

# IslandWood and Homewaters

## :: Frequently Asked Questions ::

### **What is IslandWood?**

IslandWood is a unique 255-acre outdoor learning center providing exceptional learning experiences for all ages through experiential education, using the environment as a classroom, engaging diverse learning styles, integrating science and the arts, and showcasing sustainable practices. In keeping with its goal to inspire lifelong environmental and community stewardship, IslandWood offers overnight programs for fourth through sixth grade classes, community events, and a graduate residency in Education, Environment and Community in partnership with the University of Washington.

### **What is Homewaters Project?**

Homewaters Project serves the students of the Seattle area, their teachers, and members of the community by providing training for teachers in field science, environmental and place-based education methods; facilitating sustainability and science education field programs for elementary and middle school students in local nature; and organizing community educational events. Homewaters aims to create an engaged and informed citizenry by connecting people to nature and each other in the context of their home communities.

### **Why are Homewaters and IslandWood joining forces at this time?**

For many years Homewaters has been a program of North Seattle Community College, but Homewaters' programs have evolved to no longer serve the same audience as the community college. Additionally, staffing and administrative limitations have prevented Homewaters from expanding its existing offerings and developing new ones to better serve teachers, students and the community. Joining forces with IslandWood will allow Homewaters to reach more students and teachers, offer more programs, and provide long-term organizational sustainability.



Students from John Muir Elementary school explore the water's edge with dip nets.

Likewise, IslandWood's strategic plan calls for it to expand off-campus programs. Combining forces with Homewaters will enable IslandWood to immediately serve an additional 2,000 – 2,500 students each year throughout the Puget Sound area.

### **What are the key benefits for Homewaters and IslandWood?**

This partnership will provide Homewaters with essential business operations support from IslandWood, and a permanent home for its programs. Also, IslandWood plans to train its graduate students to facilitate the Homewaters' programs. As Homewaters currently has a core staff of only three, access to IslandWood's thirty graduate students will allow Homewaters to expand its proven programming to reach more kids and teachers.

The partnership will allow IslandWood to expand its off-campus programming to reach more kids with its mission and extend its partnerships to more schools and school districts. Homewaters currently serves 23 schools that IslandWood does not serve. (The two organizations currently serve 12 schools in common.) In addition, the Homewaters program model of extending nationally-distributed classroom science units to nearby nature holds potential for further growth to schools and teachers throughout the region and state.

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### ***How will this partnership increase the impact of both organizations?***

IslandWood believes it can effectively extend the Homewaters program model to serve more students and teachers while at the same time saving on the start-up cost of developing comparable new programs from scratch on its own. And IslandWood graduate students will get additional opportunities for real-world classroom experience in schools served by Homewaters.

### ***Will there be a name change?***

We do not plan any name changes at this time. We want to preserve the individual brand identities for Homewaters and IslandWood during the transition process. Eventually there may be some co-branding for shared programs.

### ***Where will Homewaters' new office be located?***

The Homewaters team will continue to have an office in Seattle along with space at IslandWood so they can meet with staff there. The exact location of the Seattle office will be determined soon.

### ***How will programming change as a result of the merger?***

In the short term, neither Homewaters nor IslandWood programming will change measurably as a result of the merger. We intend to take time to thoughtfully and deliberately blend the work of the two organizations.



A student in Homewaters' Land and Water program investigates Thornton Creek.

Our school partners can expect to get the same exceptional programming and service that they have come to expect from IslandWood and Homewaters. Over time, we expect to learn from each other and extend the benefits to more students and teachers through collaborative effort.

### ***What will this cost and where will the money come from?***

After a thorough internal audit by IslandWood staff and outside analysis from McKinsey & Company consultants, we're confident that the partnership will allow Homewaters and IslandWood to increase program capacity in a cost-effective manner.

In the first year of combined operations, we anticipate needing to close a projected \$30k - \$50k gap to accommodate a relatively small Homewaters operating deficit and to cover the cost of new Seattle office space for Homewaters staff. Both organizations project that it is possible to obtain funding to close this gap. The positive response to the merger so far from the community indicates current donors will be motivated to continue supporting IslandWood and Homewaters.

### ***Who are the key spokespeople for this partnership during the transition?***

Ben Klasky, Executive Director of IslandWood and Chris Page, Executive Director of Homewaters are the key spokespeople. The transition will be a team effort. The teams have already been working together and are finding that the two organizations' cultures are quite similar.

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