Sustainable Wenatchee (SW) is a new non-profit in North Central Washington with a mission to: “promote a culture of environmental stewardship and social sustainability in the Wenatchee Valley. We work to do this through educating and inspiring community members to live more sustainable lives.”

SW Executive Director Jana Fischback (MES 14) has been focusing her career on sustainability since she was a student in the MES program. Jana wrote her thesis on efforts by a local non-profit to encourage homeowners to participate in energy audits and minor upgrades to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. She also took on internships with the Northwest Biocarbon Initiative, and the City of Tacoma’s Office of Environmental Policy and Sustainability. After completing her MES, she continued work in sustainability at the Point Definance Zoo and Aquarium, and then became the sustainability coordinator for Metro Parks Tacoma. Read more about Jana’s time in MES in [this 2014 article from *The Evergreen Magazine*](http://www.evergreen.edu/mes/profiles/fischback).

Originally from the Wenatchee Valley, Jana was pleasantly surprised when she returned to the area in late 2017 and was able to connect with others in the community who were passionate and excited about sustainability and educating the public to reduce their impact on the environment. She was able to connect with SW’s now board president to start the process of creating a non-profit that could centralize efforts and take the lead within the local business community. Read about the founding minds of SW on their [About Us page](https://www.sustainablewenatchee.org/about-us).

SW is still very young and growing. They host a monthly Green Drinks night at local bars and restaurants so eco-minded folks can network, and they also provide a variety of useful information about reducing impact, making small sustainably-minded lifestyle changes, and learning more about ways to get involved on their [blog](https://www.sustainablewenatchee.org/blog) and [Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/sustainablewenatchee/). While fundraising, strategic planning, and organization sustainability are high on Jana’s priority list, SW is getting notice. Jana has been featured in a few recent publications, including on the annual [30 under 35 list by the Wenatchee World](https://www.wenatcheeworld.com/news/2018/aug/02/meet-the-30-under-35-class-of-2018/), and on this [Art of Community Podcast.](https://artofcommunityncw.com/2018/08/14/podcast-episode-48-jana-fischback-and-the-impact-of-sustainable-wenatchee/)

When asked about goals for SW, Jana mentioned that she has so many ideas that one major goal is to simply stay focused and not try to do everything. She also mentioned that Wenatchee is a great place to do this work, because there is a lot of work to do, so all progress feels like success. Sustainability is not a part of the culture in central Washington, unlike at Evergreen and in Olympia. For now, she hopes to build more following and interest in the regular events (like Green Drinks) that SW provides, and to start offering more community events that the public can participate in, including the second Northwest Eco Challenge in Chelan and Douglas counties, which will kick off next spring.

Looking further out, Jana also looks forward to providing workshops and classes with community members and small business owners to help them make low-impact decisions and create a culture of sustainability within the small business community. Farther into the future, Jana hopes to connect with local schools and teachers and provide mentorship opportunities for youth in the Wenatchee Valley.

When asked how she is utilizing her time in MES in her work with SW, she laughed and said, “I’m probably using it a lot more than I realize.” She continued, “I went into MES pretty naïve, so I learned a lot from the interdisciplinary nature of the program, especially from my cohort and the diverse perspectives people had. With Sustainable Wenatchee, I’m not in just one field, I’m trying to bring together so many fields that pertain to sustainability.” She also mentioned that the program’s focus on systems thinking and understanding the 3 pillars of sustainability (environmental, social and economic) are concepts she’s continued to utilize years after completing her MES.

After thinking a minute, she added: “I never would have gotten in with the (sustainability) industry without the MES program, because I had no experience. The night classes worked for me; I was able to do lots of internships and get experience.” Her advice for MES students: “don’t say no to an opportunity – you never know where it could lead.”