

2019 USDA Forest Service Volunteers & Service Award Recipients

In fiscal year 2019, the U. S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service engaged 110,500 volunteers and service participants on projects in every region, station and area. Together, they contributed 4.8 million hours valued at \$122 million and equivalent to 2,662 full time employees—nearly 10 percent of the Forest Service permanent workforce. Trail maintenance and improvements, access and collaboration are themes most prevalent in the 73 nominations submitted in five categories: Citizen Stewardship & Partnerships, Cultural Diversity, Enduring Service, Leadership and Restoration. Nominees included Forest Service employees and units, volunteers, groups and partnerships, conservation crews, and/or other participants such as interns and resource assistants. Please join us in congratulating these individuals, organizations, units and partners for their outstanding contributions to the Forest Service mission.

Citizen Stewardship & Partnerships

Kachina Peaks Avalanche Center, Coconino National Forest, Southwestern Region



KPAC signage at Kachina Peaks. Photo courtesy of KPAC.

The Kachina Peaks Avalanche Center (KPAC) provides avalanche education, safety training and snowpack information for the San Francisco Peak and Kachina Peaks Wilderness of Northern Arizona. A 501c3 non-profit organization, KPAC is operated primarily with volunteers as a special uses permittee. KPAC is integral to the Coconino National Forest ability to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the 5,700 visitors to Kachina Peaks annually and residents in the surrounding communities. Faced with record snowfall in 2019—the fourth wettest winter in the last two decades— KPAC provided a weekly avalanche and snowpack summary to a record 4,718 visitors to their website. They published 25 snowpack summaries from December through April. KPAC takes its role as an educator very seriously. They offer a level 1 avalanche class and provide scholarships to help offset costs for participants and they work hand

in hand with the local community to build awareness offer free avalanche workshops each winter hosted at various gear shops, festivals and municipal buildings throughout Flagstaff. KPAC exemplifies the core Forest Service values safety, service, conservation and interdependence.

Bozeman Ranger District Recreation Staff, Custer Gallatin National Forest, Northern Region



Bozeman Ranger District staff and families. Photo courtesy of Forest Service.

Since 2015 the Recreation Program on the Bozeman Ranger District has excelled at expanding their capacity to promote citizen stewardship. In FY 2019, the District exceeded their annual volunteer outcomes by 30 percent. Multiple volunteers, organizations and other groups served 13,000 hours on myriad projects valued \$325,000 equivalent to 6 full time staff members. Volunteers maintained 160 miles of trail that improved public safety, resulted in expanded access and

decreased soil erosion. They restored or repaired more than 10 rental cabins, removed miles of fencing to promote restoration of wildlife habitats and served as campground hosts providing essential maintenance support of campgrounds and developed sites. In order to achieve this work, the District Recreation Program partnered with more than 17 local, state, regional, and national groups. The Recreation Program’s adherence to core Forest Service values of service, interdependence and conservation underpins their ability to facilitate meaningful citizen stewardship partnerships.

Visit <https://www.fs.fed.us/working-with-us> to learn more about how you can become a Forest Service volunteer.

Cultural Diversity

Sitka Tribe of Alaska and Pacific High School, Tongass National Forest, Alaska Region



Pacific High School student places potato spud in ground. Photo courtesy of Forest Service.

Since 2017, the Sitka Ranger District and Sitka Tribe of Alaska, with assistance from the Pacific High School gardening class, have worked together to create an educational opportunity about a traditional food source for community members. Students learn about the biology, history, and cultural aspects of the “Tlingit” potato while addressing food security issues among Sitka families. This project brings together two groups not often connected to Forest Service projects and activities. Students learn how to grow food for their subsistence and about cultural traditions of a Sitka Tribe of which many of them are members. Outcomes from this collaboration included the donation of hundreds of pounds of Tlingit potatoes to the Sitka Tribe Traditional Foods Program, enhanced awareness about the importance of the Tlingit potato to the Sitka Tribe and expanded outreach to diverse communities about natural resources workforce

development opportunities. This partnership is making a difference by forging common ground, serving the community, promoting cultural connections and hopefully, incubating lifelong gardening habits and future stewards.

Enduring Service

Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation, Flathead National Forest, Northern Region



Bob Marshall Board members and staff. Photo courtesy of Forest Service.

Since 1996, the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation (BMWF) has sustained over 2,000 miles of trail access into the third largest wilderness complex in the lower 48 states, serving serves eight ranger districts on three national forests. Their mission to save a world class trail network from deterioration and abandonment embodies how shared stewardship is essential to Forest Service mission accomplishment. In 2019, more than 300 volunteers supported and engaged by BMWF throughout the Flathead National Forest maintained 750 miles of trail (nearly 40 percent of all wilderness complex trails), cleared

3,389 trees along 213 miles, maintained 372 trail drainages that reduced erosion and improved big game habitats by removing invasive weeds on 102 acres. The BMWF is an integral part of Forest Service wilderness management. Their commitment to conserve wilderness areas for future generations and ability to harness the synergy of others committed to these special places resulted in 15,800 volunteer hours valued at \$401,858 and the equivalent of about 7 full time employees in 2019. Our mutual values of interdependence, safety, conservation and service are the foundation of our shared stewardship of public lands.

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Leadership

Paige Makowski, Staff, Mendocino National Forest, Pacific Southwest Region



Paige Makowski's sunny disposition on display. Photo courtesy of the Forest Service.

Recognized for leadership in the delivery of the Grindstone Ranger District Volunteer Program, Paige Makowski expanded volunteer engagement to support wildfire recovery efforts. Among the largest wildland fires in California history, the Ranch Fire of 2018 burned 410,203 acres. In FY 2019, Paige ramped up volunteerism with OHV groups to remove trees and other barriers, repair campgrounds and trails damaged by the fire. Their work resulted in the reopening of 163 miles of trails and campgrounds without injury and ahead of schedule providing access to the many user groups, recreationists, and others. Her strategic engagement, determination, and superior project management, communication and interpersonal skills were essential elements of her leadership. Paige personified the core agency values of service, interdependence and safety.

Emily Olsen, National Forest Foundation, White River National Forest, Rocky Mountain Region



Emily Olsen. Photo courtesy of the Emily Olsen.

Emily Olsen, National Forest Foundation (NFF) Colorado Program Manager, is recognized for her contributions and innovative approaches utilizing conservation finance tools to leverage private-public funded partnerships on the White River National Forest. Emily worked with local Friends groups, government, and for-profit businesses to secure \$1,459,717 from federal and nonfederal sources for shared-stewardship partnerships on the White River National Forest. Her efforts connected funding opportunities with on-the-ground projects that had immediate impact and resulted in improvements to Forest lands. This innovative funding approach expanded the Forest's capacity to engage volunteers, groups and Youth Corps to share stewardship of public lands. In 2019, the White River National Forest hosted 4,700 volunteers, employed 1,600 youth and logged 41,000 volunteer hours because of the added capacity generated with conservation financing tools. Emily exemplified Forest Service values of interdependency, conservation and service.

Restoration

Floristic Quality Assessment Team, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, Eastern Region



Floristic Quality Assessment Team members at work. Photo courtesy of the Forest Service.

Since 2008, the Floristic Quality Assessment Team has logged 3,557 hours inventorying up to 160 plant species. Their work contributes extensive and indispensable data that informs management decisions regarding prairie restoration at the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. Floristic Quality Assessment (FQA) is a conservation tool used to assess an area's ecological integrity based on its plant species composition. In 2019, a skilled team of 13 plant monitors, with a wide range of backgrounds, contributed 400 hours to perform field surveys and participate in training to hone their skills. Volunteers are an integral part of the Tallgrass Prairie's efforts to nourish resilient lands to improve and protect biodiversity. The Floristic Quality Assessment Team's work is particularly important to the revitalization of the unique and flourishing ecosystems on the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairies where "People and Prairie Restore Each Other." This team's commitment exemplifies core Forest Service values of service, conservation and interdependence.

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