the moment we got started in Pullman I knew that change would happen even if it was painful at times. I have been reminded that this is a leadership lab and that failing is part of leading. My idea of being a leader has started to shift from being gray to being more direct. I am braver about sharing my opinion and speaking up. The people who are in this class and those that lead the class are so driven to learn and grow and I am honored to call them friends.

Going to the University of Washington seminar opened my eyes to the inequities and injustices that have gone on for years. Making sure all voices are heard is important and this was made even clearer in DC at the African American History Museum, the American Indian Museum, and the Holocaust Museum. I was not proud of our nation. At the same time going to Gettysburg and seeing the war memorials is humbling and provides that whisper of faith back into humanity where people stood up, made a difference, and gave the ultimate sacrifice.

Moving forward as a leader this experience has taught me how to get involved and to have my voice heard. Seeing how government and policy work has given me new insight into how to enact change and to recognize all the stakeholders. Lastly, the example Deputy Assistant Secretary Robyn Colosimo of the US Army for Civil Works gave in DC of being selfless in supporting the cause speaks to me. Quiet leaders are everywhere making a difference!

# Carolyn Groom



“Through AgForestry, I am finding my voice, building a toolbox of resources, and connecting with a network of people who share a vision of a better tomorrow for the food and fiber industries of Washington.” -Carolyn

*Carolyn invoking her 'launching point' at the Washington D.C. Seminar*

Over the past six months, we have been taking a deep dive into leadership practices, emotional intelligence, DiSC profiles, and the policy process. At times, it felt like these were separate streams. But after spending a week in Washington DC, I better understand the confluence: where these streams come together.

This all clicked for me while visiting the United States Holocaust Museum. There was a sign titled “The Courage to Rescue” that detailed the increased chance of survival when ordinary citizens became rescuers. It made me question how I can make a difference as an ordinary citizen. Prior to AgForestry, I’m not confident I would have a great answer. I looked at any policy or leadership issue as a singular event: “I have an issue I want to fix” which is a daunting task to go at alone.

I have grown to realize it is much more forward-looking for a larger audience: “We have a vision of a better tomorrow.” Time spent in Olympia and DC showed that different agencies, advocacy groups, and everyday citizens are working together. Through AgForestry, I am finding my voice, building a toolbox of resources, and connecting with a network of people who share a vision of a better tomorrow for the food and fiber industries of Washington. I’m excited to be at this launching point, feeling motivated and prepared for the challenges ahead.

# Derek Friehe

“I’ve never been a part of a program with so much intentionality and thoughtfulness built into it, that every session, every assignment, every discussion, every speaker, challenges you, stretches you, and forces you to grow as a leader and as a person.” – Derek



It is difficult to go through AgForestry’s Module 1 on Personal Leadership and remain unchanged. I’ve never been a part of a program with so much intentionality and thoughtfulness built in: every session, every assignment, every discussion, and every speaker challenges you, stretches you, and forces you to grow as a leader and as a person. I’ve seen so much growth in self-awareness through the DiSC profile and the LPI leadership assessment we took and have even used those tools with my leadership team on my farm helping immensely in team communication and building an effective culture. This module has also challenged me to take a hard look at what my personal values are and how they align with my company values and how to communicate and cascade those values across the organization.

Module 2 on Public Policy was a totally new and eye-opening experience on so many levels. I like eating sausage and making sausage and the same was true as we saw how the “sausage” is made within the halls of our state and nation’s capitals. Yes, it can be messy, but the process is dynamic, fast-paced, and even fun to observe and take part in. AgForestry affords us the opportunity to see how the legislative process works and in turn equips us with the tools we need to be leaders in our own industry and represent our interests and effect change at all levels of government. Let’s make some sausage!

# Carrie Nelson

“What I have learned thus far has motivated me to continue to focus on setting up my team for success, build trust and respect throughout my work environment, and foster a renewed sense of team.”

– Carrie



My journey in the AgForestry Leadership Program thus far has been incredibly impactful both professionally and personally. Components such as the Leadership Practices Inventory, the DiSC Personality Assessment, our cohort group, learning opportunities such as Gettysburg, and our ongoing seminars and points of contact continue to inform and shift my leadership style.

Our time in Pullman, Spokane, and Wenatchee forced me to become very clear about what my values are and really commit to them. As Spokesman Review Editor Rob Curley showed us in Spokane, the most inspiring leaders are those that fully understand, embrace, and share their values. The first three modules really forced me to dig deep and not only clearly identify my values but embrace and share them. These sessions also encouraged and challenged me to understand how my very direct, results-oriented, fast-paced personality can affect others. This gained insight has helped me connect with others, problem solve, and resolve breakdowns in communication.

I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in this Leadership Program. This program has ignited a passion within me for leadership, adaptive leadership, and working to challenge long-held cultural norms. Our adaptive leadership seminar in Seattle further highlighted for me the need to lean into vulnerability and how closely aligned courage and vulnerability are. As I continue to encourage and push for a cultural shift within our work environment and foster team building; I am also reminded that I must slow my roll, remain tuned into others, and consistently model my core values. What I have learned thus far has motivated me to continue to focus on setting my team up for success, build trust and respect throughout my work environment, and foster a renewed sense of team.

# Wioletta Skotnicka-Kowalec



"These encounters were thought-provoking and a call to action— I realize I can and should be involved with causes important to me."  
– Wioletta

The first two modules of the AgForestry Leadership Program had a significant impact on my professional and personal life. Each session cultivated new leadership skills and created deeper understanding of different work relationship types. I learned about the state and federal government and about the people participating in the political process, who are not always politicians. I learned what I value the most. In the past six months, I learned a lot about myself, my values, and I gained a different perspective on my work and personal life.

Module 1 was challenging and insightful. I realized how important it is to understand different people's personality types, their individual needs and communication styles. I learned to be self-aware of my behavior and the ways I react in work environments. Each speaker and session left me with a lot of thoughts and emotions (sometimes tears).

Experiences have been significant! I began AgForestry with very little knowledge of the political process, and how state and federal government function. I was deeply moved by University of Washington professor Seawit Bishu and her journey to fit into American society. Shadowing a lobbyist in Olympia along with our many meetings in Washington DC enlightened me to the extent of knowledge, passion and effort necessary for creating public policy. These encounters were thought-provoking and a call to action. I realize I can and should be involved with causes important to me. The conversations, knowledge, and laughs we share are treasured and contribute to my broadened perspective.



# Maggie Elliot



“After the first two modules I can recognize leaders are not always alone, and when a challenge arises, I have a cohort of extraordinary leaders to help me carve a path.” – Maggie

Throughout my life I have often paused to wonder how the inspiring leaders of history managed to navigate profound uncertainty in reckoning with the revelatory problems of their time. After experiencing the first two modules of AgForestry, I understand leaders may not have all the answers, but rather are centered by a set of powerful tools to connect, grow, and catalyze change.

These tools are rooted in demonstrating how to draw strength in vulnerability, nourish empathy, and cultivate self-compassion to foster collaborative relationships emphasizing the aptitudes of team members. In weaving the common thread of human experience to ground a purpose and imbue an inspiring, shared vision.

These tools are also embodied in a recognition of the layers of systems defining the structure of policy, the shifting tide of public opinion, the resonance of message framing. In the willingness to embrace the complexity of problems and seek a diversity of voices while pursuing advancement and positive change.

The impact of AgForestry is the gift of experiences to build these tools. One of our speakers in Washington DC noted, *‘Every leader comes for their time.’* I understand we come for our time because we are of our time, inherently shaped by multitudes of experiences and people. After the first two modules I can recognize leaders are not always alone, and when a challenge arises, I have a cohort of extraordinary leaders to help me carve a path.

# Colin Towne



“AgForestry included some very challenging moments that forced me to reflect on how I view politics, how I proceeded and interacted with heavy/serious topics, and how to promote actual change in our industries.”

– Colin

*Colin looking short in front of the Washington Monument.*

The first two modules of the AgForestry Leadership Program have been profoundly influential for me. Module 1 encompassed taking an introspective look at what leadership means to me, how to improve leadership effectiveness, and how to effectively communicate and interact with people. Like many endeavors, you get out what you put in. Class 44 set the bar high from the get-go with people opening up and being willing to work hard and embrace the process of personal challenge and growth. Personally, a major takeaway from these experiences was to be my genuine self, and to be vulnerable. In doing so I will actually be a better, more relatable leader, and have the capacity for more empathy in decision making.

Module 2 applied these leadership principles to the public policy world, covering some foundational knowledge, and providing opportunities for us to observe first-hand how the process works on the state and federal level. This section of AgForestry included some very challenging moments that forced me to reflect on how I view politics, how I proceeded and interacted with heavy/serious topics, and how to promote actual change in our industries.

The amount that I have learned so far in this program surprises me, and I know that there is still a lot more to come. Above all else, I am so very grateful to be a participant in Class 44 alongside some amazing people. Getting to know my fellow classmates more and more is so rewarding. The way everyone supports one another is extraordinary and it has me even more excited to continue this journey alongside them.

# Madi Roy



"One of the greatest things AgForestry does is create an atmosphere where leaders can cast stones, share feelings and grow."

- Madi

*Madi and her Public Policy Project Team, after announcing their group's goal to expand knowledge and services to agriculture communities through WSU Extension.*

Retired US Forest Service official, Vicki Christiansen, kicked-off Class 44s opening seminar with a quote by Mother Teresa: "*I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.*"

This quote represents a re-occurring theme in Class 44's AgForestry journey. In Module 1, we learned how to use our personal leadership and communication styles to create ripples in our own lives and in the lives of others. We have also witnessed the ripples of personal leadership on public policy in Module 2 through our visits to Olympia and Washington DC. Most importantly, we have learned about the stones our guest speakers have cast which have created ripples throughout our communities, our state, and the nation.

One of the greatest things AgForestry does is create an atmosphere where leaders can cast stones, share feelings and grow: in a way that is meaningful and relevant to our personal journeys. I have had the pleasure of watching my classmates--each demonstrating amazing character--develop and implement change within their own circles of influence. This has inspired my own journey as I have grown in my awareness of the value of vision, courage, collaboration, and relationships. I have already started to cast stones, as have my classmates. I am looking forward to watching our ripples grow in Module 3 and beyond.



WE MUST SCRUPULOUSLY  
GUARD THE CIVIL RIGHTS  
AND CIVIL LIBERTIES OF  
ALL CITIZENS, WHATEVER  
THEIR BACKGROUND.  
WE MUST REMEMBER THAT  
ANY OPPRESSION, ANY  
INJUSTICE, ANY HATRED, IS  
A WEDGE DESIGNED TO  
ATTACK OUR CIVILIZATION.

