

Youth Education & Outreach Program (YEOP) Annual Report, 2024



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Program Background

In 2023, the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) launched its Youth Education and Outreach Program (YEOP) to facilitate place-based, career-connected, outdoor learning experiences on state lands and cultivate the next generation of natural resource professionals.

The program is a part of DNR's larger workforce development strategy and our efforts to cultivate a natural resource workforce that meets the sector-wide needs and reflects the demographics of the communities we serve. Through YEOP, DNR empowers youth in decision-making processes, cultivates stewardship behaviors, builds environmental literacy, and supports the physical and mental wellbeing of young people through outdoor experiences.



Students from Friday Harbor High School develop a plan for how to study bluff erosion at Cattle Point on San Juan Island.

YEOP connects the more than 1,600 permanent natural resource professionals at DNR with youth audiences for career exploration and mentorship. YEOP also partners with Tribes, education institutions, government agencies, non-profits and industry to provide teachers and students with robust, multi-faceted education on complex natural resource management issues and introduce career opportunities across the sector.

YEOP benefits Washington students and educators through increased access to the 5.6 million acres of DNR-managed lands across the state. Our public shorelines, rivers, forests, and grasslands are great outdoor classrooms for K-12 students to explore scientific phenomena and learn alongside current professionals.



Staffing

YEOP is currently comprised of two staff members:



Clare Sobetski (she/her), Program Manager, working statewide. Clare's responsibilities include developing strategic partnerships, representing DNR on workgroups and advisory committees, guiding program development, and facilitating programming for teachers and students.



Kelly Sullivan (she/her), Regional Coordinator, working out of DNR's Pacific Cascade Region. Kelly joined DNR in January 2024 as YEOP's first regional coordinator, piloting program delivery in Southwest Washington by facilitating teacher trainings, designing programming for youth, and providing consultation and coaching for DNR staff.

Program delivery is currently limited by staff capacity. As our staff increases, we will be able to support more incoming requests from schools and educational programs and conduct more targeted outreach to schools to improve the equity of our programming.

Overview of YEOP's Reach



In 2024, through the Youth Education and Outreach Program, DNR connected with more than **5,694 students**, through field trips, guest speaking, community events, and career fairs and more than **832 adults**, primarily at community events and evening STEM nights. The program served more than **95 teachers** with half day, single day and multi-day trainings.

In total, the program facilitated over **555 hours of programming**, supporting over **6,101 hours of student learning** and **1,006 hours of teacher learning**.



Funding

For the 2023-25 biennium, YEOP received \$739,900 in funding from the Climate Commitment Act.

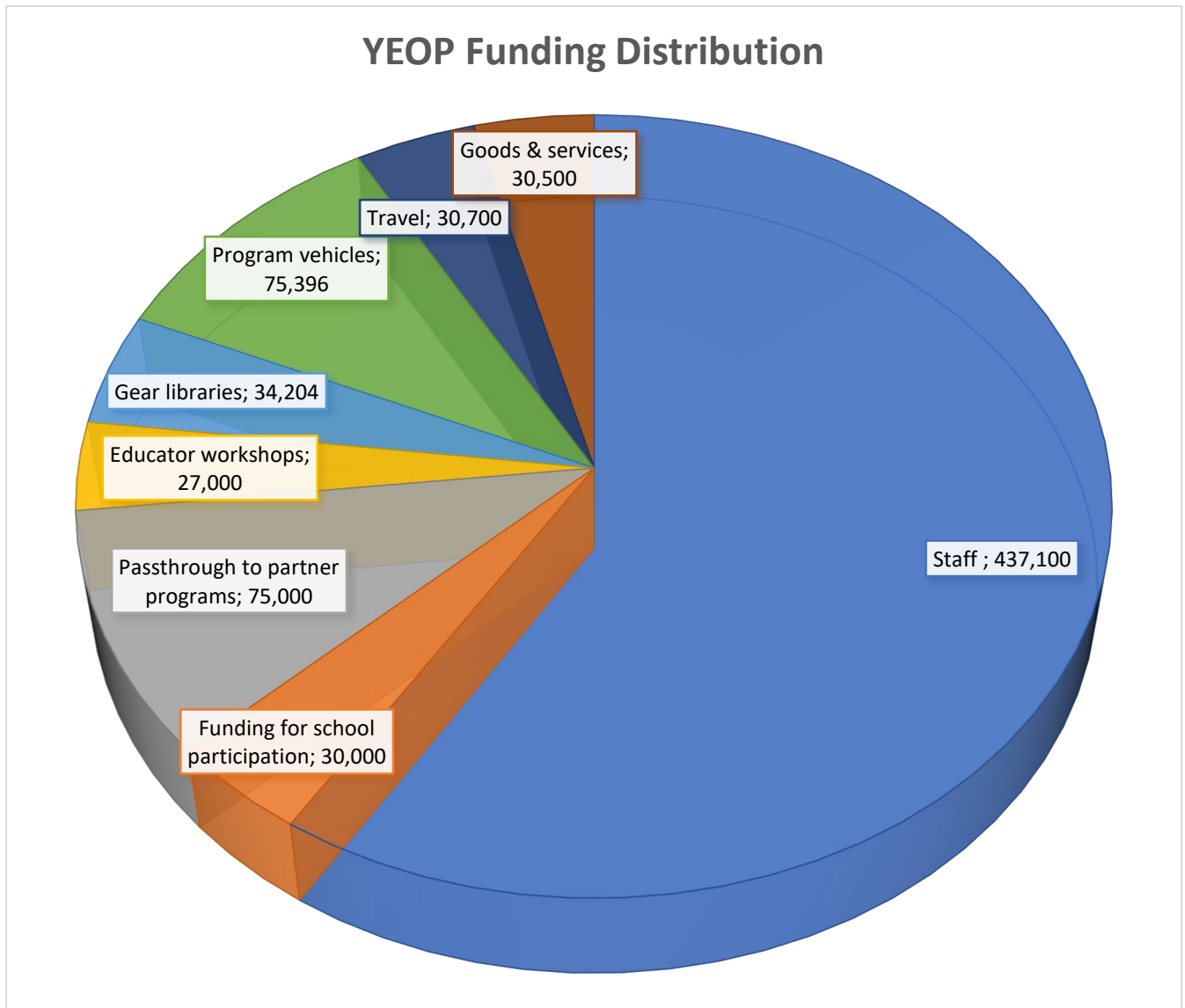


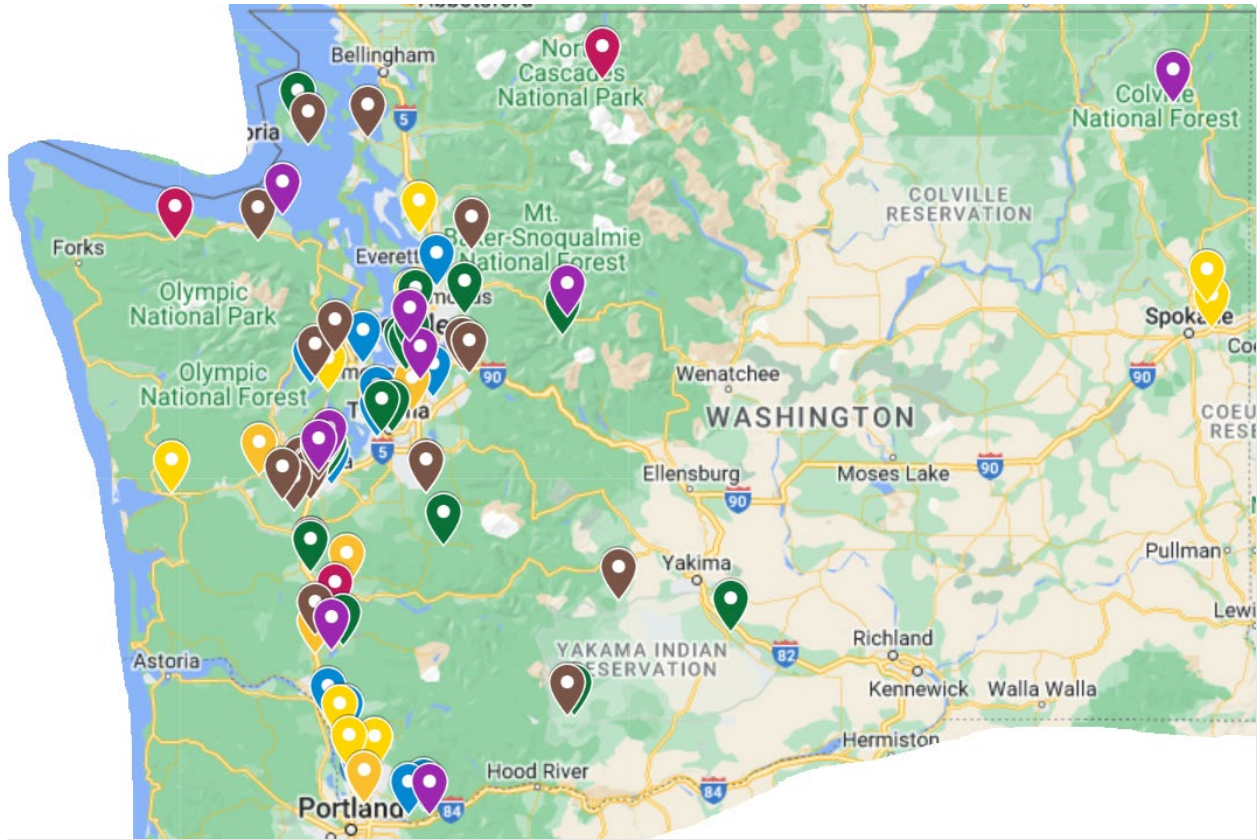
Fig. 1: Distribution of YEOP's 2023-2025 biennial funding

The bulk of YEOP's funding supports our two staff members.

Funding also supports educator trainings, YEOP's gear library system, transportation and substitute funding for participating schools, and basic program goods and services.



Maps & Graphics of YEOP Event Distribution in 2024



- Guest Speaking
- Teacher Training
- Career Fairs & STEM Nights
- Schools Served by Field Trips
- DNR-Managed Land Used for Outdoor Education
- Non-DNR Land Used for Outdoor Education

Fig. 2: Map depicting YEOP-facilitated event type and distribution across Washington in 2024



Event Distribution by Educational Service District

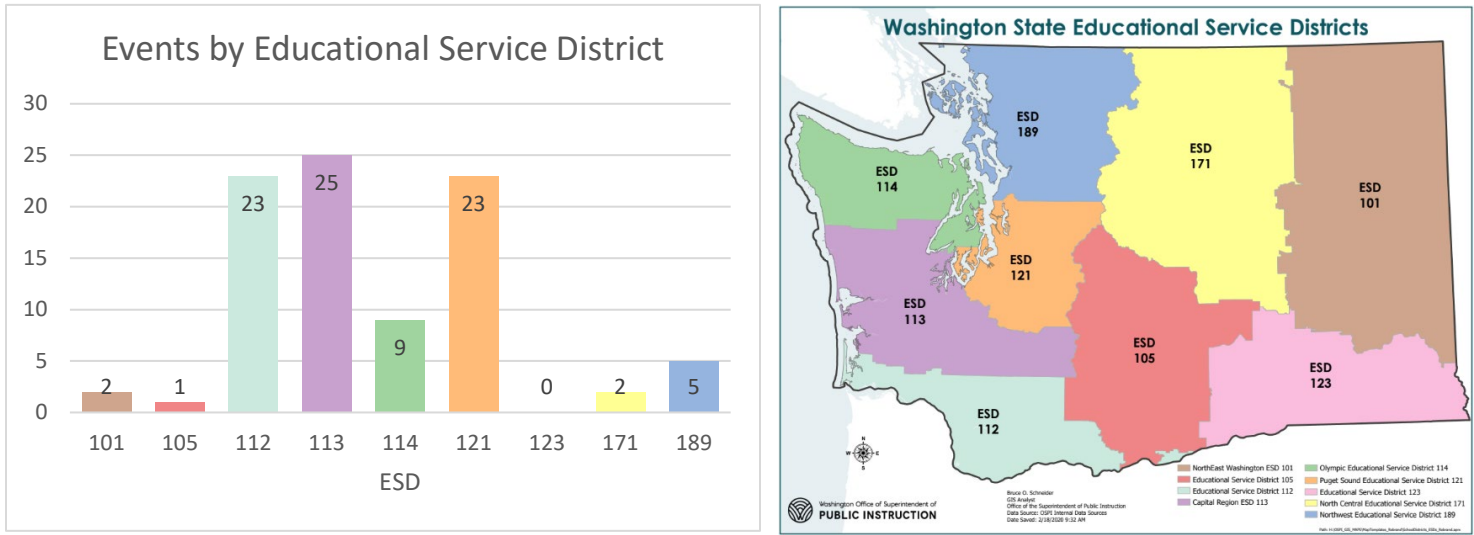


Fig. 3: Chart and corresponding map depicting YEOP-facilitated event distribution across Educational Service Districts in 2024

Event Distribution by DNR Region

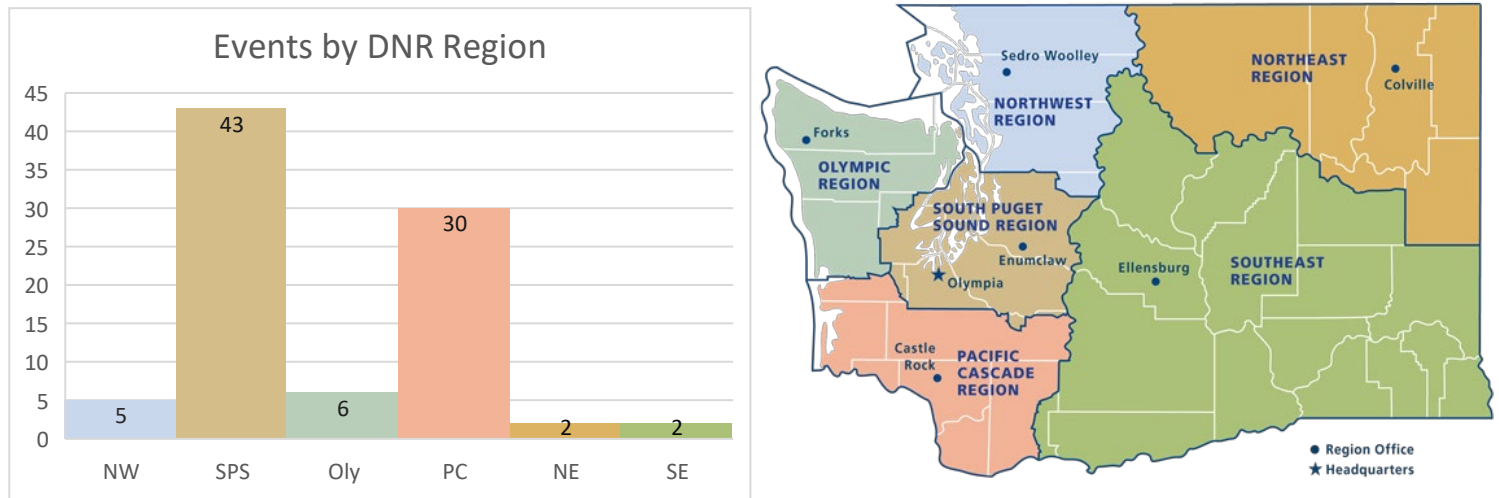


Fig. 4: Chart and corresponding map depicting YEOP-facilitated event distribution across DNR regions in 2024

Both sets of graphics illustrate YEOP’s outreach to densely populated communities in the greater Seattle, Tacoma, Olympia and Vancouver metropolitan areas.

These graphics also highlight the impact of YEOP’s regional coordinator in Southwest Washington, and how the number of DNR staff working out of the headquarters in Olympia aids in program delivery in the South Puget Sound Region. An increase in program funding would allow us to hire staff to better serve youth in Northeast and Southeast Washington and on the Olympic peninsula.



YEOP-Supported Programming by Type & Topic:

YEOP prioritizes field-based programming. The best and most impactful work is done with students in the field. Outdoor learning has been documented to improve student academic achievement, mental health, and sense of community. Furthermore, the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation (NEETF) and North American Association of Environmental Education (NAAEE) (2001) report notes that environmental education programs allow students to gain skills and abilities needed to be successful in the job market.

DNR staff participated in career fairs and facilitated guest speaking before the formation of YEOP. Establishing YEOP has significantly expanded DNR’s capacity for field-based programming.

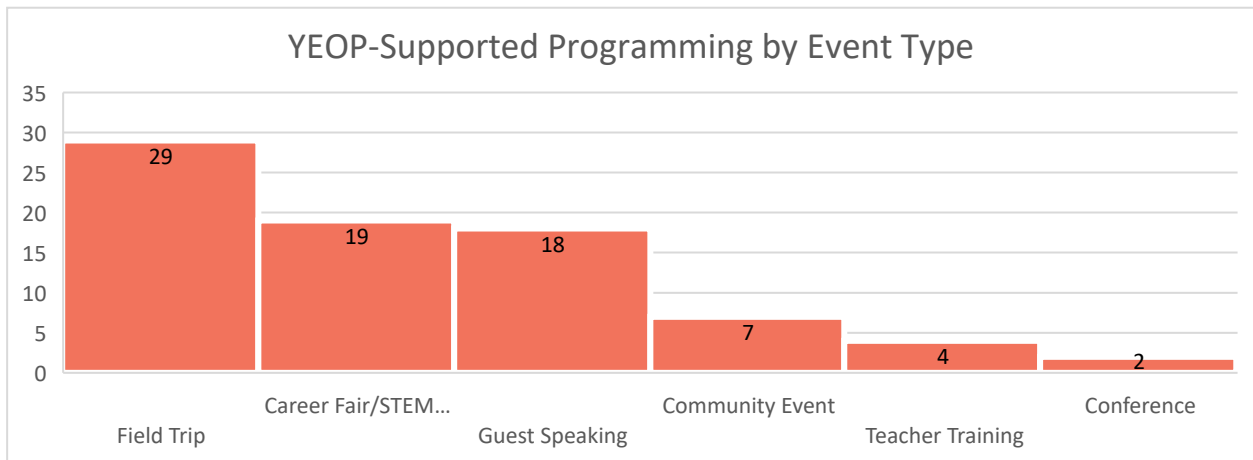


Fig. 5: Chart illustrating the frequency of YEOP-facilitated events by type.

YEOP facilitates programming across a broad range of topics related to DNR’s work and works with DNR staff across divisions and regions.

In 2024, forestry, conservation, and recreation were the three most common topics discussed in YEOP-facilitated programming.

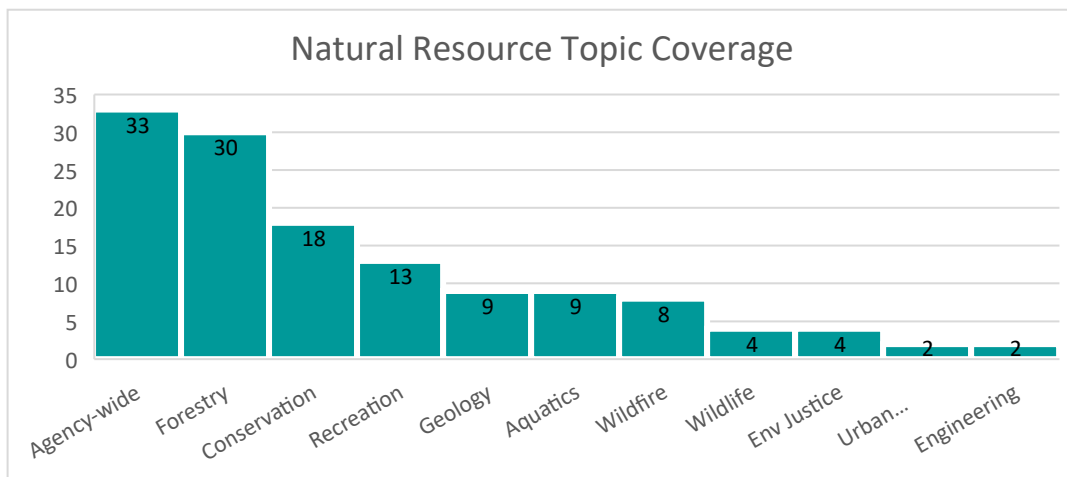


Fig. 6: Chart depicting YEOP-facilitated event distribution by natural resources topic.



YEOP 2024 MOST COMMON TOPICS

YEOP delivers programming on a broad range of topics related to DNR's work and natural resource management. These are some of our most common topics across 2024 programming

NATURAL RESOURCE CAREERS



Career-connected learning is foundational to all YEOP programming.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

Introducing land manager objectives, modern forest practices, the history of state trust lands, and methods for collecting forestry data.



GEOLOGIC HAZARDS & HISTORY

Exploring the geologic history of Washington state, local phenomena, and the modeling and planning tools used to support community safety.



AQUATIC MONITORING

Practicing community science protocols and investigating the consequences of climate change on aquatic systems.





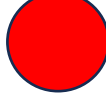
STEWARDSHIP & CONSERVATION

Participating in restoration efforts, exploring conservation activities, and cultivating a stewardship ethic based in a personal connection to the environment.



Strategic Plan Progress

The activities of the Youth Education and Outreach Program are informed by the [2024-2029 strategic plan](#), which was developed with the input of stakeholder groups, including K-12 students and teachers, community and technical colleges, other government agencies, Tribes, community-based organizations, non-profits, and industry partners. Progress towards the objectives in the strategic plan are outlined below.

On Track	Delayed	Not started
		
<p>6 of 17 (35%) objectives are on track for the identified date. This includes the program’s work to support teacher professional learning, facilitate student projects and community events, and contribute to career-connected learning.</p>	<p>9 of 17 (53%) objectives are delayed. This is primarily due to limited staff which constrains program delivery across DNR regions. The strategic plan was developed based on a regional coordinator staffing model, and current funding levels only support one pilot position.</p>	<p>2 of 17 (12%) objectives in the YEOP strategic plan are not started—the Educator & Youth Natural Resource Conferences. Both of these initiatives are unfunded.</p>

Goal 1: Formal and non-formal educators have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to teach about the complexities of natural resource management.

Case Studies:






YEOP, the Pacific Education Institute, and the Skagit Conservation District organized an *Engaging Communities in Forestry Education* training in July to teach 6th-12th grade teachers about fire ecology, land management, and climate change. This training was made possible through the partnership of the North Cascades National Park, North Cascades Environmental Learning Center, United States Forest Service, Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, Sierra Pacific Industries, Whatcom Conservation District, University of Washington Harvey Lab, and DNR’s wildfire program.





YEOP worked with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Olympic Educational Service District114, the Jamestown-S'klallam Tribe, and the Dungeness River Nature Center to organize and facilitate a training for 23 classroom teachers and informal educators in August. The training focused on climate science and watershed ecology and was made possible through the partnership of the Olympic National Park, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, Nature Bridge staff, and DNR’s aquatics program.

Objective	2024 Highlights	Planned Work	Evaluation of Progress
<p>1.1: By 2026, DNR’s YEOP facilitates or co-facilitates workshops for formal educators in 50% of Education Service Districts and at least two workshops targeting non-formal educators annually.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> January: Two online workshops for teachers statewide on careers in forest management and restoration ecology July: 3-day training focused on fire ecology and forestry; serving ESD 189 August: 3-day training for formal and non-formal educators focused on watershed ecology and climate science; serving ESD 114 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> April: Single day teacher training in Capitol Forest June: 3-day teacher training in Grays Harbor County July: 3-day teacher training in Skagit County 	<p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p>With just two staff, YEOP served 22% of ESDs in 2024. The program is on track to meet this 2026 goal.</p>
<p>1.2: By 2029, accessibility of DNR-supported or produced online youth education resources improves by 50% as indicated through online visitation and use.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> February: launched a new webpage, including a form for requesting a guest speaker and a form to access free forestry education kits May: published the first DNR-produced curriculum on OSPI’s Open Educational Resources hub 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New content planned for launch in early 2025, including a mapping tool and career pathway graphics Publishing a newsletter, introducing educators to new resources 	<p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p>YEOP is ahead of its goal to launch the new webpage by 2027 and has established baseline data on webpage users.</p>
<p>1.3: By 2026, DNR launches its annual Educator Natural Resource Conference (ENRC), serving at least 15 participants.</p>	<p>Not yet in progress</p>		<p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p>At current funding levels, YEOP is unlikely to launch the ENRC by 2026.</p>



Goal 2: Washington youth have place-based, experiential learning opportunities on public land to explore careers in natural resources and develop the skills used by natural resource professionals

Case Studies:




In September, YEOP collaborated with the US Forest Service, Cape Horn Conservancy, Vive Northwest, Slavic Family Media, and Big Brothers Big Sisters to hold an all-day event at Cape Horn Overlook to celebrate Public Lands Day. The goal was to empower urban communities to access their public lands and to ensure that they feel welcomed and safe in these outdoor spaces. DNR offered a campfire safety station with Smokey and Woodsey that was well-received.







In October, YEOP worked with students from Friday Harbor High School to restore native grasses at Cattle Point Natural Resources Conservation Area. Students engaged in a classroom activity on conservation priorities activities before a field trip to the site where they rotated between stations to learn about the use of prescribed fire, develop a plan for how to study bluff erosion, practice taking forest measurements, and participate in native planting.



YEOP partnered with the Washington State Department of Transportation, Conservation Northwest, and a researcher from UC Davis to involve students from Toutle Lake Middle School in a wildlife crossing feasibility study on DNR-managed land along the I-5 corridor. Students helped place game cameras, participated in tracking activities, explored designs for wildlife crossings, and analyzed data to determine if the area would be a worthwhile location for a wildlife crossing over the highway. The experience included two field trips with professionals, classroom visits to help students process data, and a final presentation to the experts.

Objective	2024 Highlights	Planned Work	Evaluation of Progress
<p>2.1: By 2026, each of DNR's six regions engages students in at least one authentic project, which culminates in a student product with real-life implications for local land management activity; by 2029, DNR regions serve at</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> January: Wildlife corridor project, ESD 112 November: Cattle Point restoration project, ESD 189 December: Columbia Crest recreation & forest management project, ESD 121 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toppenish schoolyard greening Pierce County wildfire resilience Cherry Creek mapping Olympic acoustic monitoring 	<p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p>YEOP served 33% of ESDs in 2024. YEOP is connecting with DNR staff across programs to identify</p>

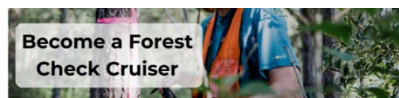


least 60% of ESDs annually through student project partnerships.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Junior Firewise project with Northeast staff 	opportunities for student projects.
2.2: By 2026, at least one class of students annually uses a YEOP-produced curriculum guide to visit DNR-managed land in each of our six geographic regions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designed a field-experience for all Tumwater School District at Mima Mounds, that integrated the Washington Geologic Survey booklet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With partners, developing curriculum for several DNR-managed recreation sites in the South Puget, Southeast and Pacific Cascade regions 	 <p>This work is underway but has been slower to start than anticipated. YEOP is prioritizing a collaborative approach to curriculum development.</p>
2.3: By 2028, 70% of Education Service Districts are served by community events designed to teach youth about natural resource management facilitated or co-facilitated by DNR's YEOP annually.	<p>Served 4 ESDs with field-based community events. Some highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> June: <i>Green Mountain community event</i>, ESD 114 September: <i>Latino Conservation Week</i>, ESD 113 September: <i>National Public Lands Day</i>, ESD 112 October: <i>Geologic Hazards Event</i>, ESD 189 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Event for Spanish-speaking community members at Kennedy Creek Annual Latino Conservation Week event Shorebird festival in Grays Harbor County 	 <p>YEOP served 44% of ESDs in 2024 and is on track to meet this 2028 goal. YEOP is growing and cultivating partnerships through the facilitation of community events.</p>
2.4: By 2026, 30% or more of 5th and 6th grade outdoor school programs supported under Outdoor School For All (SSHB 2078, 2021-22) annually utilize career exploration activities created with support from YEOP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Created career pathway graphics Western Washington University launched a survey tool for Outdoor Learning Grant funded programs that will aid in data gathering on career-connected learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> YEOP is connecting with members of the Outdoor Learning Grant advisory committee to convene a group of curriculum writers to aid in this effort. 	 <p>This work is underway but slower to start than anticipated. YEOP is prioritizing a collaborative approach to curriculum development.</p>
2.5: By 2027, DNR will launch its inaugural Youth Natural Resource Camp (YNRC),4 serving at least 15 participants.	Not yet in progress		 <p>At current funding levels, YEOP is unlikely to launch the YNRC by 2027.</p>



Goal 3: Collaborate with educators, industry leaders, non-profits, and state agencies to inspire interest in and improve recruitment into natural resource sector careers for all youth, with a focus on demographic groups that have been historically excluded from the field of natural resource management.



Case Studies:





YEOP is active in the advisory committee for the launch of a Forest Management Career and Technical Education program at Washougal High School. The 540-hour program is a satellite of Cascadia Technical Academy. The program will launch in fall 2025 and cover aspects of forest management such as tree measurement, timber cruising and valuation, silviculture, forest practice rules and laws, fire ecology, and much more.

With the assistance of a Capstone student at the University of Washington, YEOP crafted career pathway graphics illustrating the steps to natural resources careers and profiling DNR employees. These graphics support pre and post field trip career-connected learning and will be integrated into lesson plans for different teaching contexts.


In partnership with the Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement group, DNR co-facilitated the schoolyear Students in the Watershed internship program and summer Climate Resilience Youth Internship program. Both internships provided high school students with opportunities to interact with professionals in the field, support restoration efforts, and gather data for community science efforts.

Objective	2024 Highlights	Planned Work	Evaluation of Progress
3.1: By 2024, facilitate a 100% increase in formal advisory processes on the development and delivery of YEOP programming methods and outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed and vetted the charter for the program’s advisory committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult advisory committee will launch in early 2025. 	 <p>This work was delayed due to uncertainty about the Climate Commitment Act, which funds YEOP.</p>
3.2: By 2029, at least 50% of students served by YEOP programming efforts annually are from schools or school districts that	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the 2023-2024 data, the median score for all schools was 4.2. 39% of schools YEOP served in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priority schools identified for programming in 2025 and is 	 <p>YEOP is building relationships with</p>



<p>score higher than the median value in school-level total points from the most recent school year on OSPI's Outdoor Education Equitable Distribution Tool.</p>	<p>2024 had a score above the median value.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed a decision-making matrix to prioritize incoming requests based on alignment to the equity goals for the program 	<p>conducting targeted outreach.</p>	<p>high priority schools and is on track to exceed this goal by 2029.</p>
<p>3.3: By 2029, DNR is a leading contributor to advance and promote the Career Connect Washington vision to create a statewide system for career-connected learning to support young people in the attainment of natural resource certifications, degrees, and careers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convened a group of hiring managers across DNR's forestry programs to develop a plan for integrating new industry-recognized credentials into Career and Technical Education Programs Facilitated two internship programs in collaboration with the Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group Participated in more than 20 career fairs and STEM nights Participated in CTE Advisory Boards in ESDs 121, 113, 112 Expanded opportunities for career exploration and preparation for high school Northwest Youth Corps members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-lead effort to register GIS certifications as industry-recognized credentials within OSPI's systems Launch a competencies crosswalk to aid in skills-based hiring efforts Pilot implementation of skills-based assessments in summer internship programs If funded, partner with the Coastal Interpretive Center to launch a new internship program 	 <p>YEOP is a leader in collaborative efforts across educational entities and industry partners to expand opportunities for career-connected learning and build on-ramps into natural resource careers.</p>
<p>3.4: By 2029, DNR has played a key role in the expansion of Career Launch and Core Plus programs that provide pathways out of high school and into natural resource management careers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided employer expertise and guidance to expand Skills Center programming in natural resources and forestry Participated in interagency apprenticeship series Presented at the Olympic Logging Conference to build relationships and momentum with key industry partners Participated in the Western Forestry and Conservation Association's Forest Sector Workforce Development Working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide work-based learning opportunities for students in the new natural resources Skills Center program in Washougal. Participate in interagency Natural Resources Workforce Development cohort to develop a shared vision for a program that provides on-ramps into state employment 	 <p>Core Plus and Career Launch programs rely on buy in from both industry and school leaders. Momentum around these initiatives is growing but consensus on the best model to pursue has not been reached. New Skills Center programs in Washougal and Kalama will present opportunities to pilot new curriculum and</p>



	Group to build and support regional strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue work with Forest Sector Workforce Development Working Group partners to identify strategic investments 	work-based learning models.
3.5: By 2029, DNR’s career exploration resources are utilized by more than 20% of CTE teachers in the agriculture and natural resources career cluster across the state of Washington.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Created career pathway graphics illustrating on-ramps into natural resource careers Filmed content for day in the life videos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch graphics and videos Build accompanying lesson plans Present new resources at educator conferences Survey natural resource CTE teachers on use of YEOP-produced resources 	 <p>Progress towards this goal is hard to evaluate at this stage without baseline data. Initial data analysis will be conducted in 2025 now that the program has developed resources for this teacher audience.</p>

Goal 4: DNR staff have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to conduct successful outreach and education work with youth from diverse backgrounds across Washington.

Case Studies:

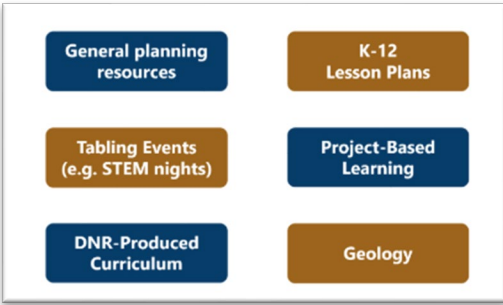
Starting in October, YEOP launched their first Instructional Methods Training series, in collaboration with DNR’s Workplace Culture & Development team. The series included four modules: Writing Learning





Objectives, Discussion Methods & Active Learning, Utilizing Education Technology & Checking for Understanding, and Supporting Learner Needs & Identities. The goal of the training series was to support DNR staff in delivering high quality instruction to youth and adult audiences, both internally and externally.

Fig. 7: The new training series received an average rating of 4.7 stars from participating staff.







In June, YEOP launched a new Sharepoint page with a resource library to support youth outreach. The library includes lesson plans for the classroom and the field, interactive ideas for tabling events, presentations created by staff over the years, and general planning resources to support staff in writing learning objectives, connecting with diverse audiences, and designing active learning experiences.

Objective	2024 Highlights	Planned Work	Evaluation of Progress
4.1: By 2029, the number of permanent DNR staff who engage with K-12 youth at least once each year increases by 30%.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched a post-event survey tool to gather data on youth education and outreach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agency-wide communications about the post-event survey Integrate a question on youth outreach into the agency-wide employee engagement survey 	 <p>Progress towards this goal is hard to evaluate at this stage without baseline data, which will be gathered in 2025.</p>
4.2: By 2029, 100% of YEOP learning opportunities and online-published resources are accessible to Washington students by anticipating necessary learner accommodations and prioritizing equity for participants with financial, physical, linguistic, or other individual learning needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed an accessibility and equity checklist for programming Established a free gear library system for forestry education across DNR’s regional offices Developed a funding mechanism to cover transportation and substitute teacher costs for schools Facilitated events for demographic groups that are underrepresented in natural resources, in partnership with Outdoor Asian and the Hispanic Access Foundation. Launched a survey tool to gather student feedback on YEOP programming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop curriculum guides for DNR-managed lands that include considerations for accessibility and resources to improve equity Fund translation of interpretive signs at locations for curriculum guides and community events Expand gear library system to support formal and informal natural resources education Analyze student feedback on programming for patterns and trends among demographic groups to critically evaluate program equity 	 <p>This is an ambitious goal, especially for one-off events with limited information on the needs of participants. New materials are designed with a pro-equity anti-racist focus and YEOP is cultivating partnerships with cultural affinity groups. Additional staff training is necessary to evaluate where our programming is falling short of our equity goals and to develop robust plans to meet equity needs in the field.</p>



<p>4.3: By 2026, 100% of DNR staff in programs with outreach and education initiatives report that they know where to access education resources and how to receive professional development on outreach strategies and instructional methods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivered an agency-wide spotlight presentation on the supports YEOP offers • Designed and facilitated a new instructional methods training series for DNR staff • Developed and launched a new Sharepoint library with resources to support outreach and education efforts • Presented information and resources to teams in the PC Region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional methods series planned for spring and fall 2025 • Integrating a question on staff support for youth outreach into the agency-wide employee engagement survey 	 <p>Progress is hard to evaluate without baseline data, which will be gathered in 2025. DNR has a large, geographically disparate staff, and YEOP struggles to build relationships with all regions and programs. Work towards this goal would be aided by additional regional coordinators.</p>
<p>4.4: By 2026, more than 80% of DNR's youth engagement activity utilizes YEOP-produced curriculum resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed and launched a lesson planning template to improve standardization and application of shared resources for outreach • Developed plug and play classroom and field-based interactive lesson plans for use by DNR staff • Collaborated with the Washington Geologic Survey on their effort to develop activities and re-organize shared physical resources for youth outreach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand Sharepoint library with plug and play lesson plans for use by DNR staff • Elevate YEOP's profile across the agency through communications materials • Strengthen relationships with Northeast, Southeast and Olympic region staff 	 <p>YEOP's staff are both based in Western Washington along the I-5 corridor. We know that there is outreach happening that we are not capturing in our data and staff that are not aware of YEOP-produced curriculum resources. Work towards this goal would be aided by additional regional coordinators.</p>



2025 Goals



2024 Partners

YEOP partners with Tribes, education institutions, government agencies, non-profits and industry to design and deliver programming.

Thank you to our many partners for making this year such a success!

