

# **Explore WWU's Sustainability Efforts**

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**Client: Gabby Laipenieks**

**SUST 471 Winter 2025**

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# Executive summary:

## **Problem Statement:**

As sustainability is a core aspect of Western's mission and values and an important piece of the university identity, access to information concerning Western's sustainability efforts should be readily available to visitors and interested members of the campus community. In the past, the Sustainability Engagement Institute has run guided tours highlighting sustainable initiatives on campus, but it has become evident that the information provided would be more effective if published in other ways that are more convenient for audiences and require less staff time. As such, the process has begun to create materials for a self-guided sustainability tour for digital publication and potential future integration into WWU admissions tours.

## **Description of project:**

Our project aims to spread awareness of sustainability efforts made by WWU by digitizing and expanding upon the Fall 2024 Sustainability Map and Brochure, producing a ArcGIS Story Map which adds, modifies and reworks needed components to ensure better communication of the university's ongoing actions and illuminates pathways for student involvement. We were also tasked with doing outreach/engagement to bring people to the site.

## **Summary of Recommendations:**

We recommend that the Western Sustainability Engagement Institute continues to keep the story map updated with relevant and timely information. For future work on this project, we suggest placing QR codes at each site on the tour which, when scanned, would direct users to the site's corresponding webpage on WWU's website, containing information on the site, as well as a link to the Sustainability Tour.

# Introduction:

Our project this quarter is a digital expansion of the Fall 2024 Self-Guided Sustainability Tour Map and Brochure, which was created in response to a lack of readily available methods for communicating sustainability efforts on campus. In alignment with WWU's Sustainable Action Plan, STARS (Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System) and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, our GIS story map promotes institutional transparency, student engagement and accessibility to information on programs and pathways for involvement. Our hope is that this project will result in more widespread awareness of local community engagement opportunities and greater involvement in student clubs and programs, as well as providing learning opportunities surrounding sustainability for students to apply post-graduation.

# Methodology:

For our project, our primary data collection methodologies included conducting interviews with people who work closely with the sites, visiting each of the sites on the tour, online research of sites through WWU's website, and exploration of example solutions from other universities, namely University of Iowa and University of Arizona's GIS Story Maps, also hosted on ArcGIS. The latter of these examples assisted us in narrowing our group's goals for the project. Secondary source research was mostly limited to copying the information on the previous iteration of the sustainability tour project and making small adjustments. These methods were effective for the purposes of this project because of how they interact directly with the sites and people around them. Since the project functions to showcase information on the sites and avenues for interacting with them, it is imperative that our project team provides relevant and accurate information.

Our group hopes that the brochure and online story map offer unique experiences. To ensure this, our project objectives add greater emphasis on student engagement with campus sustainability efforts. During our interviews with Outback Farm Manager **Terri Kempton**, Campus Grounds Crew Member **Oskar Kollen**, Student and Food Justice Expert **Sam Schmidt** and Viking Outdoor Center Recreation Program Manager **Stu Montgomery**, our group asked questions focused on past, present and future student involvement with sites. More details on individual interviews can be found in the **appendix** section.

For developing the story map, we developed skills in GIS, qualitative data integration and online communication skills for implementation. The data collected using our group's methods are featured in informational sections for each of the sites. Many of the skills needed were developed during the work process. Both members of our team communicated with each other regarding the information needed and provided, and working on the GIS story map was done with the self-guided use of templates accessed online. Assignments in class were helpful in developing summary skills, qualitative data analysis and group communication skills.

## Findings/Project Outcomes:

Our work this quarter has amounted to the story map. It is available to use on all devices, such as a phone, a laptop etc. The story map includes a user-friendly map for a self-guided walking or virtual tour, as well as informational sections for each of the sites. The information in these sites contains elements of the Fall 2024 Sustainability Tour, but has been updated with new information from our group's interviews and research of the sites. Our group also included a thirteenth site on the tour, in the **Sustainability Engagement Institute** and **Western Worn Community Closet**. The story map can be found through this link: [Explore Western's Sustainability Efforts](#).

# Project Barriers and Lessons Learned:

Our main project barriers were our group's lack of GIS skills, difficulties setting up interviews and underestimation of time investment needed for additional outreach. The GIS skills were developed as the project developed, since WWU's free ArcGIS resources provided a stable foundation for entry-level work. The interviews were delayed in their earlier stages, however our group was able to conduct all four interviews within one week. Had our group finalized interview preparations earlier, more of our contact list could have been interviewed successfully. Finally, our lack of outreach activities demonstrated our group's adapted project scope, which narrowed as more work was completed.

## Recommendations and Next Steps:

We recommend that the Western Sustainability Engagement Institute continues to keep the story map updated with relevant and timely information. For future work on this project, we suggest placing QR codes at each site on the tour which, when scanned, would direct users to the site's corresponding webpage on WWU's website, containing information on the site, as well as a link to the Sustainability Tour.

For the existing story map, our group suggests adapting the information to a more narrative format, adding images of student involvement for each site, finding smaller indicators/markers on the map within ArcGIS's design options, gaining permission from stakeholders to use their quotes from interviews for the sites, and adding hyperlinks to the text within the informational sections. The final suggestion was observed to be possible in both example solutions mentioned in the **methodology** section, but our group was unable to figure out how to implement them properly before the deadline.

Another one of our initial objectives was to perform outreach activities to draw students to the story map, such as posters, flyers or booths in public spaces. We were unable to complete these tasks due to time constraints, however it still remains part of our group's original vision for the project.

## Conclusion:

Our group's Winter 2025 iteration of the Sustainability Tour project was successful in meeting our client's basic objectives of promoting student engagement and providing accessible options for learning about sustainability efforts on campus. Although our group was unable to complete additional outreach activities, further options for continuing the broader Tour project were established.

# Appendix:

## Interview Contacts:

(Names in **bold** text were interviewed successfully)

- Gabby Lund and Beau Jay: graduate students and co-directors of the LEAD program - [lundg@wwu.edu](mailto:lundg@wwu.edu) and [jayh@wwu.edu](mailto:jayh@wwu.edu)
- **Oskar Kollen**: permanent staff on the Grounds crew within Facilities - [kolleno@wwu.edu](mailto:kolleno@wwu.edu)
- Jeff Aslan: Campus Utility Manager in Facilities Development & Operations - [aslanj@wwu.edu](mailto:aslanj@wwu.edu)
- Darrin Magee: Institute for Energy Studies Director - [mageed@wwu.edu](mailto:mageed@wwu.edu)
- **Terri Kempton**: Farm Manager at the Outback Farm, [kemptot@wwu.edu](mailto:kemptot@wwu.edu)
- **Sam Schmidt**: Student and Food Justice Expert [schmid59@wwu.edu](mailto:schmid59@wwu.edu)
- **Stu Montgomery**: Viking Outdoor Center Recreation Program Manager [montgos7@wwu.edu](mailto:montgos7@wwu.edu)

## Interview Questions:

1. Tell us about (name of the site[s]). How does it function? How was it developed?

(For stakeholders who had been contacted by the previous Tour group):

1a. Since you were last contacted in regard to the Sustainability Tour project, have there been any significant changes we should know about? (Since Fall 2024)

2. How does this site interact with other parts of campus?

3. In what ways has student involvement affected (name of site[s])?

4. How are students currently getting involved with (name of site[s])?

5. Are there any ways students can get involved with this project/site? If so, what steps should they take?

6. What are some future plans for this project/site?
7. Is there anything else you would like current or prospective students to know about this project/site?
8. Are there any other projects/sites you believe should be included in this tour?

## **Interview Summaries:**

### **Terri Kempton:**

The Outback Farm is open to all students for any reason. It was created by students in the 1960's-70's, continues to grow to this day. Maintains focus on regenerative agriculture practices (native plants, perennial "food forest"). Hosts a 60-bed Community Garden which can be used by students and community members by request. Work parties are held twice a week.

Outback Farm and Pantries provide food to students in need, not by request. Annual reports each year, digital access or printed. (Link [Here](#)).

-Instagram: @wwu\_outbackfarm

-"If you are a Western student, you own a farm!"

### **Oskar Kollen:**

The Grounds crew manages 220 acres across campus and works with student clubs and programs, City of Bellingham, volunteer programs and grant programs. There are many volunteer and work opportunities. The grounds crew hires students year-round, especially in the summer. They seek to maintain a 60:40 ratio of native and non-native plants

-Campus Tree map in development!

-Balancing ecological harmony with artistic visions

-Keep an eye out for new developments in Red Square!

**Sam Schmidt:**

- The Food Pantries are mission driven and shaped by student involvement.
- There are currently 7 food pantries across campus, with plans to open a new pantry on South Campus sometime soon.
- VU WHOLE Pantry (located in Viking Union 435)
- Fairhaven College Pantry (located on the 3rd floor of Fairhaven College)
- CEED Food Pantry (located in Miller Hall 150H)
- Journalism Pantry (located in Communications Facility 257)
- Linguistics Department Pantry (located in Bond Hall 403)
- Sociology Food Pantry (located in Artzen Hall 510)
- Parks Hall Pantry (located in Parks Hall 045)

**Stu Montgomery:**

The Outdoor Center supports academic programs with outdoor gear and student trip leaders. Runs a rental department and bike shop for more specific needs. Paid positions can be found on campus employment pages, and excursions can be joined through Outdoor Center Website.

**Any Mistakes:**

While our group was able to complete our main objectives in the long run, there were many ways in which we could have made the process more efficient. During the interview process, there were significant delays in reaching out to contacts, which led to avoidable delays in modifying informational sections of the story map. While making the story map, there was a need to transfer already completed work to new story map software, which could have been avoided by researching various options beforehand.

## **Discussion Questions for Final Deliverable/Presentation:**

- Was there anything you wish you had seen in the tour?
- How might we make the information presented more efficient?
- How easy/difficult was navigating the story map? What parts made it more/less challenging?
- In general, what can we do to make this better?

Project Inputs	Project Activities	Project Outputs	Short-term outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes	Long-term Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-ArcGIS Story maps</li> <li>-Materials for posters and find best methods to reach western student body</li> <li>-Current stakeholders, interview targets</li> <li>-Client (Gabby) and course instructor (Kate)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Develop story map</li> <li>-Interview Stakeholders for additional information on sites</li> <li>-Add map link to admissions page/campus info pages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Story map</li> <li>-Posters around campus promoting the story map</li> <li>-Research notes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Raise awareness of WWU's sustainability efforts</li> <li>-Share information on how WWU is engaging in sustainability activities</li> <li>-Show people how they can get involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Help people connect sustainability concepts to campus activities</li> <li>-Increase relevant club memberships</li> <li>-Spread awareness of sustainability efforts through others previously reached</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Help in connecting abstract sustainability concepts with local activities</li> <li>-Provide sustainability learning opportunities for people to apply to their lives post-graduation</li> <li>-Spread awareness of campus sustainability into distant contexts</li> </ul>

**Logic Model:**

## Land Acknowledgement

We'd like to start this tour by acknowledging that Western Washington University's main campus is situated on the ancestral homelands of the Coast Salish Peoples, who have lived in the North Cascades watershed, from time immemorial. Please join me in expressing our deepest respect and gratitude for our Indigenous neighbors, the Lummi Nation and Kooksack Tribe, for their enduring care and protection of our shared lands and waterways.

## About the Sustainable Engagement Institute (SEI)

Western's Sustainability Engagement Institute (SEI) develops educational opportunities and systems-change for a more sustainable, just future. Among its many responsibilities, the Institute convenes the President's Sustainability Council in order to progress the goals established by the university's [Sustainability Action Plan](#).



Western Washington University

Explore Western's Sustainability Efforts

## 1 Waste Management

### The A.S. Recycle Center

What was once one of the first campus recycling programs in the country, the [Recycling Center](#) is now a fully functional collection and redistribution entity almost completely student-run. It aims to eliminate contaminant sources before the materials go to Northwest Recycling. Whatcom County's recycling barrels. They manage about 650 recycling barrels distributed around campus.

### Composting in Residence Halls

The residence hall [composting program](#), started by students, includes bins, biodegradable bin liners, and reimbursement for custodial staff labor. Compost in the residence halls reduces the magnitude of waste in landfills that could be repurposed.

### Waste Containers

Waste containers across campus are equipped with solar panels that power waste compactors, to reduce the volume of waste removed from campus. Wireless systems in these containers notify grounds maintenance staff of full containers. This increases efficiency, lowers costs, and decreases transportation and fuel needs.



## 2 Food Pantry



There are seven food pantries across campus, the main ones being [WHOLE](#) in the Viking Union and the Fairhaven Food Pantry. The [WHOLE](#) provides free food and toiletries to support students' basic needs. The Fairhaven pantry is organized around the Fairhaven party, which also holds pop-up events to distribute free produce. Anyone can utilize this resource; it is not restricted by need. Find more information on food resources [here](#).

## Want to get involved?

### Academic Programs

#### The College of the Environment

The College of the Environment addresses today's environmental issues and prepares tomorrow's interdisciplinary problem solvers. We accomplish this mission by integrating outstanding educational programs, faculty-student collaboration, applied research, and professional and community service.

#### Business and Sustainability

The State of Washington is a leader in responding to the societal imperative regarding environmental issues and Western's degress in Business and Sustainability are action components of the state's initiatives. By combining three areas of study, you will gain the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to operate in a changing economic and social environment.

#### Sustainability, Equity, & Justice Fund (SEJF)

The representatives' roles are to serve as a liaison between students, faculty, and the Dean for CSE specifically regarding equity, inclusion, and diversity. It is imperative the Dean stays informed of happenings in their college, both positive and negative. By having a dedicated student in each department, the Dean can stay better informed and include student voices and perspectives when drafting budget proposals, initiatives, and reviewing policies.

#### Become a CSE Equity Representative

The Sustainability, Equity, & Justice Fund Grant Program promotes sustainability by providing grants to create and implement projects that positively impact environmental, social, health, and economic practices on our campus and in our community. Find out more by looking up CSE within your program of study.

Created by Alyssa Starmer, Maddie Loker, and Thomas Eckhardt

Presented by Western's Sustainability Engagement Institute (SEI)

Fall 2024 Tour Brochure:  
Outside:

# Self-Guided Campus Sustainability Tour

## Western Washington University



### 3 The Outdoor Center



The **Outdoor Center** reduces cost barriers to outdoor activities to encourage students to get outside in many ways. Students can rent bikes, camping, climbing, mountaineering, and snow and water sports gear for a discounted rental fee. Trained staff are a great resource for choosing the right equipment just for you. Equipment can be reserved and picked up in the Viking Union.

### 4 Fisher Fountain Wind Turbine

The wind turbine on top of Bond Hall, built in 1970, controls the height of Fisher Fountain depending on the wind speed. This minimizes water spraying on people walking through Red Square on windy days.



### 5 LEED Certified Buildings



The LEED certification program through the US Green Building Council ranks buildings from certified, silver, gold, and platinum. LEED evaluates the environmental performance of buildings and encourages sustainable building improvements. **Carver Hall**, which holds the WECU Court, has earned a gold status. Renovations completed in 2017 include LED lighting, motion sensors, a green roof, and low-flow water fixtures all contribute to this high ranking.

### 9 Sehome Hill Arboretum



Sehome Hill Arboretum spans over 175 acres with 6 miles of trails to explore. Open to Bellingham community at large and employed by a variety of classes, the Arboretum is an abundant natural space where the undisturbed processes of growth, competition, decay and succession can be observed and studied. Here, plant species native to Whatcom County and adjoining counties west of the Cascades grow in their natural surroundings.

### 10 Kaiser Borsari Hall

**Kaiser Borsari Hall**, opening for Winter 2025, is Western's new electrical and computer engineering, energy science, and computer science building. This building uses a net-zero energy and carbon design, exceeding LEED certification standards. Solar panels on the roof will power the entire building. The building also uses local sustainably harvested wood that looks amazing and reduces carbon footprint. This facility will be the first publically funded zero-energy academic building on a university campus in Washington State.



### 11 Fairhaven College

#### Entrance

What was once an ivy covered slope, the Fairhaven College entrance has been transformed into a bed of native vegetation. As ground cover, Perennial Geranium was planted in order to outcompete and shade out the unwanted weeds such as Bindweed and Buttercup. These plants do not require much maintenance so besides occasional watering and hand-pulling, the dirty work is left to the plants.

#### Pond

At the center of the Fairhaven courtyard lies a miniature ecosystem that allows contact between wildlife and residents. Inside the pond you may find aquatic life including goldfish, frogs, water striders and a variety of birds. Two ducks have been consistently spotted visiting each spring.

#### Courtyard

The Fairhaven courtyard was another hillside covered in ivy that has been converted into a habitat for native plants. Plants such as Evergreen Huckleberry, Snowberry, Oregon Grape, and St. John's wort serve as pollinators and take little maintenance to establish. The gardeners in the area choose not to use herbicides and instead rely on sheet mulching, mechanical removal, and establishing plants that will shade out the weeds.

### 12 The Outback Farm

The **Outback Farm** is a 5 acre farm serving as a place for experimentation, learning, reflection, advocacy, and agriculture. It features permaculture practices and teaching. It provides a home to community gardens, chickens, bee hives, and a lush wetland.



### 6 Solar Window Panels

These six 4 by 4 feet solar panel windows represent the beginning of technology moving to fossil fuel free cities. Teams of researchers at WWU and UW harvested solar energy through a special kind of pigment. These windows primarily collect energy data but have the potential to power the art gallery in the future.



### 7 Steam Plant

Western's campus relies on a natural gas-fired central steam plant and distribution system for hot water and heating. This accounts for 97% of Western's annual greenhouse gasses and 57% of the annual utility budget. While Western holds value to sustainability, there is work to be done, and the university is working to eliminate these impacts. The University has received \$10 million in funding to shift away from steam plant reliance.

### 8 The Makerspace

The **Makerspace**, located inside the Engineering building, provides free access to equipment and training to all students. Tools like 3D printers, laser cutters, and sewing machines are partnered with an online canvas course providing education and a badge. Several events are hosted throughout the year, promoting creativity and community. Sustainable efforts employed in this space include the reuse of scrap material and equitable access to tools.

Inside:

# Fall 2024 Sustainability Tour Digital 2-Pager

## Page 1:

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# Self-Guided Campus Sustainability Tour

Western Washington University

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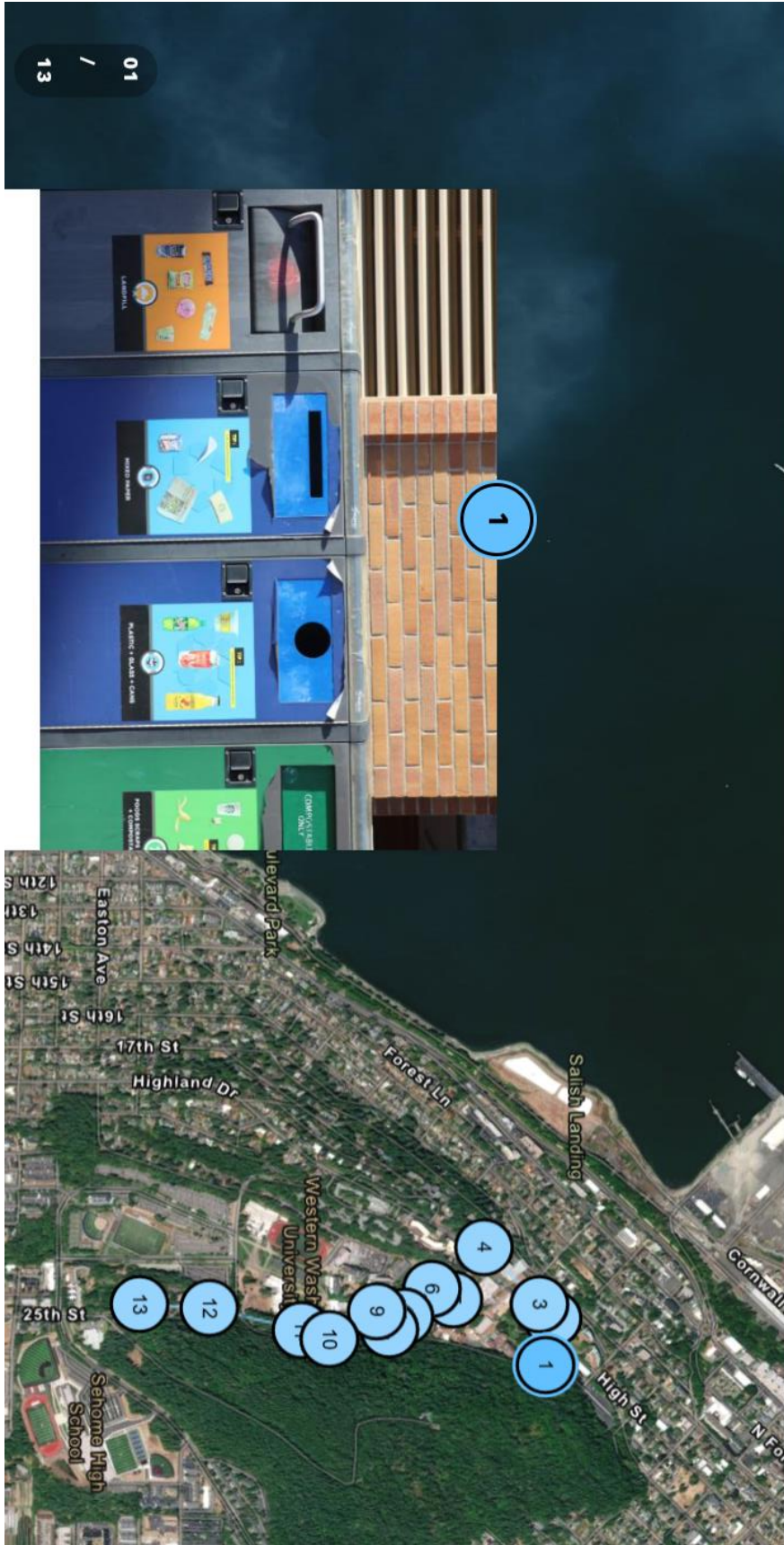
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# Story Map Screenshots:

1/3:



Explore Western's Sustainability Efforts



Explore Western's Sustainability Efforts

## Want To Get Involved?

### Student Clubs :

Western has many student clubs that focus on the different pillars of sustainability, from ecological restoration and recreational opportunities to food security and city planning.

Visit the Western Involvement Network at <https://win.wvu.edu/> (hyperlink in online materials) to learn more.

### Academic Programs :

Western has many academic programs that address contemporary issues in sustainability and the environment. These programs contain myriad opportunities for faculty-student collaboration, applied research, and professional and community



Explore Western's Sustainability Efforts



# Explore Western's Sustainability Efforts

Western's Sustainability Engagement Institute (SEI)

March 10, 2025

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