

## **Meet Holly Haley, our new Small Forest Landowner Office Community Outreach and Environmental Education Specialist**



*Tell us a little about yourself, Holly.*

I grew up along the central coast of California and my earliest memories started in the redwood forested canyons of Big Sur, where my parents helped manage a state park. Even at just 3 years old, I enjoyed being a naturalist and leading others on hikes and helping them connect with the wonders of nature. I followed this interest and studied natural sciences in school in the Pacific Northwest, attending the University of Oregon and later The Evergreen State College here in Washington, where I received my Master's in Environmental Studies. I like talking and collaborating with people and my work and volunteer experience has always been in environmental education. I've lived in the Seattle area for half my life and worked for several years at the Pacific Science Center, Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center, the Woodland Park Zoo, and most recently, I spent the last 15 years at the Seattle Aquarium, helping people connect with the mission to inspire conservation of our marine environment. During the pandemic and this time of so much change, it seemed like a good time to explore new opportunities and directions. Like the salmon that swim in the sea below the Seattle Aquarium, I felt a drive to move upstream from the marine environment, into the upper watersheds and forests of Washington. That is why I am so excited to have landed this outreach education position with the Washington Department of Natural Resources' Small Forest Landowner Office! Outside of my work life, I like to read, watch movies, and continue to enjoy exploring nature while hiking in nearby woods with my dog, camping in Washington State Parks, and regularly traveling up and down the west coast in my campervan. I met my husband, Nils, at the Pacific Science Center and we have two teenage sons, Leif and Torsten, and a house in the woods, near Tiger Mountain.

*Describe your job.*

As the Community Outreach and Environmental Education Specialist for the Small Forest Landowner Office, I am responsible for conducting educational outreach efforts to internal and external stakeholders and promote public involvement in our many incentive programs designed to help landowners steward and manage healthy forestlands. This is an exciting time to join the Small Forest Landowner Office team during a period of growth and increased resources in recognition of the importance of our state's forestlands. Doing outreach is all about communication with the public to establish and foster mutual understanding, promote

involvement, and influence action. That communication includes creating and updating presentations, educational materials, brochures, online website resources, contributing to newsletters, social media features, and press releases. Outreach also involves lots of personal engagement, presenting educational classes and doing in person public outreach events. Communication is ideally a dialogue and so we want to be sure we are creating opportunities to listen and hear from landowners as well as evaluate the effectiveness of our outreach activities. I look forward to adding to the great work the Small Forest Landowners Office has already produced and to helping increase public awareness and involvement in our programs, strengthening collaboration and communication efforts with other conservation and forestry related organizations, and getting to know the thousands of landowners we partner with in support of their forestlands all across our state.

*Why do you think our work is important?*

Washingtonians have worked together for decades to support important laws that regulate how we manage and protect our valuable natural resources. With so much of Washington's forestlands privately owned, it is important to empower landowners to be stewards of their forestlands and allow them to continue to responsibly manage their forests for economic, environmental, and social benefits and protect public resources like clean water. Our work is important in helping landowners learn about and participate in regulated forest practices, stewardship activities, and attain their own objectives to protect, improve, or restore the health and productivity of their forestlands. Because there is always a choice between keeping or selling their lands for other uses, it is important to do what we can in providing landowners with the information, technical advice, and financial support they need to keep their forestlands in forestry. Doing outreach and engaging with landowners builds the partnerships needed to help all of us deliver on our shared goals of being good stewards of our natural resources.

*What kind of legacy do you want to leave behind?*

We know science and policy are important to inform and ensure sustainable management of our shared natural resources. I think any kind of legacy I want to leave behind as an educator is the importance of education in developing and sustaining the ethics needed for stewardship. Education and outreach is not just about providing information. Creating educational experiences that are personally relevant and meaningful and where can we listen and discover our different and shared perspectives will help people feel engaged and respected and thus more likely to participate. In regards to resource conservation and protection, education helps society develop awareness, knowledge, and skills needed to care for the environment and also creates experiences that affect our attitudes, values, and emotions. Therefore, education can help develop the empathy and desire to care individually and for collective stewardship action. In other words, I hope to leave a legacy of demonstrating the value of environmental education as a necessary part of any natural resource management plan to be successful in the long term.

*What is your favorite kind of tree and why?*

My favorite tree is the coastal redwood, *Sequoia sempervirens* and so much so that my first born child's middle name is Sequoia! There are so many impressive aspects to this tallest species on earth but probably what I love most is how these organisms can live over 2000 years! As their Latin name *sempervirens* describes, they are in some ways always living, with their propensity to sprout clones all over the forest floor, often creating what are called fairy rings of trees in a circle around the original tree.

The SFLO looks forward to having Holly on our team to help spread the word about our important programs!

Holly can be reached at (360) 902-1849 or email at [holly.haley@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:holly.haley@dnr.wa.gov)