



AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY EDUCATION FOUNDATION

CLASS 42 PUBLIC POLICY PROJECT SUMMARIES

INTRODUCTION:

Members of each AgForestry Leadership Program class form teams and throughout their two years, work to develop a solution to address a specific public policy issue they identified and upon which they agreed to work. Teams submit a written report with background, processes and outcomes, and at the Graduation Seminar deliver a 30-minute presentation that is evaluated and critiqued by third-party professionals.

The public policy project is a capstone experience and integral to AgForestry. The process allows participants to apply skills learned, leverage relationships built, and reference resources to solve a public policy issue. Engaging in the process and learning from the experience is more important than the outcome. The process enables participants to work with other people to analyze a significant public issue and develop a proposal for resolution, including identifying an appropriate decision-making body, and advocating for the solution before that body.

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#### INCENTIVIZING THE USE OF BIOCHAR IN GOVERNMENT FUNDED PROJECTS

Class 42 Members: Kelly Dougherty, Cameron Eskeberg, Chris Rasmussen, Faith Van De Putte, Jason Walter

**THE PROBLEM:** Biochar is made through the combustion of organic material (including agriculture and forestry wastes) in a low oxygen environment. The emerging industry in faces challenges of economic viability and widespread adoption. It is a stable, carbon-rich char with potential to address climate change; poor forest health and wildfire risk; air, soil, and water quality; and the decline of rural communities.

**PROJECT STATUS:** SB 5961, incentivizing biochar in government-funded projects. Amended in the Senate to add pilot project funding looking at forest products to support biochar production from lands managed by DNR, the bill passed the Senate and House and was signed into law by Governor Inslee on March 31, 2022 and effective June 9, 2022.

#### WASHINGTON HIGHWAY WILDLIFE CROSSINGS--SAFETY AND HABITAT CONNECTIVITY

Class 42 Members: David Beard, Jay Krientiz, Lauren Magalska

**THE PROBLEM:** Roads are obstructing animal habitat which leads to dangerous interactions between drivers and animals as well as habitat connectivity problems for migrating species. Government agencies, citizen wildlife protection organizations, and non-government organizations (NGOs) struggle for funding, competing goals, lack of prioritization and

communication, and little interagency guidance for collaboration means projects are conducted on a case-by-case basis if at all.

**PROJECT STATUS:** Movement by WDFW and WSDOT staff to gather information and facilitate conversations between executive leadership of state agencies and NGOs that support creation of a framework to collaborate and set goals.

### **EXPANDING BROADBAND ACCESS IN WASHINGTON STATE**

Class 42 Members: Amanda Sandhop, Bill Waterfield, Chris Eckman, Kate Delavan

**THE PROBLEM:** Lack of reliable broadband access emphasized during COVID when access became a necessity to participate in daily life: school, work, medical care, and community gatherings. An unlikely and important connection for access was found between broadband and the Department of Transportation (WSDOT). Roadways are another part of infrastructure that allow residents access. WSDOT constructs and repairs roadways daily. Getting equipment and personnel on site is an expensive part of an infrastructure project and current legislation allows WSDOT to install “Personal Wireless Service Facilities” when constructing/repairing within a highway right of way. Crews could install wireless connections while there but the problem is the definition of “Personal Wireless Service Facilities” is narrow and does not include necessary components for broadband access.

**PROJECT STATUS:** Working with stakeholders to initiate HB 1457 “Facilitating the installation of broadband facilities on limited access highways.” The bill was signed into law May 12, 2021 and was effective July 25, 2021.

### **IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH OPPORTUNITIES IN THE AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY**

Class 42 Members: Colton Cooley, Sara Higgins, Brett Monson, Jerod Morris, Sarah Rasmussen

**THE PROBLEM:** Limitations to mental health treatment access in the agriculture community. Efforts have been made in Washington to expand telemedicine services that improve access to mental health treatment. Legislation requires insurance providers to reimburse telemedicine services at the same rate as in-person services. However, rural communities have not been able to take full advantage of services as a result of limited broadband access. While temporary emergency orders were issued during COVID, “audio-only” services were excluded from reimbursable telemedicine services.

**PROJECT STATUS:** The group advocated for HB 1196 “Concerning Audio Only Telemedicine” and the bill was signed into law May 3, 2021 and was effective July 25, 2021.

### **EARLY WORK OPPORTUNITY CREDIT**

Class 42 Members: Andrew Engell, Andrew Johnson, Kyle Curtis, Katie Tackman

**THE PROBLEM:** Washington State has one of the lowest youth labor participation rates, and youth are overlooked by employers due to minimum wage exceeding their perceived value, low availability, lack of experience, negative perception, and logistical challenges (e.g., transportation, school schedules, work hour limitations etc.).

**PROJECT STATUS:** Created bill language modeled on existing law and gained support from multiple legislators to provide employers a \$2/hour B&O credit. Even with bipartisan support the bill was not a priority within time constraints of the 2022 legislative session. The bill is ready for the 2023 Legislative Session.



**AGFORESTRY LEADERSHIP COHORT 42**

- Amanda Sandhop**, HIW-Weyerhaeuser, Sales Service Manager, Palestine, TX
- Andrew Engell**, Congresswoman Cathy McMorris-Rogers, Deputy District Director, Colville
- Andrew Johnson**, Dept. of Natural Resources, Forest Resources Business Analyst, Olympia
- Brett Monson**, Monson Fruit Company, Fieldman, Selah
- Cameron Eskeberg**, Dept. of Natural Resources, Natural Resources Spc., Mount Vernon
- Chris Eckman**, CoBank - Agribusiness Banking Group, Sr. Relationship Manager, Spokane
- Chris Rasmussen**, Port of Port Angeles, Director of Operations, Port Angeles
- Colton Cooley**, Rayonier, Forester, Onalaska
- David Beard**, Cosmos Corporation, Quality Engineer, Foristell, MO
- Faith Van De Putte**, Midnight's Farm, Owner, Lopez Island
- Jason Walter**, Weyerhaeuser, Aquatic Resources Unit Manager, Tacoma
- Jay Krienitz**, Dept. of Fish & Wildlife, Estuary/Salmon Restoration Manager, Olympia
- Jerod Morris**, Northwest Farm Credit Services, Relationship Manager, Spokane
- Kate Delavan**, Conservation Commission, Farmland Preservation Coordinator, Seattle
- Katie Tackman**, Chelan PUD, Fish and Wildlife Specialist, Wenatchee
- Kelly Dougherty**, Weyerhaeuser, Area Manager, Charleston, SC
- Kyle Curtis**, Tiin Ma Logging Company Inc., Chief Finance Officer and Exec VP, Yakima
- Lauren Magalska**, Port Blakely U.S. Forestry, Research Forester, Olympia
- Sara Higgins**, 501 Consultants, Vice President/COO, Cashmere
- Sarah Rasmussen**, Gilbert Orchards, Food Safety/Occupational Safety Manager, Yakima

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