



Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

2022 Chief's Awards

March 14, 2023

Order of the CEREMONY

WELCOME AND OPENING CEREMONY

Mary Pletcher Rice
Chief Executive

Work Environment and Performance Office

OPENING REMARKS

Mary Pletcher Rice
Chief Executive

Work Environment and Performance Office

CHIEF'S REMARKS

Randy Moore
Chief

PRESENTATION OF CHIEF'S AWARDS

SUSTAIN OUR NATION'S FORESTS AND GRASSLANDS

Chris French
Deputy Chief
National Forest System

DELIVER BENEFITS TO THE PUBLIC

Linda Heath
Acting Deputy Chief
Research and Development

APPLY KNOWLEDGE GLOBALLY

Jaelith Hall-Rivera
Deputy Chief
State, Private, and Tribal Forestry

EXCEL AS A HIGH PERFORMING AGENCY

Tony Dixon
Deputy Chief
Business Operations

SPECIAL AWARDS

Angela Coleman
Associate Chief

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Angela Coleman
Associate Chief

CLOSING REMARKS

Mary Pletcher Rice

Forest Service Award Category

SUSTAIN OUR NATION'S FORESTS AND GRASSLANDS

Award **RECIPIENTS**

National Greening Fire Team

Post-Fire Collaborative Recovery and
Assessment Team

Four Peaks Restoration

Special Uses Workforce Development Program

Awards in this category recognize major achievements in developing new programs or working with partners in restoring, sustaining, or enhancing the Nation's forests and grasslands.

Forested land alone comprises nearly one-third of the total land area of the United States—the single largest classification of land cover in the country. More than 56 percent of the total forested area is in private ownership. At the Forest Service, we manage about one-fifth of the Nation's forested area and nearly 10 percent of the Nation's rangelands in a system of public lands called the national forests and grasslands. Through direct natural resource management; the pursuit and exchange of new knowledge; and partnerships with State, private, and Tribal landowners; we have the capability to help support sustainable stewardship of much of America's forests and grasslands.

Our Nation's vast forests and grasslands are essential to the ecological, physical, biological, economic, cultural, and social well-being of our country. Impacts from severe wildfires, insects and diseases, invasive species, human influences, climate change, extreme weather, and other visible

disturbances have raised public awareness about the environment. These impacts, along with changing human demands, perpetually challenge our ability to ensure that ecosystems are healthy and resilient (and therefore more adaptable to changing conditions) or can be restored to a healthy state.

We constantly collect new information and acquire new knowledge through scientific inquiry and through our experience in managing natural resources. When we apply this knowledge, our land management practices become more effective, helping to make ecosystems more resilient. Long-term conservation across landownership boundaries through collaborative partnerships and knowledge transfer can enhance the natural functions of the land, such as producing cleaner water. It can also contribute to sustainability—the ability of forests and grasslands to produce goods and services that people want and need, both now and in the future. Our commitment to long-term sustainability will help maintain healthy, resilient, and productive forests and grasslands for future generations.



NATIONAL GREENING FIRE TEAM

CHAMPIONING BEST PRACTICES FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN INCIDENT OPERATIONS

UNITS: Washington Office—Fire and Aviation Management, Office of Sustainability and Climate, National Partnership Office; San Juan National Forest; Dixie National Forest; Northern Regional Office; Southwestern Regional Office; Pacific Southwest Regional Office; Kaibab National Forest, Williams Dispatch Center; Rocky Mountain Regional Office; Sierra National Forest; National Technology and Development Program

PARTNERS: Rocky Mountain Interagency Support Cache; Northwest Incident Support Cache; Northern California Interagency Support Cache; Southwest Incident Support Cache

TEAM MEMBERS: Dave Haston, Kelly Jaramillo, Denise Kusnir, Susan Leslie, Judith Downing, Colin Sorenson, Maya Bhadury, Tyler Willis, Brian Reublinger, Pauline Ordonez, Jodi Mallozzi, Donna Nemeth, Leak Pen, Zephaniah Cunningham, Ralph Gonzales, Marcus Medina, Hector Basso, Mark Garland, Alex Tovar, Ted Etter

The National Greening Fire Team works with partners to pioneer actions and technology that can make incident operations more sustainable. The team helps the interagency fire and aviation management community reduce waste and energy consumption through best practices for sustainable operations. Team members partner with green vendors to pilot and collect data on solar light towers and solar-powered trailers, along with a new mobile water treatment system for fire camps. The team also works with cache managers to achieve net zero waste incident operations by 2030. In addition, the team hosted the first Green Procurement Tech Expo to help new businesses understand Federal and incident procurement so they can deliver more green products and services on incidents. Through these and other initiatives, the team is reducing environmental impacts on incidents and helping the Forest Service achieve its goals for safety, sustainability, and climate change mitigation.





POST-FIRE COLLABORATIVE RECOVERY AND ASSESSMENT TEAM

MODELING SUCCESS IN POSTFIRE RECOVERY THROUGH COLLABORATION AND SHARED STEWARDSHIP

UNITS: Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland

PARTNERS: Larimer County, Boulder County, and Grand County, CO; Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed; Northern Water; Big Thompson Watershed Coalition; Natural Resources Conservation Service; city of Greeley, CO; Left Hand Watershed Center

TEAM MEMBERS: Monte Williams, Lori Hodges, Therese Glowacki, Katherine Morris, Hally Strevey, Esther Vincent, Laura Quattrini, Clint Evans, Sean Chambers, Jessie Olson, Robert Skorkowsky, Max Forgensi, Kevin McLaughlin, Katie Donahue, Angie Gee

The Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland worked with partners from Federal, State, and local governments, as well as nongovernmental organizations, to create a successful model of shared stewardship in postfire recovery. In 2020, confronted by the two largest wildfires in Colorado history (the Cameron Peak and East Troublesome Fires), the forest convened stakeholders to form the Post-Fire Collaborative Assessment and Recovery Team. The team identified information needs, lines of communications, organizational structure, roles and responsibilities, and critical steps to prepare for postfire recovery. Subgroups collaborated in areas such as water recovery, community recovery, and public and environmental health. As the fires grew in size and new fires broke out, the model was replicated in three Colorado counties, with leadership passing from the Forest Service to partners. The teams were able to share capacity while planning for and carrying out activities for postfire recovery. Their partnership resulted in the Forest Service's first Post-Fire Recovery Playbook.





FOUR PEAKS RESTORATION

RESTORING NATIVE VEGETATION TO THE SONORAN DESERT ECOSYSTEM THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

UNITS: Mesa, Globe, and Cave Creek Ranger Districts, Tonto National Forest

PARTNERS: National Forest Foundation; Natural Restorations; Arizona Wholesale Growers; Arizona Department of Recreation; Tonto Recreation Alliance; Ecoculture; Four Peaks Brewery; Arizona State Lottery

TEAM MEMBERS: Kelly Kessler, Bec Veerman, Rebecca Davidson, Nicole Corey, Justin Corey, Shawn Cox

In 2020, the Bush Fire ripped through one of the most heavily used areas of the Tonto National Forest’s Sonoran Desert ecosystem, destroying about 80,000 saguaros. In place of the forest’s annual cleanup of the area, Kelly Kessler suggested planting saguaros. By early November 2020, the team had more than 350 plants donated by a local wholesale grower, along with 250 volunteers to support 35 Forest Service employees in planting the saguaros, using safe COVID practices and cactus handling. Since the initial event, the team has found new partners to continue restoring native vegetation to the desert ecosystem every year. What started as a chance to do something good in very dark times has become an ongoing effort, giving people hope and the opportunity to think outside the box by working both inside and outside the Forest Service.





SPECIAL USES WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

DEVELOPING THE FOREST SERVICE WORKFORCE FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY

UNITS: Washington Office—Recreation, Heritage, and Volunteer Resources; Lands and Realty Management; Job Corps National Office

PARTNERS: Lyndon B. Johnson Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center; American Forest Foundation; Southern California Mountain Foundation

TEAM MEMBERS: Arthur Phalo, Elrand Denson, Jackie Mills, Maya Solomon, Cynthia Szymanski, Mathias Wallace, Christina Henderson, Todd Hess, Mark Chandler, Ragen McNair, James Lowe, Julie Moore, Debbie Abel, Sandy Bonilla, Jordan Bancroft, Michelle Williams, Phyllis Murphy, Kerwin Dewberry, Brian Banks, Robert Lee, Patricia Daniels

The Forest Service relies on special use permits for many recreational and other services. To help fill a gap in experienced permit administrators, Forest Service staffs joined together to launch the Special Uses Workforce Development Program. The program uses internships to teach Job Corps students how to administer special use permits through formal training and on-the-job experiences. In 2017, the Lyndon B. Johnson Job Civilian Corps Center, in coordination with the Forest Service's assistant director of Lands and Realty Management, developed a Special Uses Administrator Core Competency Training Program as a succession-planning tool. The program offers advanced technical-skills training and hands-on experience over a 16- to 27-week paid internship. Many Job Corps students come from underserved communities; after completing the internship and course work, they can apply for Federal jobs, building more diversity and inclusion into the Forest Service workforce.



Forest Service Award Category

DELIVER BENEFITS TO THE PUBLIC

Award **RECIPIENTS**

The Merikins Project at Prospect Bluff

Monongahela National Forest Red Creek
Bridge Recovery Project Team

OneUSDA Southeast Alaska Sustainability
Strategy Team

Savannah River

America's forests and grasslands furnish a wide range of benefits to the American people. Land management that is sustainable enables forests and grasslands to continue producing goods and services to meet multiple public demands, thereby contributing to human health, prosperity, and quality of life for local communities and for the Nation as a whole.

Recognizing the importance of forest stewardship, our country set aside the Nation's forest reserves in 1897 to "improve and protect the forest within the boundaries, or for the purpose of securing favorable conditions of water flows, and to furnish a continuous supply of timber." In 1960, the Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act declared that the national forests should be managed "for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish purposes." The Forest Service's research and development, technical assistance, technology transfer, and other services support natural resource management on the national forests, national grasslands, and other lands. At the Forest Service, we work with other Federal

agencies, State agencies, Federally Recognized Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations, communities, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and private landowners to sustain forests and grasslands across ownerships nationwide.

This award category recognizes outstanding achievements in delivering benefits to the people we serve and ensuring they benefit from healthy, resilient forests and grasslands. Through the lands we manage, we provide recreational settings and opportunities; cultural and heritage resources; scenery; resources such as clean air and water, minerals, fish, wildlife, livestock forage, and firewood; various sources of renewable and nonrenewable energy; corridors for communication and energy transmission; and many other ecosystem services and benefits. Each year, the benefits generate billions of dollars for the national economy, underpinning local economies in many rural areas and enhancing the quality of life and sense of place for people in many communities.



THE MERIKINS PROJECT AT PROSPECT BLUFF

IMPROVING RACIAL EQUITY AND BROADENING PUBLIC APPRECIATION FOR OUR NATIONAL HISTORY

UNIT: National Forests in Florida

TEAM MEMBERS: Dawn Lawrence, Andrea Repp

Prospect Bluff on the Florida panhandle is a designated site in the National Underground Railroad system, of great interest to visitors as the site of a fortified community of formerly enslaved people in the early 1800s. In summer 2022, Dawn Lawrence and Dr. Andrea Repp of the National Forests in Florida created an opportunity for people of African ancestry to reconnect with their rich heritage by visiting a site that was a beacon of freedom for people enslaved in America. The Merikins Project at Prospect Bluff gives visitors equitable access to the historical, economic, physical, mental, and quality-of-life benefits that people get from their national forests. The project benefits the Forest Service and the Nation by improving racial equity and broadening public appreciation for a lesser known part of our national history. Through partner support, the project increases economic opportunities for local Black communities as the site becomes a destination for Black history tourism.





MONONGAHELA NATIONAL FOREST RED CREEK BRIDGE RECOVERY PROJECT TEAM

EXPEDITING REPLACEMENT OF A BRIDGE CRITICALLY NEEDED FOR LOCAL ACCESS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

UNITS: Monongahela National Forest; Eastern Regional Office

PARTNER: West Virginia Department of Highways

TEAM MEMBERS: Chad Arbogast, Patrick Hampston, Benjamin Shaffer, Kelly Bridges, James Rossi, Amy Albright, Brooke Andrew, Clark Bartelt, Mark Beverage, Donald Bolden, David Buck, Jeff Dulka, Kendre DiPietro, Zoey Fox, Jeremiah Knavenshue, Nathan Parsons, John Waggy, Leo Weese

In July 2022, inspectors closed the Red Creek Bridge on the Monongahela National Forest in Tucker County, WV, due to a critical deficiency in the bridge. About 100 local residents use the bridge for access and essential community services; the only other access requires a 45-mile detour, in part over gravel roads not maintained in winter. The forest formed a multidisciplinary bridge recovery project team to solve the problem. The team obtained funding and environmental permits, created a plan for replacing the bridge with a temporary structure, and awarded a contract by late August. Forest staff built a temporary pedestrian bridge for community access, and the replacement bridge was opened to the public in early October, ahead of schedule and without injuries or safety issues.





ONEUSDA SOUTHEAST ALASKA SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY TEAM

IMPROVING PARTNERSHIPS, COMMUNITY SERVICE, AND
ECONOMIC, CULTURAL, AND CONSERVATION CONDITIONS
ON AND AROUND THE TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST

UNITS: Alaska Regional Office; White River National Forest; Tongass National Forest

PARTNERS: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)–Natural Resources Conservation Service (Alaska) and Rural Development (Alaska)

TEAM MEMBERS: Barbara Miranda, Chad VanOrmer, Samia Savell, Ann Fischer, Keith Perkins, Laurie Cooper, Riley Stadt, Jean Daniels, Erica Keene, Kevin Hood, Kelly O'Soup, Mallory Munz, Nicole Olsen, Michael Shephard, Clark Woolley, Paul Robbins, Jr.

The OneUSDA team—with representatives from the Forest Service, Rural Development, and Natural Resources Conservation Service—formed in response to Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack's announcement of the Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy in July 2021. The team's mission was to develop a \$25-million investment portfolio to improve economic, cultural, and conservation outcomes across Southeast Alaska, with a focus on underserved communities and local inputs and leadership. Through a collaborative process in response to community needs, the team succeeded in obligating all funds in fiscal year 2022. Results included better service to underserved communities; stronger relationships among USDA agencies and with the public and elected officials; and improved economic, cultural, and conservation conditions in Southeast Alaska. The OneUSDA Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy Team also received the Secretary's Award.





SAVANNAH RIVER

PROVIDING CLEANER DRINKING WATER FOR MORE THAN 2 MILLION GEORGIANS AND SOUTH CAROLINIANS

UNIT: Forest Service, Savannah River

PARTNERS: U.S. Department of Energy, Savannah River Site; Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, LLC; University of Georgia, Savannah River Ecology Laboratory

TEAM MEMBERS: Phillip Prater, Lawrence Moore, Andrew Thompson, Stephanie Smith-Frizzell, Willie Holston, Secunda Hughes, Jeffrey Thibault, Kevin Boerstler, Cristina Logan, Doug Aubrey, Andrew Horcher, Avery Hammett, Matthew Baker, Seth Miller, Fabio Toledo, Jeffrey Lott, Catherine Hong

For the past 20 years, the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Energy, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, and Savannah River Ecology Lab have worked together to reduce the amount of tritium-contaminated ground water from reaching the Savannah River, a source of drinking water for over 2 million residents of Georgia and South Carolina. The partners used phytoremediation to treat contaminated water that would otherwise have entered the river. Since phytoremediation began in 2001, about 190 million gallons of water containing nearly 7,000 curies of tritium have been safely irrigated on lands containing thousands of loblolly pines. Annual testing demonstrates that about 80 percent of the tritiated water is evapotranspired by the trees.



*Forest Service
Award Category*

APPLY KNOWLEDGE GLOBALLY

Award **RECIPIENTS**

Brian Schaffler

Wood for Life

Pikes Peak

Enterprise Sites of Civil Rights and
Resistance Program

Through intellectual inquiry and knowledge transfer, at the Forest Service, we provide land managers and others with better information, applications, and tools for improved resource management and decision making. To increase our understanding of forests and grasslands, we are constantly improving our knowledge of complex environmental processes, biological and physical conditions, resource uses, human and social dimensions, the economic value of the resources we manage, and the interconnections among all these elements. From on-the-ground natural resource management to long-term strategic policy development, all our efforts to sustain forests and grasslands far into the future depend on new knowledge, information, and applications.

To benefit from global knowledge, we continually interact—and share what we know—with partners worldwide. By exchanging scientific results, natural resource assessments, management trends,

innovations, and best practices across natural resource management disciplines and jurisdictional boundaries, we will help the global natural resource community make better management decisions in our collective effort to care for all lands and deliver sustainable benefits to people.

Awards in this category recognize efforts that have had a major impact on the advancement of science and the development and application of technology. In addition to our collaboration with partners from Federal, State, local, and Tribal government agencies, partners, universities, the private sector, and international groups, we attribute our land management success in part to our world class expertise in research and development; our capacity to develop new technologies; our innovation in forest products; our ability to conduct resource assessments; and our vast collection of geospatial information, inventory data, and monitoring information.



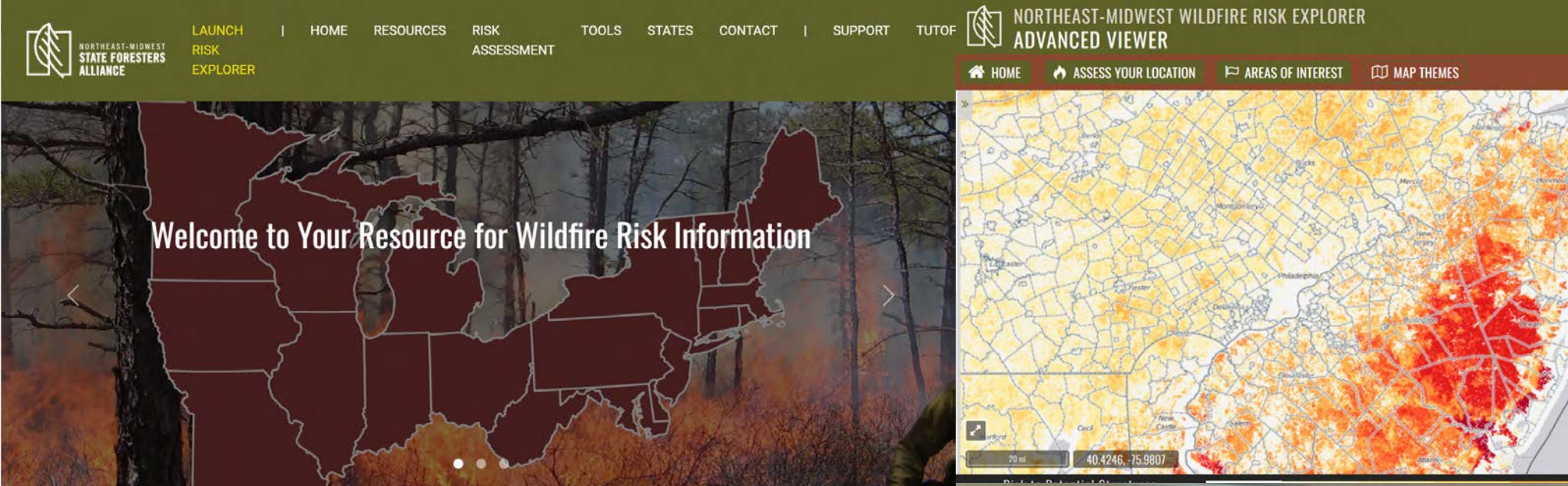
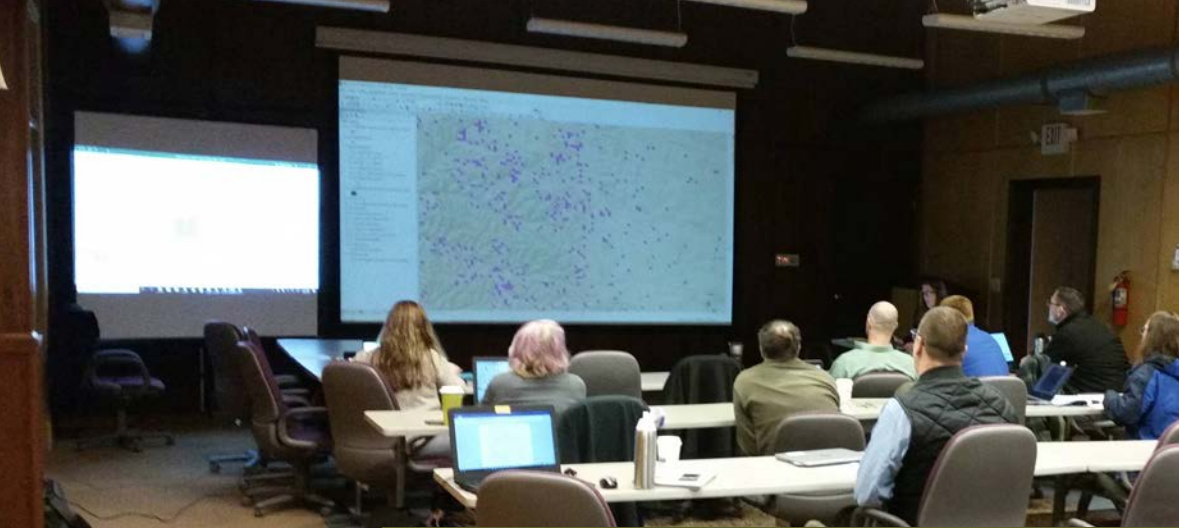
BRIAN SCHAFFLER

PROVIDING LEADERSHIP AND EXPERTISE IN DEVELOPING THE NORTHEAST-MIDWEST QUANTITATIVE WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

UNIT: Eastern Regional Office, Fire and Aviation Management

PARTNERS: States and national forests across the Eastern Region;
U.S. Department of the Interior

Brian Schaffler led the Eastern Region on a 4-year, multimillion-dollar project: developing an all-lands Quantitative Wildfire Risk Assessment. The tool is on a dashboard available to all residents and cooperators in the 20 States across the Eastern Region. Brian coordinated with all 20 States, the U.S. Department of the Interior, and national forests across the region to update LANDFIRE fuels model data and high-value resources and assets, giving the Forest Service a highly accurate picture of the region. The tool has an advanced viewer to allow land managers to prepare detailed risk assessment and fire behavior reports to support their planning. The viewer also allows citizens to assess their own wildfire risk and prepare accordingly.





WOOD FOR LIFE

DEMONSTRATING CREATIVE THINKING, HARD WORK,
AND DEDICATION TO SERVING PEOPLE IN NEED IN THE
SOUTHWEST

UNITS: Kaibab National Forest; Coconino National Forest; San Juan National Forest

PARTNERS: Alamo Navajo Fuels Crew; Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps; Southwest Conservation Corps; Navajo Nation Chapter Houses; Honanie Family/Koho for Hopi; Chizh for Cheii; Hopi Villages; Northern Arizona University Ecological Research Institute; The Nature Conservancy, University of Arizona Tribal Cooperative Extension

TEAM MEMBERS: Jake Dahlin, Timothy Leishman, David Casey, Emily Olsen, Susan Johnson, Brian Brashaw

Since 2018, Wood for Life [has delivered 7,000 cords](#) of firewood to Tribes in Arizona. In 2021, with the program's expansion to the San Juan National Forest in Colorado, the Forest Service began delivering wood to additional Tribes. Working with Tribal governments and communities, the Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps, and other partners, the Wood for Life team connects Tribal peoples to small-diameter timber from restoration projects led by the National Forest Foundation and the Forest Service. Tribal members split the wood and provide it to elders and other community members so they can heat their homes and cook their meals. The project provides firewood from small-diameter materials in need of disposal to needy families and elderly people in low-income areas on Tribal lands.





PIKES PEAK

HIGHLIGHTING WORLD-CLASS RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION

UNIT: Pikes Peak Ranger District, Pike-San Isabel National Forests

PARTNER: City of Colorado Springs

TEAM MEMBERS: Oscar Martinez, Jeff Hovermale, Diana Trujillo, Jack Glavan, Sandy Elliott, Mayor John Suthers, Karen Palus, Pikes Peak Staff

With an elevation of 14,115 feet, Pikes Peak in Colorado is known as “America’s Mountain.” Over the past several years, the Pike-San Isabel National Forests have launched a massive undertaking—construction of a new, state-of-the-art visitor center atop the mountain. A huge team of devoted workers from the Forest Service, Colorado Springs, and other partners battled geography, weather, oxygen limitations, and a global pandemic to complete North America’s highest construction project. Each year, the \$65-million Summit Visitor Center enhances the recreational experiences of more than 500,000 visitors, who come to enjoy the stunning views and learn the history of Pikes Peak. The mountain’s climate, geography, and cultural importance to American Indians are all on display as never before.





ENTERPRISE SITES OF CIVIL RIGHTS AND RESISTANCE PROGRAM

HIGHLIGHTING THE INTERSECTION OF HISTORY, EQUITY, AND OUTDOOR RECREATION

UNITS: Washington Office, Enterprise Program; Hoosier National Forest; Eastern Regional Office; Mark Twain National Forest

PARTNER: Roberts, Thomas, Bonds Family group – descendants families

TEAM MEMBERS: Michael Hill, Amanda Campbell, Valencia Morris, Teresa Villalobos, Troy Ferone, Daniel Cain, Mike Chaveas, Christopher Thornton, Stacy Duke, Marion Mason, James Halpern, Emma Woodruff, Jonathan Heyle, Regina Johnson, Lynette Troutman, Diana Daniels, David Bonds, Stevie Bonds, Steve Bonds, Elijah White

In October 2021, the Enterprise Program established the Sites of Civil Rights and Resistance Program to increase equity and representation by underserved and underrepresented communities at Forest Service recreational and interpretive sites. The program engages communities and supports collaborative discussions between Forest Service employees and community stakeholders. One goal is to develop new platforms for identifying and interpreting sites reflecting the histories of underserved and underrepresented communities. The program works to improve access for minorities to the national forests through the interpretation of African-American historical and archeological sites, in part by increasing the number of nominations to the National Register of Historic Places.



*Forest Service
Award Category*

EXCEL AS A HIGH-PERFORMING AGENCY

Award **RECIPIENTS**

Region 4 Human Resources Service Team

Cristina Newton-Schlesselman

Casualty Assistance Program

New Firefighting Occupational Series

Service is expressed in the Forest Service's name and in our motto: "Caring for the land and serving people." Striving for outstanding public service is part of our organizational culture. We have traditionally attracted employees with genuine interests in natural resources and land management—and who are also dedicated to serving the American people.

As our country's demographics change, the needs and desires of our citizens change as well. By increasing the diversity in our workforce and promoting an inclusive organizational culture, we are better meeting the needs of the people we serve. We are committed to creating a workplace environment that can attract and retain top employees while meeting the Nation's present

and future needs. The deep connection that our employees feel to our mission and conservation ethic motivates them to better serve our Nation.

We are also dedicated to organizational efficiency and cost-effectiveness. We constantly seek better ways of doing business and improving organizational performance and employee morale. This award category recognizes major accomplishments in ensuring an efficient and effective business environment by developing practices and procedures that improve customer service, efficiency, human resource management, communication, and administrative facilities management or ensure financial and performance accountability.



REGION 4 HUMAN RESOURCES SERVICE TEAM

SHOWING OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE IN HIRING NEW NONFIRE EMPLOYEES TO MEET REGIONAL NEEDS

UNIT: Intermountain Regional Office, Human Resources Management

TEAM MEMBERS: Melissa Dittmann, Megan Bowen, Bonnie Offutt, Rhonda Dory, Lauren Archer, Heather Crawford, Alisha Murri, Brandon Emery, Jeannell Johnson Thomas, Tara Werner, Melissa Ewing, Patricia Crane, Tandy Bolling, Eleyna Rosenthal, Jacqueline Waters, Julie Beall, Crystal Martinez, Lisa McKinnen

In 2022, the Intermountain Region faced the need to rapidly increase its nonfire staffing to meet public demands for goods and services from the national forests and grasslands. The R4 Human Resources Service Team worked with regional leaders and hiring managers to greatly increase the number of new hires. The team created a strategy for identifying vacancies in the region and establishing priorities for filling them. The team’s work allowed the region to fill an exceptionally high number of high-priority vacancies. The region was able to hire 629 new nonfire employees, a 152-percent increase over 2020-21 hiring levels, including many new hires that increased workforce diversity.





CRISTINA NEWTON-SCHLESSELMAN

MAKING THE FOREST SERVICE AN EMPLOYER OF CHOICE FOR
YOUNG ADULTS FROM UNDERREPRESENTED COMMUNITIES

UNIT: Job Corps National Office

PARTNERS: Forest Service hiring managers; Job Corps civilian conservation centers

In February 2022, Chief Randy Moore expressed his commitment to Job Corps by urging Forest Service regional offices to hire 100 graduates from the Forest Service's 24 Job Corps civilian conservation centers by fiscal year 2025, starting with 18 hires in fiscal year 2022. It was a pivotal moment in the history of the agency's Job Corps program. Cris Newton-Schlesselman in the national office took full ownership of the initiative as an extra duty on top of her already extensive program of work. Cris worked extensively with hiring managers across the country and with staff at all 24 Job Corps centers to expedite the hires. She also worked with myriad Job Corps graduates individually, on a case-by-case basis. Thanks to her hard work, the Forest Service exceeded its goal, hiring 22 Job Corps graduates in fiscal year 2022.





CASUALTY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

TAKING CARE OF OUR OWN AT THE FOREST SERVICE

UNIT: Washington Office—Office of Safety and Occupational Health, National Technology and Development Program; Southern Regional Office; Pacific Northwest Regional Office

TEAM MEMBERS: Amber Stewart, Katie Mergel, James Lerke, Kristel Johnson, Renae Crippen, Shawn Ray-Delmas, Sandra Bearden, Todd Legler, Grayson Beckley, Travis Thompson, Wendy Mortier, Eric Martinez, Monica Neal, Wendy Tresouthick, Douglas Hoffmaster, Gail McCrary, Cody Leclerc, Demetria Elosiebo, Paul Lemmon, Denise Depierre

When incidents lead to fatalities, the bereaved families can look to Forest Service liaisons for help. One liaison prepared a course (You Will Not Stand Alone) on how to provide family support following a casualty. Follow-up courses have proliferated across the agency, and the Casualty Assistance Program has built on them. In 2017, an interdisciplinary working group reviewed and revised agency policy regarding serious and fatal injuries to ensure that policies supported the affected employees and their families. The group also discussed differences between incidents that are and are not in the line of duty, and it developed a strategy for preparing and training employees to serve as official hospital and family liaisons. The group made a recommendation, later accepted by national leadership, to establish a permanent Casualty Assistance Program. Over time, a grassroots initiative led by passionate employees grew into a national program based on the agency's core values of safety, interdependence, and service.





NEW FIREFIGHTING OCCUPATIONAL SERIES

IMPROVING PAY AND BENEFITS FOR FEDERAL WILDLAND
FIREFIGHTERS NATIONWIDE

UNITS: Albuquerque Service Center, Human Resources Management

PARTNERS: Washington Office, Fire and Aviation Management; USDA Office of the Secretary, Office of Human Resource Management, and National Finance Center; Office of Personnel Management; U.S. Department of the Interior

TEAM MEMBERS: Pamela Spearow, Elizabeth Feutrier, Paul Poplett, Laree Edgecombe, Jennifer Baumgartner, Lisa Renken, Nathan Lancaster

Wildland firefighters protect communities, infrastructure, natural resources, and more from wildfire. Because the Forest Service needs the ability to recruit and retain a dedicated force of high-performing wildland firefighters, agency leadership formed a team to improve compensation, benefits, training, mental health, and work-life balance for nearly 12,000 Forest Service firefighters by creating a new occupational series. In creating the new series, the team worked with Federal partners to resolve complex issues related to firefighter duties, qualifications, pay, and benefits, including supplemental pay. As a result, Forest Service fire employees have begun getting supplemental pay under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law of 2021, including retroactive payments and additional pay for hours worked. These steps will help the Forest Service recruit and retain the stable force of wildland firefighters it needs.



Forest Service
Award Category
SPECIAL AWARDS

Award
RECIPIENTS

National Pandemic Response Team

Office of Tribal Relations



NATIONAL PANDEMIC RESPONSE TEAM

PROTECTING THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF TENS OF THOUSANDS OF EMPLOYEES, PARTNERS, AND OTHERS

UNITS: Washington Office—Engineering, State, Private, and Tribal Forestry, Chief Information Office; Albuquerque Service Center—Human Resources Management, Chief Financial Officer

TEAM MEMBERS: Emilee Blount, Debbie Pressman, Susan Cranmore, Anthony (A.T.) Torres, William (Bill) Wettengel, Jennifer McGuire, Tomas Martinez, Jason Flaherty, Lauro Garcia, Melissa Dittmann, Joyce El Kouarti, Erica Nieto, Aaron Sics, Sherry Neal, Tim Holden, Brian Watts, Barbara (Bea) Day, Michelle Fidler, Sirena Fugitt, Iva Sanders, Linda Smith

In early 2020, the administration's top priority became an effective response to the global pandemic caused by the coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19). The National Pandemic Response Team worked to protect the health and safety of over 30,000 employees as well as partners, collaborators, visitors, and contractors. Working in a constant state of emergency and uncertainty, the team played a vital role in protecting employees, reducing the spread of COVID-19, and safely conducting Forest Service operations both indoors and outdoors across the Nation. A top priority for the team was complying with Executive Order 14043, Requiring Coronavirus Disease Vaccination for Federal Employees. The team engaged an interdisciplinary group of more than 200 diverse and geographically dispersed employees to carry out the vaccine mandate, achieving a 99-percent survey response rate and an 88-percent employee vaccination rate.





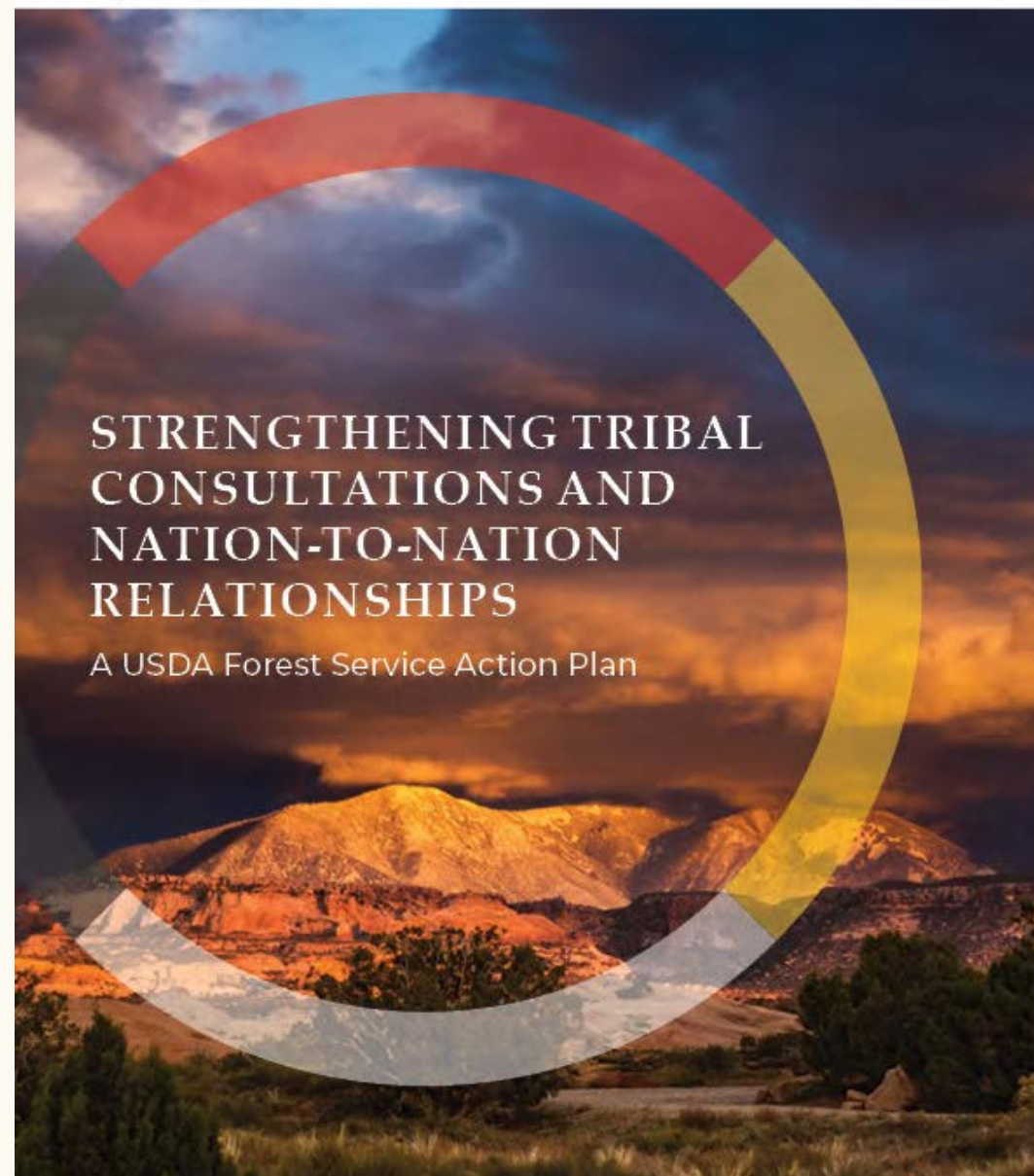
OFFICE OF TRIBAL RELATIONS

IMPROVING TRIBAL CONSULTATIONS AND STRENGTHENING NATION-TO-NATION RELATIONSHIPS

UNIT: Washington Office, Office of Tribal Relations

TEAM MEMBERS: Alicia Bell Sheeter, Yolynda Begay, Sandy Marin, Rebecca Hill, Reed Robinson, Richard Adkins, Lisa Radosevich-Craig

The Forest Service is bound by Tribal trust and treaty obligations to consult with federally recognized Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations through Nation-to-Nation relationships. Accordingly, the Office of Tribal Relations has released Strengthening Tribal Consultation and Nation-to-Nation Relationships: a USDA Forest Service Action Plan . The plan gives guidance on fulfilling the agency’s Federal trust responsibility, honoring treaty obligations, and supporting Tribal self-determination. By engaging in diplomacy, building trust, and reaching out to Tribal Nations, the Forest Service will use the plan to increase its understanding of Indigenous knowledge, awareness, and cultural competency. Under the plan, the agency will strive to integrate its mission, purpose, and values with the Indigenous understanding of “interconnectedness.” Together with Tribes, the Forest Service will build on Nation-to-Nation relationships to more effectively manage the Nation’s shared resources, meeting the challenges that climate change, wildfire, and other threats pose to the Nation’s shared landscapes.



Chief's Awards Committee

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



Each winning team will receive a wooden tree cookie award.

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE 2022 CHIEF’S AWARDS COMMITTEES AND VOLUNTEERS

Washington Office Work Environment and Performance Office, Host

PLANNING TEAM

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| Bunni Maceo, Team Lead | Robin McDonald |
| Rebecca Wallace | Mason Lowery |
| Debbie Cress | Sonja Beavers |
| Tara Little | |

REVIEW TEAM


- | | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Dixie Porter | Tracie Wilkinson | Larry Weigand | Deidre Smith |
| Lara Peterson | Jacob Tadeo | Amanda McAdams | Helen Cortes |
| Rochelle Selvin | Ashleigh Trimble | Bill Clark | Katherine Sanchez |
| Phillip Rodbell | Cheri Jones | Hector Ortiz | Meador |

TECH TEAM

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| Hunt Spear | Nancy Ellsworth |
| Mason Lowery | Calvin Miller |

THE 2022 CHIEF’S AWARDS COMMITTEE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE SERVICES RENDERED BY

- U.S. Department of Defense
- American Sign Language Interpreters
- WO Office of Communication Staff



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