



# NEWS RELEASE

## *Lolo National Forest*

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## New Superior, Ninemile Rangers Selected

Missoula, Montana – **Carole Johnson**, a Montana native and longtime Superior Ranger District employee who has served the district in many capacities over the years, including work as a specialist in recreation and lands, has been selected as the new Ranger for the Superior Ranger District. And **Erin Phelps**, a native of Idaho who began her land management career as a seasonal wildland firefighter and most recently served as the Project Manager for a high priority partnership project in Flagstaff, Arizona, has been selected as the new Ranger for the Ninemile Ranger District.

Phelps has been in the acting District Ranger position at Ninemile since mid-July. She earned a Bachelor's of Arts in English from Eastern Oregon University and began her career as a seasonal firefighter with the Bureau of Land Management. She later served as a Forest Service Hotshot lead crewmember before accepting a position in environmental planning in 2010 as a Writer/Editor. For the past three years she has worked as the Forest Service Project Manager for the innovative Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project, a large initiative funded in large part by the citizens of Flagstaff, who passed a \$10 million bond to fund fire hazard reduction treatments on the National Forest adjacent to the city. Phelps has also been working this year in Washington DC with a team of Forest Service specialists to identify ways to incorporate the concept of ecosystem services – the benefits people receive from nature – into Forest Service policy and procedures.

Phelps is an avid outdoor enthusiast and enjoys trail running and training for ultra-marathon distances. She and her fiancé, Christopher Soriano, have recently enjoyed exploring Montana's trails and backcountry with their dog, Madeline, and a canister of bear spray. Erin also loves to mountain bike, ski, swim in cold water, and camp.

She said she is looking forward to the opportunity to lead the Ninemile Ranger District.

"The employees of the Lolo National Forest and the local communities share a fierce sense of pride and responsibility for Montana's public lands," Phelps said. "As I see it, the joy and the challenge of being a District Ranger is leveraging when those two align, and identifying solutions when they don't.

"I firmly believe in the power and importance of an engaged community to achieve a healthy, resilient landscape and a healthy, resilient community. I am beyond thrilled to join the Lolo National Forest and the employees of the Ninemile Ranger District. Ninemile is a beautiful district rich in Forest Service history and often forgotten skill sets, and I am amazingly lucky to be able to call this place home."

Carole Johnson, the new Ranger at the Superior Ranger District, was born in Missoula, raised in Superior and graduated from Montana State University with a Bachelor's of Arts degree in history and geography of natural resources. She began her career on the Superior Ranger District as a seasonal employee in recreation in 1971 and

has continued to support and accomplish critical work on the district ever since.

Johnson has served in specialties that include, land adjustments (surveying), silviculture, firefighting, minerals, timber, conservation education and historic preservation. She has played a key role in developing the continuing conservation education and historic preservation mission of the Savenac Nursery near St. Regis, which now houses a visitor center, cabin rentals, interpretive trails and exhibits. That work has included restoration of historic buildings and partnership with local groups working to preserve local history.

Johnson has supported the Lolo National Forest fire organization in several capacities. In addition to working as a firefighter early in her career, she has also served as a Logistics Section Chief for Incident Command Teams. Most recently, as the Acting District Ranger, she led the Superior Ranger District through an active 2015 fire season in which firefighters responded to dozens of initial attack fires.

In addition to her accomplishments as a Forest Service employee, Johnson has been active in the local community of Superior for many years. She has served on the local hospital and planning boards and is currently a member of both the County Fair Board and the Glacier County Tourism Board.

“The communities within the Superior Ranger District are extremely important to me,” Johnson said. “So much of our land base in Mineral County is National Forest land and people are so dependent on the National Forest for recreation and economic opportunity. I look forward to being very engaged in the local communities and will encourage the employees of the Superior Ranger District to do the same.”

Johnson said open communication with both citizens and employees is something she has valued throughout her career and something she said will be a priority as she leads the district in the years ahead.

“I have an experienced and dedicated staff here at the district and completely dedicated employees,” Johnson said. “It’s an honor to be able to lead them and continue the important land management work being done here. I appreciate both the diversity of the natural resources and the stewardship role entrusted to us as land managers. My door is always open and I invite both citizens and employees to visit with me at any time.”