



Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Partnership Peaks

San Juan National Forest Partner Stories, Opportunities, and Updates

Autumn 2022



Florida River in Summer

FIELD SEASON CLOSEOUT

by Lorena Williams

Change is in the air on the San Juan National Forest. We see more geese and fewer hummingbirds, and all too soon the scent of watermelon will be replaced with the aroma of pumpkin spiced lattes. Field season is coming to a close, and crews and partners alike are squeezing in their final projects and preparing for National Public Lands Day. Cool nights, shorter days, and turning leaves also signal the arrival of leaf-peepers. **Check out our Fall Color Report** to get regular updates on where the leaves are changing!

Leaves aren't the only things changing on the San Juan--the Forest is preparing to say farewell to our longtime Forest Supervisor, Kara Chadwick, who accepted the deputy regional forester position for the Pacific SW Region in California. Check out Kara's message on page 3. The incoming Columbine District Ranger will soon be announced as well. In this issue, we'll celebrate accomplishments, say goodbye to old friends, and welcome new ones.

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Forest Supervisor's Corner

It's hard to believe how quickly the days pass in this fast-paced world we live in! A little less than four months ago I arrived in Durango as the acting Forest Supervisor, and at the end of the month I'll be heading back to our national headquarters as my time on the San Juan National Forest wraps up and Kara Chadwick returns October 3. I knew this was a busy place – and the summer is always a busy time of year – but I've been truly impressed by the extent of that busyness,



the sheer volume of shared stewardship work underway and the strong currents of collaboration and partnership that guide and support these common efforts. Together this season we've made strides in meaningful forest health and hazardous fuels reduction work, taken action to restore and enhance fish and wildlife habitat, maintained and improved trails and recreation sites, supported long-standing traditional uses of the national forests, and responded to many, many wildfire ignitions that fortunately never grew beyond our control. The Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative and the Southwest and Rio Chama Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration projects have brought collaborative focus to the urgency of the work needed to conserve the natural resources we all depend on; resources that are foundational to the quality of life we enjoy in southwest Colorado. I am grateful for the collaboration and partnerships and grateful to have had the privilege of meeting and working with many of you. And rest assured when I get back to headquarters I'll sing the praises of the strong community connection to our legacy of conservation that continues on the San Juan National Forest. Best wishes and safe travels to you all!



Forest Supervisor's Corner



It is with a mixture of excitement and sadness that I write this note to tell you that I have accepted a new position in California and will be leaving the San Juan NF in November. The day has come for me to move on to another challenge, another opportunity, and new experiences. I am sad to leave this beautiful part of the world, where I have connected with so many people, made lasting friendships and had the opportunity to be a part of something truly amazing—working with partners under a genuine shared stewardship model.

Reflecting on my eight plus years on the Forest, the memories that come to mind involve the work we've accomplished with all of you. It is difficult to choose a few examples from so many successes over those eight years. I can't help but think of the work we've done together on fish habitat in Hermosa, securing instream flows for a once thought extinct fish species, coming together in a seamless response to the 416 Fire, and most recently collaboratively developing successful proposals for RMRI and CFLRP. Topping this off is having all partners in the SW come together to work toward a common vision and shared priorities and agreement to support one another in accomplishing those priorities. The synergy we have collectively created is nothing short of awesome. Because of all of you, our partners who made this happen, I know whoever comes into my chair will be able to keep the momentum going with your support.

I know many think I'm crazy to leave this area with so much going on -- let alone move to California! But I ask, who wouldn't want to live in wine country? My next challenge will be permanently filling the role of Deputy Regional Forester overseeing State & Private Forestry and Fire & Aviation Management in Region 5. The Pacific Southwest Region of the Forest Service includes all of California, Hawaii, and the U. S. affiliated Pacific Islands, so I know some fun adventures await!

It's no secret that I am making a great many people happy by vacating this coveted position. Agency-wide, folks have heard of the great work being accomplished, and the partnerships and strong collaboration that enables that work and they want to be a part of that. Keep doing what you're doing!

I will truly miss all of you and SW Colorado . . .

Kara Chadwick

Leaders in Restoration Meet in Durango

By Christy Garrou & Nathan Van Schaik



Partners with the Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI) will host the next RMRI Leadership Team & Partnership in-person meeting Oct. 4-6. Leaders in land management, forest restoration, and conservation will rendezvous in Durango as part of an effort to restore the Southwest landscape, as well as two other at-risk landscapes in Colorado.

The three-day event includes RMRI partner and landscape updates, discussions surrounding the four RMRI values, a world café, subcommittee updates, and both a field tour and industry tour.

Begun in 2019 and co-convened by the USDA Forest Service and the National Wild Turkey Federation, the Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative brings together partners from across jurisdictions to restore three giant

landscapes in Colorado: [RMRI-Southwest](#), [RMRI-Upper Arkansas](#), and [RMRI-Upper South Platte](#).

RMRI was first developed when Colorado was selected as the pilot location to showcase the Forest Service's [Shared Stewardship strategy](#) in action. In December 2019, RMRI partners unanimously selected the RMRI-Southwest landscape to be the focus of its first efforts and to serve as its flagship landscape.

RMRI partners last sat down together in person in February 2020, and have been meeting virtually since. Much has happened in those two and half years, and much more is to be done. RMRI partners in the RMRI-Southwest landscape, meanwhile, have made tremendous progress toward the monumental task of restoring an entire landscape over ten years.

Leaders in restoration meet in Durango

In the first year, for example, RMRI-Southwest partners established processes to identify priorities within a 750,000-acre landscape. Additionally, they developed a governance charter and structure standing up a multi-partner Steering Committee made of local natural resource leaders from federal, state, and non-government organizations.

Work in the landscape began well before RMRI's inception in 2019. But since then, RMRI has mobilized partners across federal, state, Tribal, and local jurisdictions to increase the pace and scale of forest restoration.

Partners are united in their four shared values: Restore forests and habitats; protect communities; support recreation and tourism; and ensure clean and secure water.

Partners in the RMRI-Southwest landscape direct investments at improving this one large landscape rather than make slow progress in multiple small places. In short, RMRI Partners plan together, prioritize together and act together.



What's happening?

Partners making up the Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative host an in-person Leadership & Partnership meeting in Durango Oct. 4-6, 2022.

Who can attend?

Due to the size of the meeting room, potential for upticks in COVID infection rates, as well as for planning purposes, we politely request RSVPs. If you did not receive an invitation and wish to contribute to RMRI, please email Nathan Van Schaik at Nathaniel.vanschaik@usda.gov.

Why was Durango selected?

RMRI partners last met in person February 2020. In person collaboration is best. Plus, In December 2019, RMRI partners unanimously selected the Southwest Colorado landscape to be the focus of its first efforts.

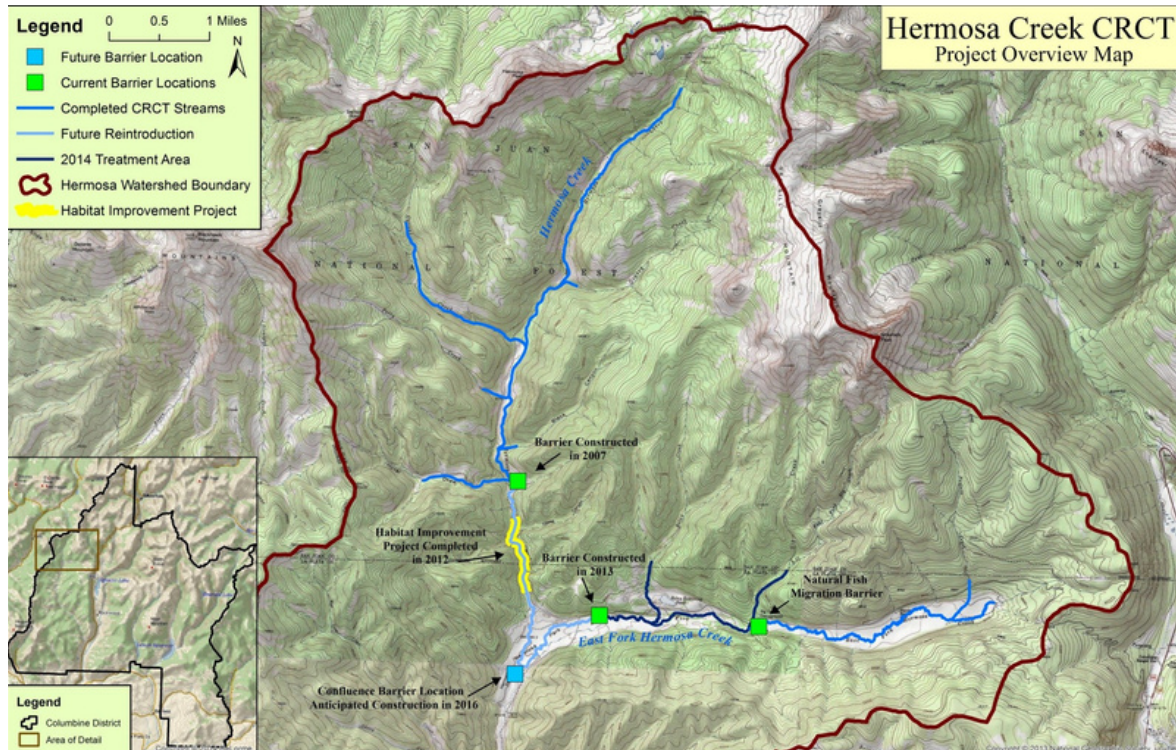
Why should I care?

The RMRI-SW landscape encompasses nearly 750,000 acres, stretching 120 miles along Highway 160, including the towns of Cortez, Dolores, Mancos, Durango and the San Juan NF. RMRI mobilizes 40+ partners across federal, state, Tribal and local jurisdictions to increase pace and scale of forest restoration. RMRI-Southwest partners are committed to treating 20,000 acres of private lands and 290,000 acres of federal lands over ten years.

Hermosa Creek Colorado River Cutthroat Trout Project

Decades-long partnership restores Cutthroat Trout to Hermosa Creek

by Abe Proffitt



Map of Hermosa Creek CRCT Project Area
Photo Credit: Clay Kampf



Colorado River cutthroat trout (FS Sensitive)

Just before the summer sun breaks the horizon, a fine mist rolls across the surface of Hermosa Creek in the San Juan National Forest just north of Durango, CO. Meandering downstream between the large boulders and deep eddies is a cutthroat trout – its bright orange underbelly and speckled sides glistening through the glassy surface.

Admiring the circuitous waters, it is hard to believe that a few years ago the Colorado River Cutthroat Trout (CRCT) that now teem in Hermosa Creek were almost impossible to find here. After Western settlement in the late 1800s, CRCT were nearly fished to extinction and more competitive species of trout, like the brown, brook, and rainbow trout, were moved into the cutthroat's habitat, reducing its historic range to under 14%.

Now, thanks to the completion of the Hermosa Creek Colorado River Cutthroat Trout Project in 2021,

Hermosa Creek Colorado River Cutthroat Trout Project

thousands of Cutthroats are back in the creek. For the past 35 years, the San Juan NF, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Trout Unlimited Five Rivers Chapter, and other partners have worked tirelessly to re-establish CRCT in this small portion of their historic range.

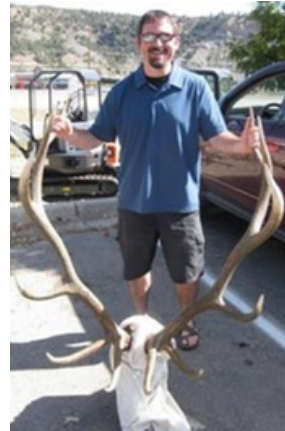
The project began with two land exchanges along the East Fork Hermosa drainage in the 1990s. Habitat improvements followed with the construction of fish migration barriers and instream improvements such as boulder clusters, log structures, and bank stabilization. Once improvements were in place, Colorado Parks and Wildlife worked to remove non-native species and reintroduce pure CRCT back into the streams.



Volunteers removing non-native fish species

In total, the project restored 23 miles of Hermosa Creek habitat, making it one of the largest and most successful river restoration efforts in the region. Every phase of this project was the result of engaged and effective partnerships working to achieve a common goal.

Clay Kampf, a fisheries biologist on the San Juan National Forest for the past 15 years, is thrilled with the project's success.



“It’s remarkable to see what long-lasting partnerships can accomplish. CRCT populations have been declining for decades, but now we’re seeing them in abundance throughout their historic range, and that is exciting!”

Clay estimates more than 75,000 fish have been reintroduced to the watershed over the project's lifespan, all of which were bred at several hatcheries in the region, including the Durango Fish Hatchery.

As one of the oldest state-owned hatcheries in Colorado, the Durango Fish Hatchery staff care for the brood fish that produce eggs, incubate and hatch eggs, and raise these fish until the day they are stocked in the river: roughly 1.2 million sub-catchable (1-5 inches) and 150,000 catchable (5+ inches) fish annually.



Volunteers stocking CRCT into Hermosa Creek

Hermosa Creek Colorado River Cutthroat Trout Project

Much of the project's success, like so many projects here in the San Juan NF, rely on diverse partners uniting over a shared purpose - and Colorado River Cutthroat trout restoration is a unique multi-agency accomplishment for the communities in this region because of its duration. The children who grew up throwing pellets at the fish hatchery will someday encounter future generations of those fish in Hermosa Creek, bringing us closer to shared vision for an intergenerational community.

Check out some of the photos from this amazing project!



Honoring Patti Brady

By Christy Garrou



If you've been to the San Juan Supervisor's office or the Pagosa Ranger District more than once, chances are you know Patti Brady. I say *know*, rather than met, because Patti's warmth draws you in immediately. Her humor, enthusiasm and hugs bring you back to visit, like old times.

Patti came to the San Juan with a rich history, growing up on a ranch in Southern New Mexico, then running a ranch with her husband Pete. She became a postmaster, and retired. Thankfully for the San Juan, Patti was not done with federal service.

Honoring Patti Brady

This fall, Patti celebrates 25 years on the San Juan. She began by volunteering at the Supervisor's Office visitor services desk, and her outgoing personality and motivation quickly led her to assist on projects. She worked on the Rail Ranger program, attended outdoor educational shows, and updated Infra data reporting, to name a few. She became a San Juan Mountains Association employee, painting a mural for the centennial and meeting many employees and visitors over the years.

She developed the Adopt-a-Road program, and has managed it throughout the years, growing it to what it is today.

But Patti was not meant to be behind the desk full time. In 2000 she began volunteering on the Pagosa Ranger District. Her duties included facility maintenance and repair, sign inventories, teaching trailer towing classes, trash pickup, and volunteer project coordination. Her passion, though, was road patrol.

She has been patrolling the district several days per week for over 20 years, "meeting, greeting, and providing information (and the occasional warnings) to visitors," said Paul Blackman, her supervisor since 2007.

Paul said, "The information she gathered during patrols and subsequently provided back to us has proven to be invaluable to the district, as we simply did not have the resources to travel to all the places she did and spend time with so many forest visitors. Whether it was discovering a deteriorating road condition, signs in need of replacement, or a law enforcement issue that needed addressing, Patti has single-handedly filled a large gap in the management of our local forest resources and the public we serve."

"She has a gift for interacting with visitors like I've never seen before, and it pays off in so many ways (I'm sure the hugs have something to do with it). And I know for a fact that each year as hunting season rolls around, there are camps that wait for Patti to show up so they can swap stories, make her some breakfast, and share their love of the forest."

Thank you, Patti. We can all learn from your dedication and enthusiasm for each day.

Partnership Opportunities



Stakeholders of the Four Rivers Resilient Forest Collaborative gathered this summer for a tour at Junction Creek, Hidden Valley and Falls Creek Ranch

The San Juan National Forest works to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of this region's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. One way to achieve that is through partner connection. Our partners include land management agencies across all levels of government, nonprofit and for-profit entities, tribes, and community groups. By working with partners with diverse backgrounds and knowledge, we are increasing the resiliency of our natural resources and strengthening the community that enjoys and works in these lands. For information about partnering with the USFS, follow this link: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/working-with-us/partnerships>



To become a partner with the San Juan NF or for questions, contact SJNF Partnership Coordinator Lorena Williams by email at lorena.williams@usda.gov or by phone at (970) 422-2939.

For general questions about the San Juan NF, call (970) 247-4874, visit the [forest website](#), or follow us on social media:



Thank You, Summer Interns!

By Brookelynn Pitsch, Public Affairs and Partnerships Intern

I want to spotlight this summer's San Juan NF interns, but I first want to open up with what this internship meant for me. I graduated from Fort Lewis College in December of 2019 with a Bachelor's of Arts in Environmental Studies and Studio Art. Since I graduated, I have interned with three federal agencies - US Fish and Wildlife, National Park Service, and now the US Forest Service.

This summer I was a part of the [Resource Management Apprenticeship Program](#), with [Southwest Conservation Corps](#) and [AmeriCorps](#). I am excited to once again be a part of the AmeriCorps program, especially since they offer an education award at the end of your completed term that individuals can use towards students loans, training and apprenticeships, and future school opportunities like graduate school. The neat aspect with AmeriCorps is that you are allowed to serve 4 terms with them, so I am hoping to save up enough funds to help me with graduate school. These internships are especially helpful because they give individuals an opportunity to explore options in the environmental field. Since I had a broad undergraduate college experience, I now can narrow down my interest of study at graduate school. I'm ecstatic to be gaining more knowledge about the operations of environmental organizations, both federal and non-profit.

Speaking of non-profits, my first week with the U.S Forest training I was in Silverton with other interns from San Juan NF partners: [Mountain Studies Institute](#) (MSI), and Conservation Legacy/Southwest Conservation Corps, which are all non-profits. The other interns and I participated in a 2-day Wilderness First Aid Training. During that week we also hiked around Lackawanna Mill with Jeremy from MSI. We briefed on forest fires in the SJNF, dendrochronology, and the kind of trees that are prevalent in SJNF. Caitlyn Paine and Joy Hernandez from CL and Jeremy May from MSI were great hosts and planned an awesome week for our orientation.

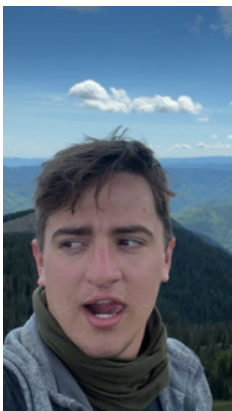
My internship involved developing social media content, along with creating one-page narratives and a tri-fold brochure about the U.S Forest Service's "Wood For Life" Program. I also assisted the forest health collaboratives with meeting preparations, coordination between the stakeholders, and helping monitor Ponderosa Pine trees. Learning about forest ecology and wildfire risk managements was very interesting experience this summer. I have a lot of respect for the collaboratives and the U.S Forest Service for their dedication and efforts to protect our lands.



Thank You Summer Interns!

Greening Youth Foundation Interns

Tristen Denton - Dolores Rangeland Management



I am a rangeland management intern, consisting of hiking, utilization cages, towing the UTV. I am responsible for moving cages from 2021 and plotting the 2022 locations as point data in our system. This data is necessary for monitoring grazing patterns of cattle, cows, and horses. My internship is located in Dolores, CO, and I travel throughout the SJNF. My goal for this internship is to gain experience in field work and to acquire new skills (trailer/tower training and UTV training). I aspire to have a career where I can do both field work and GIS work, especially in the Rocky Mountains. This internship got my foot in the door by connections in the area and helping me line up my seasonal job in Telluride. For those in college and just out of high school, I highly recommend this program. Personally, I have seen growth in my individuality and a change of mindset that I didn't have before the program.



Tyler Saiz- Columbine Rangeland Management

My intern position is a Range intern with the Green Youth Foundation, which includes fence construction and repair, noxious weed management, and range monitoring. I have travelled from Arizona to this internship on the Columbine District. My goals for this internship are to get experience and make connections. My career aspiration is to work for the USDA and obtain the level of a GS12 or 13. I will be pursuing a full time position after I complete my Masters at the University of Arizona. Sean Kelly is an excellent supervisor and mentor. If one is interested in range, then I highly recommend this internship.

The Pagosa District also had 2 Greening Youth interns in their Rangeland Management Program:

Antonio Hill - Pagosa Rangeland Management

Emma Freeborn - Pagosa Rangeland Management

Thank you Summer Interns!

Danielle Miller - Columbine Ranger District



As a Resource Assistant, this internship requires me to help determine range readiness for cattle grazing, as well as help with noxious weed control. The internship is located in Bayfield, Colorado and travel is a daily necessity when performing the job. The program that gave me this opportunity is through the Greening Youth Foundation. My hope is that this internship will provide me with more knowledge about vegetation within the area and different ways to determine range health. My career aspirations are primarily in firefighting, which can be helped through this internship by using vegetation readiness and life cycles to help further firefighting processes. I could see myself working with the same program again though I do hope for a full-time job. I would recommend this program to others because it can help youths get in touch with nature and learn how important it is in our lives.

Brandon Lawton - RMAP Intern, with MSI and SCC



My intern position is Hydrology Field Technician Intern, where I am working at the U.S Forest Service office in Durango. I'm working with the Hydrology crew performing various field projects throughout the summer. My goals for the internship are to build relevant field experience to apply for related jobs in the future. My career aspirations are either to work in hydrology or snow science. Career paths that interest me currently include hydrology, avalanche forecasting, or ski patrol. This internship is the first relevant experience related to my degree since I graduated college. This internship could lead to future, more permanent positions performing hydrology field work. I would see myself working for this type of program again to continue building experience. I do recommend this program for anyone looking for an introduction into federal hydrology work. In addition, anyone looking for other experience in the RMAP program would find the internship to be a wonderful start in gaining experience.

Nickolas Kolettis - RMAP Intern, Pagosa District



I am an intern for the Forest Service, working with the Lands Department. I work mostly in data entry, currently grabbing information related to FS land purchases, exchanges, conveyance, and donations. Such information includes acreage of wildlife habitat and various natural resources for consolidation and reporting over a half a decade of transactions. SCC and Americorp are my program supervisors. I'm located in the District Ranger Office in Pagosa Springs CO., and I traveled here from Las Vegas Nevada. I applied for this internship to learn more about the Forest Service and its various operations. This internship will advance my career aspirations by shedding light on the various opportunities for growth in the FS. I do see myself working for this type of program again. If you want to get out of your comfort zone and really contribute to the land I highly recommend this type of internship.

Welcome New Employees

Supervisor's Office



Tony Heard - Initial Attack Dispatcher

I have been in the federal fire service for over 15 years. Working with UFSF, BIA, BLM and FWS. I started my career with the BIA in Oklahoma on a Type 6 engine and since have worked with multiple agencies on Engines, Hand Crews, Wildfire Modules and a few Dispatch positions across the US including Montana, Texas, New Mexico and Colorful Colorado. I live in Bloomfield, NM. I am married to love of my life Varissa Heard. Have two step sons and a few fury friends roaming around. I enjoy getting in the outdoors, fly fishing, Hiking, Biking and getting the camera to capture all this grandeur. I am very excited to be starting here in this new position and looking forward to a long career working with some of the best folks around.

Kevin Lindner - Asst Fire Management Officer- Prevention

I've worked on the San Juan since 2011 split between Durango and Dolores. In 2011 I was working on an engine in Dolores, and hopped over to the BLM for 2012 again in Dolores. I came over to the San Juan Hotshots in 2013 and worked with them through April 2018 when I got the opportunity to lateral back over to Dolores. Back in Dolores for 2018 I moved up to Engine Captain and had been leading fine men and women up in fire and fuels management through July of 2022. Starting August 1 I jumped on the opportunity to build the San Juan National Forests Fire Prevention Program based out of the SO. I'll be working for all of our fine three districts and very much look forward to engaging with all of our public and partners.



Joseph Ferrer - San Juan Forest Budget Analyst



Joe will be with the San Juan until the Regional Budget Business Operations consolidation which is expected in FY23. Joe comes to us from the Carson NF, Jicarilla Ranger District in Bloomfield, NM and he grew up in Mountainair, New Mexico. After high school he served in the US Navy for 20 years. He was able to travel all over the world and was stationed in Iceland, San Diego, Hawaii, Washington state and an island in the Indian Ocean. After retiring from the Navy in 2016, Joe was hired by the Forest Service as the Administrative Support Assistant for the Jicarilla RD where he is the person folks go to for answers. Joe is married with two high school kids, one Senior and one Junior. In his spare time Joe enjoys hunting, when he is lucky enough to draw a tag, and other outdoor activities. During the winter months Joe referees High School basketball.

Welcome New Employees

Supervisor's Office

Jaden Priebe - Administrative Support Assistant



I grew up in northern Utah but spent my summers in Southwest Colorado backpacking. I love being outside climbing, hiking, paddle boarding, rafting, etc. I graduated from the University of Utah in 2020 with a bachelor's degree in Parks Recreation and Tourism with an emphasis in Natural Resources Adventure and Outdoor Programming. I have worked one season as the Bear Education Coordinator for Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and as a seasonal Recreation Forestry Technician for the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forests and for the Columbine Ranger District. I am very happy to be back with the San Juan National Forest as the newest Administrative Support Assistant.

Justin Marler- Assistant Fleet Manager

I am happy to continue to support the San Juan National Forest in its public service mission in a new role. I have worked on the San Juan for 13 years. I spent three seasons working as a seasonal employee on the Dolores RD and ten seasons on the Columbine RD. In my free time I enjoy many of the outdoor activities southwest Colorado has to offer including rafting, backpacking, hunting, fishing, and skiing.



Jason Mosher- Lands and Realty Specialist



I started my federal career with BLM Cadastral Survey in 2006 working out of the Colorado State Office in Lakewood CO. During my 16 year career I've performed a variety of surveys in 9 different States across the western US. I was given the opportunity to come to Durango in 2017 as the Boundary Program Manager under agreement with the Forest Service. I'm excited for my new adventures as a Lands and Realty Specialist here on the San Juan National Forest. In my free time I enjoy hiking, biking, camping, skiing, and exploring public lands with my wife and two daughters.

Jamie Blair - Minerals and Geology Program Lead

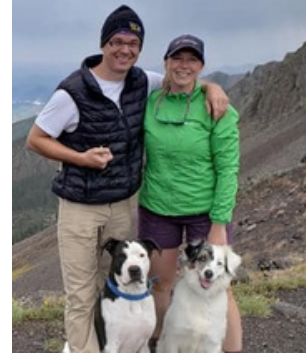
Jamie Blair has been selected as our new Geologist on the San Juan National Forest! Jamie comes to us from the BLM's Tres Rios Field Office where he has been the Geologist since 2009. Many of you have worked with Jamie in the past, during our Service First days and also when he detailed into the Geologist position after Walt Brown retired. Jamie did an excellent job and we are excited to have him back permanently. Please join me in welcoming him to the San Juan!

Welcome New Employees

Supervisor's Office

Denise Kusnir- Lands and Realty Specialist

Denise Kusnir born and raised in Western Kentucky and started her career on the Daniel Boone National Forest in eastern Kentucky as a Backcountry Ranger and Fire fighter. Denise moved on to many other forests including Ozark NF as a wild cave guide/fire fighter, Custer NF as a Wilderness Ranger, Kaibab NF as the Wilderness/Trails, Coronado NF as a Realty Specialist, and the San Juan NF as a Realty Specialist on the Dolores RD starting in 2020. Denise loves her time outside with her husband, Mark and 2 dogs rock climbing, backpacking, rafting, and cross country skiing.



Becca Smith - Forest Lands Program Manager



Starting in 1990 to 1992, Becca Smith was a Geologist with the Bureau of Land Management in Idaho, then again from 1999-2001 in the Redwood National and State Parks. From 2002-2012, Becca was a Region 2 Zone Hydrologist for the San Juan National Forest at the Pagosa Ranger District, then later became Pagosa Ranger District's Lands and Minerals Specialist until the beginning of 2022. Since January of this year, Becca has been a Realty Officer, and is now currently the Forest Lands Program Manager as of July 2022.

Sara Brinton - NEPA Coordinator

My first job with the Forest Service was with the Youth Conservation Corp (YCC) in 1985. During college, I worked as a student trainee in forestry on the Pagosa District. After graduating from Colorado State University with a degree in Forestry in 1991, I started full time on the District. Over the past 33 years I've worked in various capacities on the District in forestry, range management, as the District ecologist/botanist, and most recently as the District NEPA coordinator. In my spare time I enjoy gardening, landscaping, and exploring the National Forest.



Welcome New Employees

Dolores Ranger District

Griffin Harris - Harvest Inspector



In May, Griffin started as the harvest inspector for the Dolores Ranger District's timber program. He had previously spent four seasons on the Dolores' timber prep crew, as well as one season each on both the Boise and the Black Hills National Forests. Griffin's interest in working with the Forest Service was piqued after an SCA interpretive ranger internship he took on the Siuslaw National Forest in Oregon. He graduated from Amherst College with a degree in Environmental Studies. When not at work, Griffin and his wife Tara spend a lot of time hiking, backpacking, mushroom hunting, and running (slowly).

Christy Kupiec – Customer Service Representative

Christy Kupiec joins us from White River National Forest – Eagle-Holy Cross Ranger District, where she was serving as a seasonal this summer.

Her prior service was as a seasonal campground host with NPS in Yellowstone National Park as well as cashier supervisor with their concessionaire. Originally from Texas, her background includes teaching junior high, high school and community college students in mathematics, sciences, and computers. She then transitioned to high school counselor and assistant principal. In addition to her public service, she also has an extensive background in real estate acquisition, development and sales.

Since moving to the Cortez area in 2020, she and her partner, Anne – a retired archaeologist, spend their free time hiking and exploring the many ruins of the S.W.



John Leonard - Timber Marker



John has worked on the Dolores timber crew for the past 6 seasons but recently became a permanent employee and timber crew lead! Before he moved to the area, John spent most of his life managing and working on federal lands, including Yosemite National Park as a Biological Tech and in the Peace Corps in Ecuador as an Agro-Extension Forester. John and his wife are building a house and ten-acre farm near Dove Creek where they tend native plants and bees. John is a weaver of stories and full of knowledge, so if you get the chance to chat with him, you won't be disappointed!

Welcome New Employees

Pagosa Ranger District



Autumn Grennier - Recreation Management Specialist

Autumn began her career on the White River NF working as a CSR on the Rifle District in 2016. She worked seasonally as a Rec Tech and FPO at Hanging Lake on the Eagle District, and at the Maroon Bells on the Aspen District. She completed the Rocky Mountain Land Management Internship, an intensive 2-year field-based internship that was co-developed by the USFS and Colorado Mountain College, where she earned a Certificate in Public Lands Stewardship in 2019. She went on to work as the Assistant Recreation Officer for the Mendocino NF. Autumn is delighted to be working on the SJNF and likes to get outdoors to hike, bike, run, swim and camp on her free time.

Not all bios were ready at time of printing, but please welcome to the San Juan:

Ryan Tolle, Civil Engineer - Supervisor's Office
Amanda Pray, Rangeland Management Specialist - Columbine



Finally, a huge shout out to all of our seasonal employees who have left or will be leaving us soon. Our public lands would not be the same without your hard work! Each year, seasonal employees arrive to the San Juan with fresh energy and enthusiasm to carry out much of our day-to-day project implementation. From trail building to fish surveys, firefighting to weed monitoring, seasonal employees are a critical component of our workforce. Photo of Columbine District Trail Crew, 2020.