

## *Shoshone National Forest Receives Honor Award from the US Department of Agriculture*

*Kristi Salzmann, Public Affairs Officer, Shoshone National Forest*

On Wednesday, December 11, 2013, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary's Honor Award for Diversity and Inclusion was accepted by three representatives of the Shoshone National Forest during a ceremony held in the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Auditorium in Washington, D.C.

Over the past year, the Shoshone National Forest has made significant strides to make improvements in many areas to include a revamping of hiring panels for both temporary and permanent employees. Panel members from outside the specific subject matter and at varying grades have been included and have increased the panel's overall effectiveness and while bringing fresh insight into the process. A complete overhaul of the Shoshone's outreach plan and hiring process was performed to provide hiring managers with step by step instructions to reduce confusion and increase candidate pools.

The Forest held a series of in-depth conversations about cultural transformation and diversity. These discussions took place at all levels of the Forest and helped them work through issues and focus on what could be done to make improvements for the future.

The Shoshone has made changes to its permanent organization to provide career ladder positions from entry to mid-management levels, thereby promoting professional development, training, and retention potential. The creation and implementation of a new "buddy" system for seasonal employees and mentor program for all new permanent employees helped bring new employees into not only the U.S. Forest Service but the Shoshone National Forest family and its surrounding communities.

Shoshone National Forest Administrative Officer Veronika Klukas said, "It was a true honor to accept the award on behalf of all employees of the Shoshone. Good, hard work has been done at all levels of the forest, and it is wonderful to know that the hard work of many has not gone unnoticed." Receiving the award on behalf of the Shoshone along with Klukas were Recreation Technician Matt Walter and Timber Technician Tanner Schuler, both from the Washakie Ranger District.



*Accepting the Secretary's Honor Award for Diversity and Inclusion: left to right Tanner Schuler, Veronika Klukas, and Matt Walter.*

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