



News Release

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Students from Darrington, WA, located near the site of the 2014 Oso mudslide, will visit IslandWood for a four-day nature-based learning experience fostering STEAM skills and deeper connections to the outdoors

IslandWood this week will host 30 fifth grade students from Darrington, WA for a four-day outdoor learning experience designed to promote enthusiasm for STEAM topics (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) while fostering a deeper connection to the natural world for the rural youth participants and their teachers.

"We're honored to support the efforts of the Darrington community to empower rural youth through outdoor education," says Martin LeBlanc, IslandWood's Sr. VP of External Affairs. "We believe that outdoor learning experiences can be transformative for children from all communities – urban, suburban, and rural – with lasting contributions to health, confidence, and stewardship behaviors."

Providing STEAM-based educational opportunities for Darrington's youth is one of the goals of the Darrington Collaborative, a group formed earlier this year under the leadership of Senator Patty Murray, Congresswoman Suzan DelBene, and Governor Jay Inslee, to bring together Darrington community members, STEAM educators, Darrington area timber industry leaders and conservation groups, including The Wilderness Society, PEW Charitable Trusts, American Whitewater and Washington Wild, after the Oso mudslide in 2014.

"Exposing young people to opportunities in sustainable forestry and other conservation work near Darrington is vital to the community's long-term recovery," says Ben Greuel, Washington State Program Director for the Wilderness Society, a member of the Darrington Collaborative. "That process begins with programs like IslandWood that introduce environmental science and stewardship concepts in elementary school."

The Darrington students will spend a majority of their time outside, exploring IslandWood's 255-acre Bainbridge Island campus, while engaging in hands-on science investigations, team-building exercises, and other activities that use the outdoors as a classroom. IslandWood's natural learning environment features five distinct ecosystems, six miles of trails, two tree houses, a suspension bridge, and a forest canopy tower.

For the Darrington community, the IslandWood experience is part of a broader effort, spearheaded by the Glacier Peak Institute – WSU Extension, and its Director, Oak Rankin, to provide young people with leadership and career skills through nature-based STEAM programs. "The trip to IslandWood helps us build the foundation for a lifelong connection to the outdoors for kids in our community," says Rankin.

About IslandWood

IslandWood is a nationally recognized outdoor learning center that connects thousands of children and adults every year to the natural world in communities throughout the Puget Sound region. IslandWood offers education programs for Seattle-area schools; two graduate programs; conference Programs for nonprofits and corporations; and camps and community programs for families.

Learn more: islandwood.org