A $20,000 STEM Lighthouse grant awarded to Skamania School District for the 2018-19 school year will support outdoor learning and teaching plans for its long-held 38-acre piece of property.

“Our idea is to develop it into an outdoor classroom,” said Emily Hopple, who co-teaches kindergarten through second grade and coordinates STEM—science, technology, engineering and math—studies. “We’ll be able to visit and look at the health of the forest and observe animals, making it an extension of our classroom.”

The land is walking distance from the school but difficult to access. The district plans to install a trail or a road, and a shelter where students and staff can conduct research.

In 2018, the School Board established project goals—that it will provide educational benefits, responsible land management and a financial benefit to the school. The district gathered community input, established a 15-member task force and addressed community concerns.

One concern was related to a community well, which the district and task force have determined will be maintained in a protected zone. A logging survey found that some trees will need to be thinned and others removed due to disease. This will produce revenue and contribute to the health of the forest.

Meanwhile, school staff consulted with other districts and STEM resources across the state to learn how to engage students in field studies in many subjects and to incorporate neighborhood partnerships.

Skamania seventh and eighth graders are already studying stream quality, and fifth and sixth graders are researching what components make a healthy forest. Students will have opportunities to assist with everything from writing letters to the Department of Natural Resources to improving the land.

Skamania School District will be sharing its story and using it to inspire and encourage STEM education in other districts across the state.

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The Lighthouse grant is managed by the state Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and recognizes Skamania’s innovative practices and ability to reach students with STEM education.
Grant funding enriches learning, community

Small school districts share most of the same needs as larger districts—updating textbooks and technology, maintaining buildings and vehicles, and providing stimulating learning opportunities. Plus, as in Skamania’s case, they serve important roles in their communities.

This school year, Skamania has won more than $350,000 in competitive grants, which are being used to improve facilities and enrich learning—and to improve the area’s emergency preparedness.

- **Urgent Repair Grant**—$200,000 (the maximum offered). Built in 1946, Skamania School has had an ongoing problem with lead in its water. This state grant will fund a complete plumbing replacement for the school.

- **Healthy Kids Healthy Schools**—$89,716. The district will use this grant to remodel the school kitchen and contribute to the Parent Teacher Organization’s garden project. It also supports the district’s effort to create an emergency shelter for the community.

- **Bus replacement**—$35,000. This state Department of Ecology grant makes it possible for the district to replace an aging school bus with a new one that meets environmental requirements.

- **STEM Lighthouse**—$20,000. (Please see page 1 for details).

- **Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant (Title IV)**—$10,000. This federal funding supports enrichment activities for Skamania students: swim lessons for third and fourth graders, outdoor school for fifth and sixth graders, an outdoor experience for seventh and eighth graders, and an after-school drama program for all students.

Partnering for safety

With Skamania School’s growing capacity to provide shelter and a field that can accommodate a Life Flight landing, it is a natural emergency services partner. “Most communities know of their fire station and of their schools, and they know that’s where they can get information or help,” said Skamania County Emergency Management Coordinator John Carlson. With a remodeled school kitchen and a grant-funded backup power generator, the school will be able to provide shelter, Carlson said, whether for a more common event, like a winter storm, or a rare event, like an earthquake.

NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT Skamania School District does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, honorably discharged veteran or military status, sexual orientation including gender expression or identity, the presence of any physical or mental disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability, in its programs and activities, and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following employee has been designated to handle questions and complaints of alleged discrimination: Ralph Pruitt, Title IX Coordinator, Section 504/ADA Coordinator Compliance, Coordinator for 28A.640 and 28A.640-400; (360) 427-4235; rpruitt@skamania.k12.wa.us. This information is also available on the OSPI website at reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us. Select “School” under Organization Type and “Skamania Elementary” under Organization for the most recent update.