

# 2017 USDA Forest Service Volunteers & Service Award Recipients

In fiscal year 2017, the Forest Service engaged 115,000 volunteers and service participants. Together, they contributed 4.6 million hours valued at \$111 million and equivalent to 2,560 full time employees—nearly 10% of the Forest Service permanent workforce. The Forest Service is proud to recognize these individuals, organizations and partners for their exceptional work in five categories: Citizen Stewardship & Partnerships, Cultural Diversity, Enduring Service, Leadership and Restoration.

## Citizen Stewardship & Partnerships

### Quentin Tyler Degering, Washakie and Wind River Ranger Districts, Shoshone National Forest, Wyoming



Quentin Degering instructs a Student Conservation Association Intern on the proper placement and technique of installing a culvert during the 2017 Bears Ears Blasting Project. Forest Service photo by Callie Domek.

Forest Service employee Quentin Degering is the South Zone Trail Program (SZTP) Volunteer and Service Project coordinator on the Washakie and Wind River Ranger Districts. In his first year as Coordinator, Quentin tripled the number of volunteer service hours reported by the unit the previous year. Prior to this position, Quentin worked as a trails technician for 12 seasons. This experience informed his focus on organizing projects that align with visitor use patterns and skill levels as a volunteer coordinator.

Quentin supports capacity building by cultivating cross training between partners and FS trail crews, improving productivity and promoting shared stewardship of public lands. He organized and led a pilot Wilderness trail work initiative to address backlog of deferred maintenance across the South Zone. Quentin coordinates training of volunteer partners, permittees, conservation corps members, veterans, and interns, and has been a mentor extraordinaire for many 21<sup>st</sup> Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC) participants. He strengthened the unit's safety culture by developing protocol for Saw certification training. His experiences working on trails and his commitment to creating projects that build on volunteer strengths and factor in visitor use is making a difference for South Zone trails.

### Lutherhaven Ministries, Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District, Idaho Panhandle National Forests, Idaho



Lutherhaven volunteer applies his carpentry skills to the Spyglass ground house restoration project in July 2017. Forest Service photo by Barbara Hansen.

Lutherhaven Ministries partners with the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District to support recreation, clear trails, maintain day use sites, and work on special projects that benefit the district and the public it serves through its Servant Adventure program.

Among the many special projects Lutherhaven supports is the restoration of the historic Spyglass Lookout ground house. As the lead partner Servant Adventure volunteers contributed 510 volunteer hours in 2017 and a total of about 4,300 hours since the inception of the project in 2012. Lutherhaven has remained steadfast in its support and commitment to the project. In addition to an estimated \$80,000 of in-kind contributions, the executive director of the organization secured \$30,000 in grants, without which the restoration may not have been possible.

Lutherhaven takes the initiative annually to prepare a pre-season program of work, coordinate volunteers' work with the Forest Service and other partners, and research and resolve questions or issues that arise. Volunteer project managers prepare inventories of materials and define project needs, share progress reports and photos throughout the season and generate a post-season accomplishment report annually.

This heritage project preserves the legacy of the Forest Service fire lookout era and provides visitors an opportunity to experience life as a lookout at a remote post.

## Special Recognition: El Toro Trail Rehabilitation, El Yunque National Forest, Puerto Rico



The rehabilitation of El Toro Trail exposed community members to the rich biodiversity of the El Yunque National Forest. Forest Service photo by Juana Rosas.

By working with a partnership consortium that included community based organizations, public schools, Forest Service Job Corps and the Youth Conservation Corps, the El Yunque National Forest effectively engaged members from the Naguabo, Palmer, Guayama, and Rio Grande communities to participate in El Toro Trail Rehabilitation and Wilderness / Historic Trail Training.

Students and volunteers worked together over a two week period while learning about the Forest Service, historic trail and wilderness regulations, and environment ethics under the leadership and mentorship of Forest Service trail masters.

This project promoted the inclusion of communities that have not traditionally partnered with the Forest and resulted in the reopening of the El Toro Trail after 20 years of being closed to the public. The El Toro Trail Rehabilitation Project served as a bridge between the Forest Service, underserved communities and advocacy organizations. It strengthened relationships with underrepresented stakeholders; raised awareness of public lands; and promoted natural resources career opportunities, all while supporting the Forest Service goals to sustain our nation's forests and grasslands and deliver benefits to the public.

## Cultural Diversity

### MobilizeGreen, National Partnership



MobilizeGreen YCC crew cleans up the Anvil Lake Beach the old fashion way by hand, so as not to disturb the sensitive ecosystem. Photo courtesy of MobilizeGreen.

The Forest Service—MobilizeGreen partnership has resulted in opportunities for 228 young people from diverse communities and socio-economic backgrounds to contribute 125,907 hours or the equivalent of 70 full time employees annually to projects in every deputy area and region, and research stations and the area since 2012. Whether the Resource Assistants Program (RAP) for college students and recent graduates or the residential Youth Conservation Corps program for teenagers, we are working together to develop the next generation of conservation stewards and increase the diversity of our workforce.

The first collaboration with MobilizeGreen was an internship program for nine recent graduates. This partnership informed the design of the RAP of which MobilizeGreen is one of nine partners. The nimbleness of this partnership is critical to our ability to respond to emerging needs. In response to inquiries

from youth and families about opportunities for teenagers who are unable to commute to forest daily for Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) jobs, the Forest Service worked with MobilizeGreen to help build our capacity for residential YCC programs. Since 2015, the Forest Service has hosted YCC programs on three forests and are adding a fourth in 2018 on the Monongahela National Forest based in partnership with MobilizeGreen. We recruit applicants nationally on the Forest Service website and host them at camps on forests where they work, learn and play outside. Residential YCC opportunities expose young people during their formative years to natural and cultural resources careers, the benefits of being outdoors and the opportunity to earn a minimum wage for hours worked.

The MobilizeGreen partnership is an asset because we collaborate together to develop innovative approaches and to support a more diverse conservation workforce.

### Discover Your Forest Greenhouses to Greenscapes, Deschutes National Forest, Oregon



DYF staff and a student transplant a plant to the Deschutes National Forest Service photo by Karen Gentry.

The Greenhouses to Greenscapes (G2G) program engages disabled and underserved youth in Central Oregon in conservation education, horticultural therapy, and service projects. The program was developed between Discover Your Forest (DYF) and the Deschutes National Forest five years ago in response to gaps in programming at school greenhouses and the lack of conservation education and career skills programs for special needs students.

In 2017 the partnership enabled 112 young people to participate in experiential learning that resulted in plants grown by students in greenhouses being transplanted to the Deschutes National Forest and other greenscapes. This project exemplifies how shared stewardship can successfully engage diverse communities for mutual benefit and support reforestation priorities. The Greenhouses to Greenscapes program supports Forest Service strategic plan objectives to sustain our nation’s forests and grasslands and deliver benefits to the public.

Greenhouses to Greenscapes is another invaluable addition to the longstanding partnership between Discover Your Forest and the Deschutes National Forest.

### Special Recognition: Greencorps Chicago, Hidden Springs Ranger District, Shawnee National Forest, Illinois



Chicago Greencorps team members prepare for a day of work on the Shawnee National Forest with the Hoosier Mule Team. Forest Service photo by Kelly Pearson.

Greencorps Chicago is a vital link between the urban population of Chicago, Illinois and public lands. Participants with barriers to employment and young people growing up in underserved communities make up a large part of Greencorps Chicago’s applicant pool.

In 2017, twelve Greencorps Chicago members served on the Shawnee National Forest and inventoried 11,562 acres for invasive species, hauled more than 30 tons of gravel and improved two miles of wilderness trails. They acquired skills in trail construction and maintenance, wilderness awareness, ethics and GIS/GPS, learned about Leave-No-Trace principles and safety protocols when working with picks, pulaskis and the Hoosier Mule Team. Greencorps contributed 800 service hours in 2016 and 1,080 in 2017—a total value of \$45,383.20 based on the Independent Sector

valuation of the service hour.

Greencorps Chicago’s mission is to promote environmental stewardship and improve the quality of life in Chicago by establishing, maintaining and restoring natural and public spaces that are safe, healthy, and sustainable through hands-on involvement with program participants. By working with the Forest Service, Greencorps Chicago is able to expand experiences for its members to public lands beyond Chicago’s borders and facilitate employment training for environmentally related jobs.

## Enduring Service

### Steve Benoit, Monterey Ranger District, Los Padres National Forest, California



Steve Benoit (far right) works with Forest Service staff and volunteer to remove a log blocking the trail during a National Public Lands Day event on the Monterey Ranger District. Courtesy photo by Lise Carter.

Steve Benoit has served as a volunteer Forest Service Wilderness Steward for 32 years. He is a trail crew leader, the Lead Volunteer Wilderness Ranger for the Ventana Wilderness Alliance, a local nonprofit that advocates for wilderness issues. His work as a trail crew leader includes oversight of 22 Ventana Wilderness Rangers who patrol heavily impacted trails, educate backcountry visitors, clean up campsites and fire rings and remove trash.

Steve finds new ways of vetting and training applicants for the Ventana Wilderness Association's ever-expanding program, including requiring potential members to join seasoned members on patrols of trail corridors and camps. Steve helps reinforce a safety culture by conducting crosscut saw trainings. A certified crosscut sawyer, Steve regularly attends Volunteer Wilderness Ranger Training and Wilderness Ranger Academy to upgrade and refresh his skills.

Since Steve began his longstanding partnership with the Forest Service he has served 12,500 volunteer hours on the Monterey Ranger district including over 400 hours in 2017.

### Friends of the Sandia Mountains, Mountainair and Sandia Ranger Districts, Cibola National Forest and Grasslands, New Mexico



A Friends of the Sandia Mountain volunteer repairs a wildlife drinker on the Sandia Ranger District. Courtesy photo by Sam Beard.

Friends of the Sandia Mountains has been a sustained and dedicated Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands partner since its founding in 1996. Their efforts to engage the Albuquerque, New Mexico community to support maintenance, protection and restoration of natural, cultural and scenic resources is expanding the Forest's capacity to host and train volunteers, and lead Youth Conservation Corps crews. The resources leveraged for projects through the Friends' fundraising efforts allow the Forest and Grasslands to accomplish more work.

The organization's nimbleness and responsiveness to evolving Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands and community needs has resulted in better services for visitors. In 2017 Friends volunteers served 8,500 hours to clear vegetation, make repairs caused by fire and weather incidents, and to create new routes and access points enhanced the trail experience for hundreds of visitors.

FOSM contributes significantly to building capacity on the Forest by providing a suite of services, labor and financial support that helps the Forest Service get essential work done.

## Special Recognition: Arizona Trail Association, Southwestern Region, Arizona



Arizona Trails Association volunteers head out to learn about basic trail design. Courtesy photo by Lance Diskan

Since 1994 the Arizona Trail Association has provided leadership that has expanded community support and engagement for the care the Arizona National Scenic Trail (AZNST). The efforts of this group to establish the Congressionally-designated 800 mile trail system crossing multiple land management boundaries and states are an outcome of volunteer activism and coordination.

The Trail Skills Institute trainings sponsored by the Arizona Trail Association (ATA) have resulted in high quality work by volunteers and promoted skills development for some. The nearly 1,400 Arizona Trail Association volunteers who logged a total of 21,420 hours in 2017 represent about 11 full time employees,

doing work that may otherwise have gone undone. The ATA grew the Arizona trail from just a concept to an 800 mile Congressionally-designated connected route across Arizona, 73% of which lies on Forest Service lands.

As the Forest Service celebrates the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Trails Act, we salute the many partners like the ATA who are the backbone of our trail maintenance work.

## Leadership

### Paul Kimpling, Paonia Ranger District, Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests, Colorado



Paul Kimpling and a volunteer hang a sign in the Paonia District. Forest Service photo by Albert Borkowski.

Paul Kimpling, a Forest Service employee is viewed throughout the community as a leader in youth development, conservation education and stewardship. Paul was key in engaging partners and identifying funding to implement programs that engage youth, such as Every Kid in a Park and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC).

In 2017, under Paul's crew leadership the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) collaborated with 21CSC member organizations, like the Western Colorado Conservation Corps and Student Conservation Corps, on joint projects showing the collective power of youth leading youth. He coordinated with Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management staffs to share their natural resource expertise with the YCC in a variety of disciplines as well as organized a rafting trip to a unique archeological site.

Paul's ability to inspire and excite others about public lands, natural resource careers and volunteerism and service enabled the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests to expand and serve more youth. His commitment to excellence, ability to work independently, and to complete jobs safely and on schedule has been a major benefit to the Paonia Ranger District.

**Reanna Suela, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, California**



Reanna Suela facilitates a learning session with Generation Green Youth about Lake Tahoe. Forest Service photo by Adilene Negrete.

As a Pathways intern, Reanna Suela exhibits leadership skills in the office and in the field. She advocated for diverse participant programming by preparing briefing papers to solicit leadership support. In addition to building a case for better outreach to underrepresented groups she led volunteers and service participants in the field. Reanna was instrumental in developing an outreach and recruitment strategy for the Youth Conservation Corps program that targeted ethnically diverse youth and then served as a crew leader of the YCC team during the summer.

Reanna’s leadership and efficient coordination of a variety of Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit volunteer and youth engagement programs,

including the Ski with a Ranger program, Generation Green of Lake Tahoe, and the Kupu Blue Waters Youth Exchange program resulted in 5,785 volunteer and service hours in 2017. The engagement of individuals and groups through these programs led to deeper connections of the communities served by the Lake Tahoe Basin with their national public lands.

**Special Recognition: Susan Fox, Central Coast Ranger District, Siuslaw National Forest, Oregon**



Susan Fox introduces volunteers to visitor services duties at the Visitor Center. Forest Service photo.

As a temporary employee at the Cape Perpetua Scenic Area, Susan recruited, trained, and managed a volunteer program that resulted in 12,000 service hours in 2017. This volunteer force helped maintain 28 miles of hiking trails and numerous facilities, staffed a prominent visitor center and information booth and 150,000 visitor contacts within the Scenic Area, and helped provide interpretive programs to the public and education programs to youth.

As the Volunteer Coordinator in Fiscal Year 2017, Susan Fox attended all Cape Perpetua staff training sessions and in turn provided training to volunteers and others. Her efforts to increase her knowledge of emergency response and preparedness allowed the unit to better equip its volunteers with necessary information and resources and to communicate safety messages to the public.

During Susan’s tenure, she expanded recruiting and organized a more effective screening process for applicants, improved training for personnel, organized equipment and files on site, maintained volunteer records, established uniform standards, managed reimbursements and agreements, and updated standard operating procedures. The volunteer program exceeded all expectations because of her focus on excellence, exceptional multi-tasking skills and advocacy for citizen engagement in the work of the Forest Service.



# Restoration

## Darrell Borden, Washington Conservation Corps, Olympic National Forest Crew, Washington



A Washington Conservation Corps crew led by Darrell Borden restores pollinator habitat at the Dennie Ahl Seed Orchard on the Olympic National Forest. Courtesy photo by Washington Conservation Corps.

The Washington Conservation Corps was established in 1983 to conserve, rehabilitate, and enhance natural and environmental resources while providing educational opportunities and meaningful service experiences for young adults ages 18 to 25. For over 20 years, Washington Conservaiton Corps (WCC) has worked with the Olympic National Forest under a partnership agreement; the longest running WCC crew agreement in the state of Washington. Darrell Borden has led every one of the Olympic's WCC crews.

Darrell Borden hires, trains, and supervises each crew member and coordinates planning and implementation of every single project in collaboration with Forest Service staffs. He knows the forest and area resources well enough that he quickly adapts to ever-changing project assignments, weather conditions, and availability to maximize the crew's accomplishments and education opportunities. The six person year-round restoration crew supports resource work across the entire forest.

Following the wettest winter on record Darrell's crew contributed to significant restoration outcomes. He and his crew felled 300 hazardous trees, planted 4,000 trees, deployed 5,000 salmon carcasses, helped spawn 1,400 salmon eggs, removed 21 cubic yards of debris, cut 264,000 lineal feet of brush, and hiked 520 miles of trail which they maintained and improved along the way.

## Special Recognition: Mary Lou Jordan, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, Illinois



Volunteer Mary Lou Jordan weeds, transplants and organizes native plants for prairie restoration at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. Courtesy photo by Nature Conservancy at USDA Forest Service/Midewin.

Since 2008, Mary Lou Jordan has been influential in sustaining habitat restoration at the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. Mary Lou manages horticultural responsibilities to maintain healthy and abundant plant stock in cost effective ways. She cheerfully works on labor intensive, yet necessary tasks that many consider tedious.

Over the past ten years, Mary Lou has learned to identify many native forb and grass species in various stages of development. Just as important is her ability to identify invasive or non-native plants that find their way into seedlings and remove them before they contaminate prairie restoration. She looks at each task as a challenge, and prides herself on working independently and safely, seeking clarification when needed.

Her limited mobility prevents her from participating in the field, but her seasonally-specific skills are just as critical and underpin the restoration mission. Mary is very adaptable; she may be cleaning seed one week and the next week riding along on raptor bird surveys due to her

extensive raptor knowledge and just as likely to be helping unload a shipment of native plants

In 2017, Mary Lou volunteered 375 hours valued at \$9,000 and saved the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie over \$6,000 by planting, nurturing and transplanting 5,040 seeds on site.