

Success  
Story

## Skykomish School District Forest Education Kickoff

August 29, 2023

It's a late summer morning, right in that weather sweet spot when there's a chill early in the day but it's comfortable by lunch time. You sip a hot cup of coffee as you walk across a river, listening to the water as it flows over smooth, round rocks. As you arrive at a trail, you take in the towering trees overhead, wondering what types of trees they are and how long they've been there. A few minutes into your walk, you notice a frog tucked into the contours of a tree trunk. Careful not to disturb it, you snap a quick photo and move along.

This may not sound like a scene from a teacher workshop, but that's exactly what it was. On August 29, Skykomish School District teachers participated in a K-12 Forest Education Kickoff facilitated by Pacific Education Institute's (PEI) Tressa Arbow and Chelsea Trout.



*Skykomish educators visited Maloney Creek Trail.*

**“I used to think  
it's hard to get  
outside with  
busy  
schedules, but  
now I think I  
can make it  
work and the  
kids will  
engage with  
it.”**

It's no wonder the superintendent, Dr. Destry Jones, has partnered with PEI to incorporate forestry into the school district's curriculum, as the setting in Skykomish is ideal for forest-related field experiences and instruction. With Maloney Creek Interpretive Trail just minutes from campus, and a combination of public and private forested lands all around, Skykomish students at all grade levels will benefit from a place-based education approach. In summer 2024, with the inaugural Skykomish Youth Engaged in Sustainable Systems (YESS) Program in Forest Management, Skykomish will have initiated a full K-12 forest education experience complete with paid, career-connected learning opportunities for high school students.

After learning about PEI and receiving an overview of Dr. Jones's vision for the program, Skykomish teachers were introduced to [the Washington Forest Education K-12 Learning Framework](#) and received instructional guides from both Project Learning Tree and Project WILD. Next, a team of forestry experts took the teachers to Maloney Creek Trail to help build their knowledge and confidence with forestry content. They demonstrated some of the tools they use regularly, helped identify common tree species along the trail, and taught some standard forestry terminology.



*PEI's Green Jobs Coordinator Chelsea Trout identifying different species of trees.*

After walking deeper into the forest, teachers had a chance to practice some forest management techniques, including surveying a plot and measuring tree height and diameter.

In workshop evaluations, teachers indicated high satisfaction with the workshop and activities. When asked whether the workshop contributed to their professional growth, 93% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed.

This workshop kickoff was the first in a series that will be designed to support teachers with implementation of forest education at all grade levels. Moving forward, PEI will continue to design professional learning tailored to Skykomish School District's needs, region, and students.

The kickoff was a team effort, and PEI would like to thank Skagit Conservation District Forester Nick Kunz, Department of Natural Resources Youth Education &

Outreach Program Manager Clare Sobetski, King Conservation District Forester Jason Saura, and Project Learning Tree and Project WILD for their support and generous contributions to the workshop.



*Teachers learned different methods of measuring tree height.*