Employee Resource Groups

Creating Positive Changes in the Workplace
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Randy Moore serves as Chief of the Forest Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), leading a workforce of more than 25,000 permanent employees who sustainably manage 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands; support the world’s largest forestry research organization; and work with States, Tribes, and others to sustain America’s forests for the benefit of all citizens, today and in the future.

Before being named Chief, Moore served as Pacific Southwest regional forester from 2007 to 2021.

He began his 43-year career in 1978 with USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service in North Dakota. He started his Forest Service career in Colorado and Kansas before serving as deputy forest supervisor in North Carolina and Missouri. Later, he served as forest supervisor on the Mark Twain National Forest in Missouri and, in 2002, served 5 years as regional forester for the Eastern Region in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Moore’s national experience in Washington, DC, includes serving as acting associate deputy chief for the National Forest System and as national deputy soils program manager.

A native of Bastrop, Louisiana, Moore earned his bachelor’s degree in plant and soil science from Southern University. He and his wife, Antoinette, have two sons, a daughter-in-law, and two grandsons.
Message from the Chief:

Dear USDA Forest Service Family,

As I begin a new chapter of my Forest Service career, my greatest honor as Chief is championing our agency’s greatest yet most complex strength: our employees’ diverse thoughts, experiences, and perspectives. A diverse workplace is one with a mix of cultures and experiences; an inclusive workplace is one that celebrates that mix of differences and works to build a collective culture around them. It is one where employees feel equally valued, safe to express themselves, and validated in their experience.

As our agency grows in collective self-awareness, I challenge agency leadership to support efforts like the employee resource groups (ERGs) we are celebrating today. ERGs help meet the administration’s strategic goals and Executive Order 13985, but the true reasons we have been able to develop and sustain these groups are the hard-working employees who created them. I applaud the efforts of the diversity, equity, and inclusion branch to represent and advocate for our diverse employees. These ERGs are one result when we provide our employees the space and energy for growth. If that doesn’t align with our core values, I don’t know what does!

I am proud of our employees’ dedication to embrace our diversity and create communities of belonging. The ERGs you will be introduced to today represent a new era of grassroots efforts for diverse groups to be seen, heard, and represented. Thank you for joining us today as we promote and congratulate those efforts. These employee resource groups are a clear example of our agency’s greatest strength and represent our evolving legacy of working toward the greatest good.

—Chief Randy Moore
Michael Watts joined the USDA in May 2003 following a career in the U.S. Army and work at the regional, State, and Federal Government levels in positions of increasing responsibility. He held leadership positions at the Food and Nutrition Service and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights. From May 2007 to October 2012, Watts led civil rights initiatives in the Department in two roles within the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights. He held the positions of civil rights director for the Department, and later director of the Office of Compliance, Policy, Training, and Cultural Transformation. He was appointed to the Senior Executive Service in 2008 and joined the Food, Safety, and Inspection Service (FSIS) in October 2012 serving as the assistant administrator for the Office of Outreach, Employee Education, and Training, currently the Office of Employee Engagement and Development.

In May 2018, Watts joined the Office of Field Operations (OFO) as an executive associate for regulatory operations. In this position, he exercised oversight for 3 of the 10 FSIS district offices—Atlanta, Chicago, and Raleigh Districts. He also served as the designated OFO resolving official for complaints from approximately two-thirds of the agency’s workforce.

Before joining USDA, Watts was the State of Minnesota’s assistant commissioner of diversity and equal opportunity, an executive position in the Department of Employee Relations, a cabinet-level office that reported to the Governor. He began his career in the military (enlisted and commissioned service), where he developed a solid foundation of experience in leading people and managing diverse and geographically dispersed organizations. After leaving the military and completing law school, he worked as equal employment opportunity manager for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) at the Birmingham VA Medical Center in Birmingham, Alabama and later launched his own consulting business in Minnesota.

Watts is a lifelong learner, strong communicator, and a real people-person who thrives on challenges and solving problems. He earned his J.D. from the Cumberland School of Law at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama. Watts received his masters’ degree from Webster University in St. Louis, Missouri in Administration of Justice and Human Relations. He is a graduate of the University of Alabama, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in Political Science. He is also a graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, the Marine Corps Command and Staff College, and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government Senior Managers in Government Program.

Mr. Watts resides in Manassas, Virginia with his spouse, daughter, and pet dog, Snoopy. He enjoys traveling, outdoor activities, reading, and listening to all music—especially jazz.
Message from Director Michael Watts:

I am honored to serve as the national civil rights director for the Forest Service. The work we do for the agency is extremely important, especially during the challenging times of the last year and a half.

On January 20, 2021, President Biden issued Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government. To align with the strategic goals of this Executive order and the agency’s core values, the diversity, equity, and inclusion branch worked with a core group of agency employees to establish several employee resource groups (ERGs).

I am excited to announce these ERGs, which will be ambassadors in promoting our values of diversity and inclusion. They are imperative to the agency’s efforts to build a sense of community and empower employees. ERGs give employees a collective voice to speak with decision makers and management. They also support personal growth and professional development of their members, and they provide a safe space where employees can bring their whole selves to the table.

These vital links between employees and executive leadership facilitate communication to voice concerns and solve problems. ERGs improve equality and equity by offering their expertise and experiences to leadership. Through the diligent work of diverse ERGs, the Forest Service can cultivate a supportive, inclusive, accessible, and equitable work environment.

—Director Michael Watts
# Agenda

Monday, September 20, 2021, 1:30–4:00 p.m.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time (Eastern)</th>
<th>Topics and ERGs</th>
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| 1:30–1:45 p.m. | Welcome and Opening Remarks | Chief Randy Moore  
Forest Service Chief |
| 1:45–1:55 p.m. | Introduction to ERGs | Michael Watts  
National Civil Rights Director |
| 1:55–2:00 p.m. | ERGs Kickoff | Berlinda Baca  
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Branch Chief |
| 2:00–2:10 p.m. | African American Strategy Group (AASG) | Margaret Hangan  
AASG Point of Contact |
| 2:10–2:20 p.m. | American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) ERG | Erica Enjady  
AI/AN ERG Chairperson |
| 2:20–2:30 p.m. | Asian Pacific American Employee Association (APAEA) | Dr. Arvind A.R. Bhuta  
APAEA Chairperson |
| 2:30–2:40 p.m. | Association of Christians Reaching Out in Service and Support (ACROSS) | Richard Ludke  
ACROSS Chairperson |
| 2:40–2:50 p.m. | Chicanos, Hispanics, Indigenous, Latinos/Latinxs, Afro–Caribbeans/Afro-Latinos/All Empowered (CHILAE) | Juana Rosas  
CHILAE Chairperson |
| 2:50–3:00 p.m. | Dynamic Employees Beyond Disabilities (DEBD) | Stephanie Soto  
DEBD President |
| 3:00–3:10 p.m. | Gender Inclusivity and Visibility Employee Resilience (GIVER) Group | Nathaniel Boehme, Aerran Riley, and Kathryn Dawson  
GIVER Group Emissaries |
| 3:10–3:20 p.m. | SALUTE (Veterans) ERG | David Francomb  
SALUTE ERG Chairperson |
| 3:20–3:30 p.m. | Unifying People, Lifting, and Inspiring Females Together (UPLIFT) | Carolyn Warden  
UPLIFT Cochairperson |
| 3:30–3:55 p.m. | Q&A | All ERGs |
| 3:55–4:00 p.m. | Closing Remarks and Adjourn | Berlinda Baca  
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Branch Chief |
The African American Strategy Group (AASG) was originally founded in 1992. African American employees, underrepresented in the Forest Service workforce, wanted to ensure that a venue existed to raise concerns and solutions to Forest Service leadership. The AASG continues to provide perspectives from African Americans that are vital in assisting the Forest Service achieve its mission and vision. As the Forest Service strives to become a multicultural and diverse agency in all aspects of organization life, AASG offers expertise in making the agency a more inclusive work environment.

Contact the AASG through Margaret Hangan (margaret.hangan@usda.gov) for more information.
John Crockett is currently the associate deputy chief for State and Private Forestry in the Washington Office. He has worked for the Forest Service for over 23 years in a variety of positions including deputy director, assistant director, restoration program manager, district ranger, timber management assistant, and assistant forest fire management officer.

John has a keen focus for collaboration and working with partners. As district ranger, he helped launch several projects on the Pisgah National Forest in North Carolina, including the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP), which he continued to lead at the national level. He led the forest products modernization effort, an initiative to better align Forest Service culture, policies, and procedures with current and future forest restoration needs. He continues to be instrumental in developing and maintaining partnerships that enhance all lands. He also loves helping to shape the next generation of leaders by serving as a mentor.

Internationally, John has been an agency point of contact for its Bonn Challenge commitments, and he represents the agency on the Global Partnership for Forest Landscape Restoration (GPFLR) committee. He also serves as an advisor/speaker in the agency’s International Seminar on Forest Landscape Restoration since its inception in 2014.

John grew up in rural Alabama and is married with three children. He enjoys traveling with family and anything that has to do with being outside. He received his degree in forest management from Alabama A&M University in 1998.
Margaret Hangan is the heritage program manager for the Kaibab National Forest. A career archaeologist with extensive experience in the private sector, she came in late to the Federal service, moving directly into heritage management positions. Her first Federal job was with the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management. In 2003, she transitioned to the Forest Service as heritage and Tribal relations program manager for the Cleveland National Forest. Three years later, she took her current position on the Kaibab National Forest.

Although Hangan is beginning her 13th year in that official role, she has taken on ever more complex duties, working with the Kaibab and other forests on the Rim Country Environmental Impact Statement, the Four Forest Restoration Initiative, and more. In the wider community, she is a cochair of the Arizona Historic Archaeology Advisory Committee and a member of the Arizona Governor’s Archaeological Advisory Council. Recently, the Natural Inquirer program featured her in their “Scientist Card” series. She has also served as president of the Southwestern Region’s regional civil rights committee, doing work that focused on diversity and inclusion, LGBTQ recognition, and other salient issues.
American Indian/Alaskan Native ERG

The American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) ERG is dedicated to articulating, supporting, and advancing the needs and goals of AI/AN employees of the Forest Service to contribute towards a work environment that values diversity, equity, and inclusion. The group strives to elevate the voices of Indian Nations, foster awareness of culture, traditions, and values, assist in outreach to recruit and retain AI/AN employees, and share the AI/AN perspective to improve the Forest Service overall. The group celebrates the AI/AN community and the accomplishments of AI/AN employees within the Forest Service. At present, there are 574 federally recognized American Indian and Alaskan Native Tribes and Villages – each of these Nations are ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse. The AI/AN ERG encourages learning about the history of Tribal nations and the contemporary issues that Native peoples are facing today. The AI/AN ERG is newly formed and currently working on outreach for new members.

Contact Erica Enjady (erica.enjady@usda.gov), the group’s chairperson, for more information.

Note: The AI/AN ERG is still working on establishing the group; the name of the AI/AN ERG will be updated within the year.
Reed Robinson serves as the national director of the Office of Tribal Relations in State and Private Forestry in the Washington Office.

Reed plays an integral role in advancing Tribal relations priorities and policy implementation on behalf of the Forest Service. He brings a wealth of knowledge from his experience in Tribal relations where he has advised on such topics as boundary disputes, bison management, tribal engagement regarding significant and controversial environmental impact statements and environmental assessments, National Historic Preservation Act/Section 106 and Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act compliance issues, and more. Reed authored the National Park Service Draft Strategic Plan for the reestablished American Indian Liaison program. He also established the Midwest Regional Office of American Indian Affairs.

Reed is a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe (Sicangu/Lakota) and a 30-year veteran of the National Park Service. Reed began his career with the National Park Service at the Timpanogos Cave National Monument in northern Utah. In 2012, he became superintendent at Devils Tower National Monument in Wyoming. He later served as deputy superintendent at Badlands National Monument in southwestern South Dakota.

Reed holds a technical certificate in construction management from Utah Valley State University and is a graduate of the National Park Service Superintendents’ Academy and the Harvard Kennedy School Senior Executive Fellow Program.
Erica Enjady serves as the forestry program manager on the Carson National Forest in Taos, NM. She also serves as the chair of the agency’s American Indian/Alaskan Native employee resource group. Since joining the Forest Service in 2016, Erica appreciates opportunities to be involved with a diverse set of programs and initiatives. Her focus has been collaborating with local partners, the State of New Mexico, and Tribes to improve the conditions of the forested land in New Mexico through shared stewardship. Prior to the Forest Service, Erica worked as forest manager for the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, where she was responsible for timber, wildfire, and fuels management activities on the Mescalero Apache Indian Reservation.

Erica is a member of the Mescalero Apache Tribe and is originally from Albuquerque, NM. She enjoys all things food related and starting craft projects that she hopes to finish. Erica loves spending quality time with her husband and three kids, especially when that time is spent outdoors.
The Asian Pacific American Employee Association (APAEA) ERG is a voluntary employee organization in the Forest Service who believes that diversity is a source of strength and an asset to our agency. Our identities provide national and global perspectives on land, natural resources, civil rights, and workforce management. We honor the past and present achievements and contributions of Asian/Pacific Islanders who serve the agency in “caring for the land and serving people.” We strive for common ground and proactively address opportunities and seek resolution. We promote inclusive engagement and collaboration among Forest Service employees, agency leadership, and our Asian/Pacific Islander public. Our actions bridge social and cultural differences. We demonstrate these values through our accomplishments.

The mission of APAEA ERG is to: promote Asian/Pacific Islander employee career development, leadership, talent management, and retention in the Forest Service; enhance the Forest Service’s cultural and intergenerational competency in serving its employees and diverse public; and provide a forum for those interested in Asian/Pacific Islander issues and opportunities to network, mentor, share common ground, seek solutions, and cultivate a sense of community.

Contact us at: SM.FS.APAEA@usda.gov
Leslie Weldon serves as chief executive for the newly established Work Environment and Performance Office (WEPO) mission area for the Forest Service. She is responsible for aiding the Forest Service to live its core values of safety, service, conservation, interdependence, and diversity. The goal of WEPO is to build skills and establish best practices to sustain a workplace culture where employees thrive and feel safe, valued, and respected. Such a workforce can excel in our mission to conserve the Nation’s forests and grasslands while providing a wide range of services and benefits to the public.

During Leslie’s career in natural resource management, she has served in leadership and policy positions as a biologist, district ranger, forest supervisor, and regional forester in communities in Washington State, Oregon, and Montana. She has served in several positions at the Washington Office, including assistant fisheries program manager, executive policy assistant to Chief Mike Dombeck, external affairs officer, and deputy chief for the National Forest System. She has proudly participated on numerous national and international technical and policy review activities in areas including the Congo Basin, Brazil, Peru, China, Argentina, and Germany. Her work has involved identifying shared solutions and working closely with partners from academia and conservation, as well as environmental and community groups, local government, and natural resource related businesses. Leslie is committed to a diverse, equitable, and inclusive Forest Service, strong partnerships, and innovation in addressing the social and natural resource challenges of the day.

Leslie is married to Michael Weldon. They have adult twin sons named Joseph and Kevin.
Employee Profile

NAME: Dr. Arvind A.R. Bhuta, Ph.D., GISP, CE
POSITION: Forest Mapping and Accomplishment Portal Program Manager
OFFICE: Cooperative Forestry, Washington Office
ERG ROLE: APAEA Chairperson

Arvind Bhuta’s passion for natural resources began while an undergraduate in zoology at Auburn University in Auburn, AL. Initially educated and trained as a terrestrial vertebrate ecologist, he expanded his interests into the disciplines of geography, forestry, and natural resources management in graduate school. There, he was able to focus on understanding how human activities, climate, and natural disturbances influence natural resources and biodiversity across the world’s temperate forests, with specificity towards longleaf pine ecosystems. Arvind has served in the Forest Service since 2014. He was a forester/biometrician in the Pacific Northwest Regional Office in Portland, Oregon from 2014 to 2016 and the ecologist for the National Forests in Alabama from 2016 to 2019. He is currently the acting national forest stewardship program manager and the forest mapping and accomplishment portal program manager in cooperative forestry at the Washington Office. He is also the chairperson (2020–2021) for the Asian Pacific American Employee Association employee resource group.

Arvind earned undergraduate degrees in zoology (BS), environmental science (BS), and geography (BA) from Auburn University, and advanced degrees in geography (MS) and natural resources (PhD) from Virginia Tech. He also did a postdoctoral fellowship in forestry at Clemson University. He is a member of the Society of American Foresters, the Ecological Society of America, and the American Association of Geographers, where he is serving a 2-year appointment as a board member for the biogeography specialty group. He is certified by the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Certification Institute as a GIS professional and the Ecological Society of America as a certified ecologist. Arvind is a first-generation Asian American who was born in New York City, grew up in Alabama, and has lived across the Southeast in Mississippi, Florida, and Virginia. He currently resides within the District of Columbia.
The Association of Christians Reaching Out in Service and Support (ACROSS) ERG has been an employee association since 1997. ACROSS exists to support and encourage employees in the workplace as well as in their personal lives. The group provides prayerful support for employees and Forest Service leadership on a regular basis. ACROSS inspires members daily with encouraging messages, serving all Forest Service employees in need with prayer and sometimes small financial gifts. ACROSS members can depend on each other to stay focused on Forest Service core values and employees’ civil rights.

ACROSS connects Forest Service employees with shared personal beliefs and builds strong professional relationships. A benefit of belonging to ACROSS includes being part of an agency-wide network of employees with shared values and diverse backgrounds and careers. ACROSS is an essential part of employee spiritual wellness for Christian employee members. Sharing struggles at work and at home helps employees lighten their emotional loads that can affect their physical and mental well-being. Many employees are comforted and relieved to know that others are praying for them. Being able to share with others who are familiar with the Forest Service makes ACROSS a unique and valuable employee support organization. ACROSS has worked within the agency to protect employees’ civil rights, creating a more comfortable work environment for many employees.

ACROSS welcomes all Forest Service employees to share their Christian values and lift each other and all those in need up in prayer. By serving people, ACROSS is an integral part of caring for the land.

Contact us at SM.FS.ACROSS@usda.gov.
Richard Ludke was born and raised in Colorado with a love for mountainous landscapes. After graduating from college, he eventually became a Forest Service wildland firefighter. He found an exciting career with the agency, fighting fire, driving engines, and rappelling from helicopters. Given the many opportunities the Forest Service offers, Richard was able to participate in many operations and job duties. He currently serves the Tahoe National Forest as a safety officer. Like most members of ACROSS, he found out about this ERG through word of mouth. Richard became an ACROSS member in 2013. Five years later, he responded to an email requesting ACROSS management support. Since May 2018, he has served as the national chairperson for ACROSS. Talk about opportunities regarding tasks, operations, and job duties! It is just another privilege of working with the Forest Service.

Richard enjoys the role that ACROSS plays in connecting Forest Service employees with shared personal beliefs and building strong professional relationships. This benefit of belonging to ACROSS includes being part of an agency-wide network of employees with shared values and diverse backgrounds and careers. ACROSS is an integral part of Richard’s spiritual wellness and for meeting other Christian employee members. Many, including Richard, are comforted and relieved to know that others are praying for one another. Being able to share with others who are familiar with the Forest Service makes ACROSS a unique and valuable organization.

Richard is thankful for ACROSS because it welcomes all Forest Service employees to share their Christian values and lift each other up in prayer. It is a privilege to have found a career in the Forest Service that continues to provide opportunities not found in any other job. He is blessed with a wonderful wife and live in a wonderful mountain town with their wonderful little dog in Truckee, California. He works for the Tahoe National Forest and couldn’t be more pleased.
The Chicanos, Hispanics, Indigenous, Latinos/Latinxs, Afro-Caribbeans/Afro-Latinos/All Empowered (CHILAE) ERG aims to: be proactive with Forest Service leadership to ensure that the development and implementation of policy is sensitive to the cultural values of Hispanic employees and the Hispanic/Latinx community; build transformational partnerships with “campeones” (champions) who are agency senior-level officials and targeted community groups to build support and capacity; work with Forest Service management to ensure that the talents and skills of Hispanic employees are recognized and utilized at all levels of the organization; aid in creating strategies to eliminate systemic barriers identified in the MD-715 report; ensure strategies are culturally sensitive; create a Forest Service “palabra” (pledge of dignity) to be a model agency in diversity, equity, and inclusion; assist in determining appropriate historical and philosophic concepts to share with Forest Service workforce on days of observance; take responsibility for developing skills to meet current and future needs of the Forest Service; assist each other in achieving individual career goals, outreach, and recruitment; support the development of a professional “comunidad” (community) that will provide guidance, mentorship, and self-efficacy or confidence through mentoring and learning opportunities to better understand the culture of the Forest Service; promote unity and a sense of purpose among all Forest Service Hispanic/Latinx employees and Forest Service colleagues.

Contact us at SM.FS.CHILAE@usda.gov.
Robert Velasco II was selected to serve as chief financial officer for the Forest Service on August 29, 2021. In this role, Robert leads financial stewardship for the agency and provides senior executive leadership, oversight, and guidance in ensuring financial accountability, management, operations, analysis, and reporting. He also oversees audits and assurance for management accountability. Robert ensures the Forest Service effectively and transparently manages funds entrusted to the agency with sufficient controls through systems and procedures.

From 2017 to 2019, Robert served as the associate deputy chief for Business Operations and deputy chief operating officer. In this role, he provided leadership and oversight for 4,000 employees across agency-wide administrative functions including human resources, information technology, budget, acquisitions, safety, regulatory and management services, Job Corps, and the Enterprise program. In the Spring of 2020, Robert also served as the agency’s first national pandemic coordinator, establishing a national framework and coordinating structure to provide the agency’s response to COVID-19.

Prior to joining the Forest Service in 2013, Mr. Velasco served as the chief operating officer at the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the lead Federal agency for volunteerism and civic engagement. At CNCS, Mr. Velasco established new national performance measures for volunteerism and formally launched FEMA Corps, a dedicated disaster services corps in partnership with the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Before CNCS, he spent 17 years at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as deputy director and chief of staff at the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and as director for program operations and director for management operations at the Office of Medicare Hearings and Appeals (OMHA). In both social services and Medicare appeals organizations, he had responsibility for addressing national management reform initiatives in human capital, acquisitions, financial management, and e-government.

In 2000, Mr. Velasco was selected by the Annie E. Casey Foundation as one of ten national Children and Family Fellows where he consulted local governments and nonprofits to build leadership capacity for human service systems reform.

Mr. Velasco is a graduate of the HHS Senior Executive Service (SES) Candidate Development Program and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Federal Executive Institute. He received his appointment to the Senior Executive Service in 2006.

He resides in Arlington, Virginia with his wife, Janine Velasco, and their two children.
Juana Rosas serves as the partnership coordinator for the National Partnership Office in Washington DC, where she is responsible for the Secure Rural Schools Program. The Secure Rural Schools Program provides critical funding for schools, roads, and other municipal services to more than 700 counties across the United States and Puerto Rico. The daughter of “campesinos,” or farmworkers, Juana grew up in a small village called Zambrano, in the Mexican State of Guanajuato. Her family migrated to the United States, working as farmworkers throughout California. Juana has a Bachelor of Arts in Latin American studies from University of California, Berkeley, a master’s in Spanish and a master’s in international relations from Fresno State University. She started with the Forest Service as a high school student in the Generation Green Program in the Pacific Southwest Region and later as a Student Career Experience Program intern in 2007.
Employee Resource Group Profile

Dynamic Employees Beyond Disabilities

The mission of the Dynamic Employees Beyond Disabilities (DEBD) ERG is to advocate, advance, and strengthen the rights and opportunities of individuals with disabilities. DEBD’s vision is to strive for an agency where diversity, equity, inclusion, and access are prevalent. We are working to eliminate workplace access barriers, biases, assumptions, and misconceptions to make the agency a place where all individuals are supported, valued, and afforded the same opportunities as their colleagues without disabilities.

The DEBD’s goal is to assist the USDA and Forest Service in improving overall employment, retention, and promotion of individuals with disabilities, such as cultivating the work environment and expanding diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Contact us at SM.FS.DEBD@usda.gov.
Employee Profile

NAME: Antoine “Tony” Dixon
POSITION: Deputy Chief, Business Operations
OFFICE: Washington Office
ERG ROLE: DEBD Executive Sponsor

Tony Dixon has worked for the Forest Service for more than 30 years and has a wealth of experience across natural resources, financial, and business areas. Tony was selected to serve as the deputy chief of business operations for the Forest Service beginning on August 29, 2021. Prior to that, in 2016, he was named the chief financial officer. In this position, he is responsible for overseeing the financial management and execution of the agency’s $5 billion budget, as well as management of approximately 450 employees.

Tony launched his career as a cooperative education student on the Routt National Forest in Steamboat Springs, CO. He has served in a variety of positions and geographical locations, including the national director of the Forest Service Job Corps program, deputy regional forester of the Rocky Mountain Region, and forest supervisor of the National Forests in Mississippi. He also served as the deputy regional director of public affairs in the Atlanta-based Southern Regional Office and held a number of positions in the national headquarters in Washington, DC, including program analyst, legislative affairs specialist, deputy area budget coordinator, and chief of staff for the deputy chief of the National Forest System. He served as chief financial officer before moving into his new role as the deputy chief for business operations.

Tony has a bachelor’s degree in marketing and forestry from Alabama A&M University and a master’s degree in administration from Central Michigan University.
Jennifer McGuire has been the director of budget and finance since 2011. She is a certified public accountant with a master’s in accountancy and a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting from the University of New Mexico. She has served as the director of audit and assurance, acting deputy director of budget and finance, and branch chief of internal quality assurance. She’s been with Forest Service since 2005 and worked in two other agencies as an auditor.
Stephanie Soto is a deaf employee working as a financial analyst with the Albuquerque Service Center chief financial officer's budget and finance billings department. In her financial analyst role, she works as an imprest fund coordinator. She transferred back to the Forest Service in September 2020 from the U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Inspector General, where she worked as an auditor for 2 years. Prior to that, Stephanie worked as a human resources specialist in the human resources management compensation department at the Forest Service for 3.5 years.

Stephanie has been able to venture outside of her financial analyst role to advocate for equal communication access for the deaf and hard-of-hearing employees within the Forest Service. She has also been involved with a behind-the-scenes team for the inclusivity learning series since February 2021, as well as the USDA Secretary's town hall in April 2021, to ensure that agency-wide events are accessible for all employees. Thanks to the maximum telework environment during the pandemic, Stephanie has been able to assist with the Pacific Northwest Region’s town hall as well as their first-ever virtual regional new employee orientation to ensure that both of these events were fully accessible to all employees. She really enjoys collaborating and networking with different groups within the Forest Service and challenging herself to learn and grow outside of her current position.

Outside of work, Stephanie spends time with her husband, who is also deaf, and their two children. They enjoy going for hikes, playing board games, cooking, baking, and spending quality time together.
Employee Profile

NAME: Aaron Stout
POSITION: Grants Management Specialist
OFFICE: Office of Grants and Agreements (Region 5)
ERG ROLE: DEBD Executive Vice President

Aaron Stout started his Federal service in 1994 as a military working dog handler in the U.S. Air Force. In February 2012, his journey began with the Forest Service as a grants management specialist in Nevada City, California. After 9.5 years, Aaron looks back at the opportunities the Forest Service have given him to work, raise a family, and play in one of the most beautiful places in Northern California, and he is thankful. He is looking forward to new challenges as he steps outside of his role as a grants management specialist.
Antonio Garcia has always had a passion for the outdoors and enjoys hiking, hunting, fishing, and the scenery. In 2007, he became a paraplegic after an exposure to hantavirus. He thought his days of being and working in the outdoors were over. Since being in a wheelchair, Antonio has learned he can do almost everything he used to do, just differently. His position as the Sandia Ranger District volunteer coordinator and assistant recreation program manager means a great deal to him as he can engage with people that love and have a desire to sustain the forest as much as he does. Because of Antonio’s experience with hantavirus, he has presented at the regional and other forest safety meetings to educate others about the risk of exposure and prevention. He is hoping that he can help make a positive change in someone’s life while sharing his passion for hunting and the outdoors.

Antonio’s educational background includes a Bachelor of Science degree in forestry from New Mexico Highlands University in Las Vegas, NM. He was a former Student Career Experience Program intern and converted to a full-time position on the Sandia Ranger District in 2013.
The Gender Inclusivity & Visibility Employee Resilience (GIVER) Group is a queer-and trans-affirming community of Forest Service employees. Our goal is to create a welcoming space where lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and other nonheterosexual (LGBTQIA+) people and allies can come together to find community and support positive change. We partner with other organizations, within and beyond the Forest Service, to learn, share resources, and support each other’s liberation. By fostering a work environment of respect and trust, we will be better able to support one another, connect with the diverse communities we serve, and care for the forests that care for us.

Contact us at SM.FS.GIVER@usda.gov.
Gina Owens serves as the regional forester for the Eastern Region of the Forest Service. In this role, Gina oversees management of more than 12 million acres of the National Forest System spread across 17 national forests and one national tallgrass prairie in the Northeast and Midwest. She is passionate about fostering and maintaining strong ties with the Eastern Region’s 20 States and the District of Columbia as well as partners and private landowners to support State and private forest lands. Forty-four percent of the Nation’s private forest landowners call the Eastern Region home, so there is a tremendous opportunity to continue building those connections.

Gina previously served as the deputy regional forester for the Pacific Northwest Region and as the forest supervisor on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. Since beginning her career as a Forest Service volunteer in the Alaska Region, Gina has dedicated more than 30 years to the agency. She has held a variety of leadership and staff positions across the agency, from Oregon, Washington, and Montana in the West to the agency’s national headquarters in Washington, DC, and the Green Mountain and Finger Lakes National Forests in the Eastern Region, where she served as a district ranger in Vermont. She earned a degree in wildland recreation management from Washington State University.

Gina was born and raised on Whidbey Island in Washington State. The waters and mountains of the Pacific Northwest will forever be a place she calls home. Gina is passionate about exploring the outdoors. She loves to hike and camp and particularly loves to be on the water in a canoe, kayak, or really anything that floats.

Gina is keenly interested in how the Eastern Region accomplishes its priority work and, just as importantly, how the region engages with the people and communities it serves. Her passion is for all regional employees to be experienced by each other and by the region’s diverse partners and the public it serves as caring, respectful, inclusive, trustworthy, and responsive.
Jennifer Eberlien became regional forester for the Pacific Southwest Region in July 2021, giving her overall responsibility for 18 national forests in California, covering one-fifth of the State or 20 million acres of land, as well as responsibility for State & Private Forestry programs in Hawaii and the affiliated Pacific Islands.

Jennifer started her career with the Forest Service in 1992 on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest in Park Falls, Wisconsin. She has since served as deputy forest supervisor for the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest in southwest Oregon, forest supervisor of the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest in Everett, Washington, deputy regional forester for the Pacific Southwest Region in Vallejo, California, acting regional forester for the Rocky Mountain Region headquartered in Denver, Colorado, and as the associate deputy chief for the National Forest System in Washington, D.C.

Jennifer is a graduate of the University of Minnesota with a bachelor’s degree in anthropology. She also holds a master’s degree in anthropology from Northern Arizona University.
Nathaniel Boehme (he/him/his) has extensive experience serving the community in various capacities that include social work, civil rights, training, advocacy, and more. He engaged in program management and development in Portland, Seattle, and Los Angeles and spent the last 5 years as the Nation’s first LGBTQ veterans coordinator and LGBTQ special emphasis program manager. He now serves in the USDA’s civil rights division in the Forest Service. Through purposeful and intentional outreach and engagement, with an eye towards diversity, justice, and antioppressive practice, Nathaniel works to create connections with various organizations and the community at large to gain entrée with partners while providing dignity-affirming and trauma-informed services for the internal workforce.

Nathaniel has an accomplished and relevant educational career, graduating magna cum laude from Utah State University with a bachelor’s in psychology, another in sociology, and a minor in women and gender studies. Additionally, he was awarded a master’s in sociology at Washington State University, and he also holds a master’s in social work from Portland State University with a certificate in human services management.

Nathaniel has served nearly 2 decades in the U.S. Air Force in various components and is third-generation Air Force, deployed to Iraq in 2005/2006, and continues to serve in the Oregon Air National Guard as an equal opportunity noncommissioned officer (NCO). In 2017, he became the first actively serving military personnel in Portland and Seattle to participate in Pride parades in uniform with command approval, and in 2018, he organized the Portland Pride parade’s first-ever military and veteran contingent.

Nathaniel is active in his local and national community through volunteerism as a member on the Portland Police Bureau Review Board, chair for policy committee with the Oregon Public Health Association, and training and development program manager with Minority Veterans of America. He and his husband are happy to call Portland home.
Aerran Riley (they/them, he/him) is a native Michigander that has spent the past 13 years in the Upper Peninsula with their partner and pup. They have a professional passion for conservation, interpretation, and connecting people with the resource. Personally, they enjoy baking, reading, traveling to the mountains, and spending time with friends. They are the visitor center manager for the Ottawa National Forest in Michigan.

Kathryn Dawson (she/her) is a storyteller and an internal communications professional for the Pacific Northwest Region. Working out of her home studio on the green side of the mountains in Oregon, she’s cruised timber by snowshoes in Northern Minnesota, done campground surveys by canoe, and has worked as a frontliner across many offices in both the Forest Service and the private sector.
SALUTE (Veterans) ERG

The SALUTE (Veterans) ERG is a small group of committed veterans in the Forest Service who began establishing an ERG in March 2021. The intent of the ERG is to help and support fellow veterans in the United States Forest Service. The group continues to meet biweekly to work on the founding documents and focus for the group. The vision statement of the SALUTE ERG within the Forest Service will embrace our proud community of employee veterans to support and encourage each other through shared experiences. It’s a group of veterans acting with a collective voice promoting an inclusive and respectful workplace while providing Forest Service leadership with advice, guidance, and recommendations to issues and concerns of the veterans in the agency.

Contact us at SM.FS.ergSALUTE@usda.gov.
Mr. Mark Green is the agency’s director of human resources management. He has held this position since July 2018 in both an acting and permanent capacity. In this position, Green is responsible for leading more than 850 employees engaged in the delivery of all aspects of human resources services and support to an agency with over 28,000 permanent and 12,000 temporary employees.

Green is a graduate of five U.S. Army resident leadership courses. He earned a bachelor’s degree in human Resources Management from Park University and an associate degree in criminal justice from Central Texas College. He also completed the Leadership for a Democratic Society Program, provided by the Office of Personnel Management, Federal Executive Institute.

Prior to starting with the Forest Service, Green served for 25 years in the U.S. Army before retiring in 2007. Throughout that time, he held various leadership positions where he led people performing operational and administrative functions in support of large units and missions. His assignments included multiple duty locations in the United States, Europe, South Korea, Bosnia, and Iraq.

He began his career with the USDA Forest Service in 2007. During his tenure, he has had the privilege of serving in various positions, starting as human resources liaison for the Washington Office and law enforcement and investigations. He was later promoted and supported those same units as an employee relations specialist.

In 2010, Green had the opportunity to serve in the USDA’s office of human resources management. In this role, he was responsible for formulating and interpreting employment policy, addressing senior executive and political appointee performance and conduct, and conducting investigations of many high-level misconduct cases. He also trained and credentialed misconduct investigators for all agencies in the Department.

In 2012, Green returned to the Forest Service as assistant director of human resources management. In this role, he led the development and implementation of many agency-wide management changes and work environment initiatives. These included efforts to strengthen and revitalize the agency’s employee and labor relations programs and taking on a key leadership role in developing and delivering the Forest Service’s anti-harassment program and its supporting components.

In 2018, Green was detailed to the Southern Region as acting deputy regional forester, where he assisted with hurricane recovery operations. He currently resides in Stafford, Virginia, with his family.
Employee Profile

**Name:** David Francomb  
**Position:** Deputy Forest Supervisor  
**Office:** Boise National Forest (Region 4)  
**ERG Role:** SALUTE Chairperson

David is the deputy forest supervisor on the Boise National Forest. Prior to his work on the Boise, David worked as a district ranger on the Green Mountain and Finger Lakes National Forests (Manchester Ranger District) and a deputy district ranger on the White River National Forest (Aspen-Sopris Ranger District). In addition to David’s line officer experience, he worked as a leasable minerals program manager, oil and gas administrator, and zone GIS coordinator. The Forest Service has always provided David with a wide range of exciting and challenging opportunities to step into, and he has embraced many of those during his 18 years with the agency.

David brings a wealth of experience with him that includes leading the implementation of the first wind energy project on National Forest System lands, completing an oil and gas leasing draft environmental impact statement, hosting the 2016 national Rainbow Family gathering on his ranger district in Vermont, and working on several of the most highly visited national forests in the country. David is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army. David’s service included working as a field artillery officer in the First Infantry Division (Big Red One) while being stationed overseas in Germany. While on active duty, David deployed in support of NATO’s Multinational Implementation (IFOR) and Stabilization (SFOR) Forces to peacekeeping operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina and NATO’s Kosovo Force (KFOR). David is extremely excited about the opportunity to work with fellow veterans, setting up a veteran-focused employee resource group for the Forest Service.

In his free time, David enjoys a whole host of activities which include being outdoors on his road bike, camping, splitboarding, and spending time with his family: Therese (wife), Aiden (son who is a sophomore at the United States Air Force Academy), Penelope (high school senior), and Liam (high school sophomore).
Oriana Saiz is the executive assistant and contracting officer representative (COR) at the Southwestern Regional Forester’s Office and is currently on detail with the Office of Civil Rights as a diversity and inclusivity specialist. Prior to her work in the Southwestern Region, Oriana was in the knowledge management division in human resources management (HRM) as an Oracle PeopleSoft database administrator and project manager. Oriana also worked as a training program specialist with the HRM academy (now training and employee development) and started her Forest Service career in the HRM Contact Center. In addition to Oriana’s HRM and program specialist experience, she performed duties as executive secretary and union steward with Local 2200 and is a detailer for the disaster assistance support program, in cooperation with the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Forest Service International Programs. In Oriana’s 10+ years with the agency, she has been afforded diverse and challenging opportunities for development and to promote ethical civil treatment, advocate for persons with disabilities, support veteran networks, and represent employees in the merit system protection boards and in grievances.

She brings a diverse perspective with her from her experience in strategic human capital planning, data analysis, and a military career spanning over 22 years. Oriana is a graduate of Norwich University, where she attained a master’s in public administration. She retired as a master sergeant with the New Mexico Air National Guard and has volunteered and supported many missions, exercises, and active-duty tours. Her combined active duty and reserve component assignments have given her total force experience in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Air Force Headquarters (Pentagon), Air Force Safety Center, Air National Guard, Joint Force Headquarters, Wing Education and Training, Fighter Squadron, Mission Support Squadrons, Services Squadron, Force Support Squadron, Logistics Readiness, and Maintenance Squadron. Her active-duty background includes several overseas duty assignments in Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom, including mobilization in support of Operation Joint Guard and Operation Enduring Freedom. Oriana is passionately driven and honored for the opportunity to serve fellow veterans by being in a position to impact and help establish a viable, veteran-focused employee resource group for the agency.

In her free time, Oriana enjoys hiking, learning and practicing holistic and alternative healing arts, painting, travel, spending time with family and friends, and being a mom to her 8-year-old daughter, Rebeckah.
Unifying People, Lifting, & Inspiring Females Together

Unifying People, Lifting, and Inspiring Females Together (UPLIFT) ERG aims to be inclusive and welcoming. We are ensuring a more inclusive and equitable place for all. The reason and purpose for which the organization is being formed is to help identify and eliminate obstacles women continue to face in the workplace, to provide resources that help people succeed, including creating work-life balance, and empowering women through a support network.

Collaboratively, we promote growth through positive experiences, promote inclusivity through acceptance, and promote women as leaders in all areas and disciplines to spearhead change for the betterment of all in the Forest Service.

Contact us at SM.FS.UPLIFT@usda.gov.
Michiko Martin is the regional forester for the agency’s Southwestern Region. She provides an essential role in carrying out agency goals: enhancing shared stewardship opportunities with partners, meeting high-priority restoration goals across critical landscapes, protecting communities from wildfire, and providing the numerous benefits that flow from healthy forests and grasslands by strengthening all people’s connections with the land. She leads more than 2,000 employees and oversees 20.6 million acres of national forests and grasslands in Arizona and New Mexico.

Michiko brings over 34 years of Federal Government experience to her position. Michiko joined the Forest Service in 2014 as a national director and from 2014 to 2021 has served as the director of conservation education; director of recreation, heritage, and volunteer resources; and as the acting director of engineering, technology, and geospatial services.

Prior to joining the Forest Service, Michiko worked for 12 years as the chief of education, outreach, and new media for the office of national marine sanctuaries, with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the Department of Commerce. Michiko also served as a commissioned naval officer for 12 years, working as a meteorologist and oceanographer. She directed the daily operations of an environmental support unit to naval forces in Okinawa, Japan, and assisted in the operation of global atmospheric and oceanic numerical models.

Michiko is a recognized expert in the field of environmental education, having served 3 years on the board of directors for the National Marine Educators Association, twice serving as an issue editor for “Current,” a nationally recognized education journal for ocean education, and currently serving on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature’s Commission on Education and Communication. She also has an outstanding proficiency in science and engineering, with an extensive background in environmental modeling and numerical forecasting. Additionally, she has participated in oceanographic research cruises and holds a naval qualification to operate small boats.
Employee Profiles

**NAME:** Carolyn Warden  
**POSITION:** Fire Operations Specialist  
**OFFICE:** McCall Ranger District, Payette National Forest (Region 4)  
**ERG ROLE:** UPLIFT Cochairperson

Carolyn Warden works on the Payette National Forest as a fire operations specialist for the McCall Ranger District. She has worked in fire management for about 20 years, with experience on engines, a hotshot crew, a rappel crew, and an incident management team. She has also been involved with her region’s work environment and civil rights committees and serves as the women’s special emphasis program manager for her forest.

Other than work, Carolyn spends most of her time with her husband, who also works for the Forest Service in fire management, and their two kids who are 3 and 1 years old. They do their best to get out and recreate on the forest, while still adhering to nap times.

**NAME:** Savannah Springer  
**POSITION:** Human Resources Specialist  
**OFFICE:** Albuquerque Service Center  
**ERG ROLE:** UPLIFT Cochairperson

Savannah Springer works with the Albuquerque Service Center service team, in Albuquerque, NM. She has been with the Forest Service for just a little over 7 years. Savannah started as a pathways student in the processing department and did some time with the temp staffing team as well as the national permanent fire and aviation staffing team.

During her free time, she spends time with her fiancé and their 2-year-old daughter. They vastly enjoy the great outdoors and camping.