

## Boots in the Forest

# ANDY BRUNELLE

By Jaimie Olle

A pair of brown dress shoes slides beneath an oak desk, as Andy Brunelle, the capitol city coordinator for the Intermountain Region of the U.S. Forest Service, attends to his ringing phone and the ding of a new email message. Brunelle's boots have spent their days crossing the marble floors of the Idaho State Capitol in Boise, rather than the pine needle coated floors of the forest.

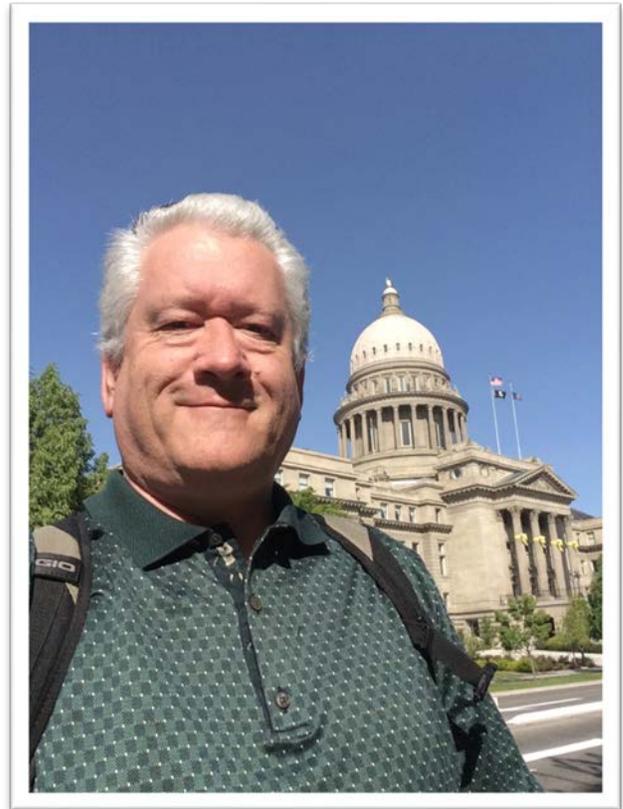
As capitol city coordinator, Brunelle represents the Forest Service by interacting with other government entities and officials, providing a face to the agency. By helping to tell the Forest Service's story, Brunelle connects people and agencies that have similar goals and interests with the agency to enhance the work being completed in the Intermountain Region.

Since making connections is a huge part of his job, Brunelle spends a great deal of time on the phone and computer. The average day consists of at least one or two meetings at his office and around Boise. Brunelle enjoys the close proximity of downtown Boise—it makes meeting people as easy as a walk in the park, literally.

“Often key connections are made simply by walking around downtown,” suggests Brunelle. Many times he finds just the person he needs to talk with while traveling around the blocks surrounding the Capitol.

With a master's degree in public administration from the University of Oregon, Brunelle knows his way around the legislative field. Prior to the Forest Service, he worked for former Idaho governor, Cecil Andrus, as a resource management advisor.

After the former governor's fourth term, Brunelle began his work for the Forest Service in 1994 as a public affairs director for the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project. The initiative, which sought to introduce science and research into land management, proved controversial. Brunelle spearheaded the project until its completion in 2000.



*Andy Brunelle is a frequent visitor to the Idaho State Capitol.*

Brunelle has been in his current position of capitol city coordinator since 2001. For him, the best part of his job is interacting with a variety of people outside the agency. He enjoys learning from other local officials and understanding how they meet their residents' needs. Particularly, he looks to the county commissioners who see the immediate consequences of their decisions and the decisions of local government.

“My goal,” asserts Brunelle, “is to make the Forest Service more effective through better communication and relationships with state governments, while taking into consideration a variety of interests.”

One of Brunelle's other duties as capitol city coordinator is to help arrange meetings for top Forest Service officials with Idaho's governor. Brunelle has proudly escorted the last five Forest Service chiefs from the airport in his 1971 Volkswagen van.

When he leaves work, Brunelle stays connected with the forest. He enjoys fly-fishing and downhill skiing. He can't seem to leave the government side of his job behind either—he volunteers on a number of local city government and parks planning commissions.

“Spending time on the slopes or the river makes one aware of the benefits of the National Forest System,” believes Brunelle.