



United States Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

Kaibab National Forest
800 S. 6th St.
Williams, AZ 86046
(928) 635-8200
www.fs.usda.gov/kaibab

News Release

Media Contact: Jacqueline Banks
jacqueline.banks@usda.gov
(928) 635-8314

Four Kaibab National Forest employees receive highest regional honor

WILLIAMS, Ariz., Aug. 13, 2019 — Four Kaibab National Forest employees were recently honored with a prestigious regional award for their dedication to increasing tribal access to forest products, enlisting tribes as partners in restoration, and strengthening local communities by providing a wide range of goods and services that contribute to social, economic and environmental well-being.

Lisa Bighorse, Samantha Flores, Josh Giles and Steve Swatling were the recipients of the Regional Forester's Excellence in Service Group Honor Award for the Southwestern Region of the Forest Service. The award, which is the highest honor bestowed in the region, recognizes a group embodying the spirit of service and demonstrated excellence as well as dedication to the Forest Service motto "Caring for the Land and Serving People."

"These employees exemplify the values of innovation, public service and collaboration," said Heather Provencio, forest supervisor of the Kaibab National Forest. "They have not only found ways to improve the health and sustainability of public lands, but they've also created opportunities for our partners and communities to team with us and garner benefits from doing so."

A few highlights of their work include overhauling the forest's fuelwood policy to increase access to permits and available supply while also lowering costs for rural communities; hosting remote permit events on the Navajo and Hopi reservations so that community members can easily obtain permits without the burden of a four-hour round trip drive to a Forest Service office; and, developing a product plan to provide small-diameter logs of the specific length and diameter needed to construct a traditional Navajo hogan.

"The Kaibab National Forest is the only national forest that borders the very large Navajo reservation, where 66 percent of homes are heated with wood stoves, and traditional homes - known as hogans - are constructed from small-diameter logs," said Mike Lyndon, tribal liaison for the Kaibab National Forest. "The Kaibab National Forest, led by these forward-thinking employees, is actively working to meet the needs of



Forest Service



our tribal partners for these materials while also removing them from the forest in a way that promotes long-term health, resilience and restoration goals."

Other work for which Bighorse, Flores, Giles and Swatling received recognition included organizing community wood drives for elders with the Cameron Chapter of the Navajo Nation; teaming with the Alamo Band of the Navajo Nation and the Mule Deer Foundation to conduct forest restoration treatments and expand tribal employment opportunities; partnering with the Hopi and Zuni tribes to provide large-diameter timbers for reconstruction of ceremonial kivas; and, engaging all Kaibab National Forest firewood cutters as partners in restoration by sharing best practices to enhance forest health and wildfire mitigation goals.

According to the award nomination spotlighting these exceptional Kaibab National Forest employees, "Combined, their many efforts have greatly expanded relationships with tribal communities and engaged tribal partners in the shared stewardship of national forests, while providing critical resources and economic opportunities to tribal members in rural communities."

"Growing up in northern Arizona, I have been fortunate enough to be enriched by tribal cultures throughout my life. The knowledge, customs, and values I have been exposed to by our neighboring tribal communities have positively influenced my development, so I have a personal interest in giving back to those communities," said Samantha Flores, timber staff officer with the Williams and Tusayan districts of the Kaibab National Forest.

"As public land managers, I feel we are tasked with supporting all communities that need the resources we are here to protect and steward," Flores continued. "On the Kaibab, there is a natural emphasis on tribal communities because we are surrounded by tribal lands, giving us the unique opportunity to readily share stewardship with this important group of forest users."

The award for Bighorse, Flores, Giles and Swatling was presented by Southwestern Regional Forester Cal Joyner at a ceremony in Albuquerque earlier this summer.

Since then, Giles has left the Kaibab National Forest to serve as the district ranger for the Emigrant Creek Ranger District of the Malheur National Forest in Oregon. Bighorse, Flores and Swatling continue their efforts to engage a broad range of partners in working together to restore forests and strengthen communities.

###

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.





**2018 Regional Forester's Excellence in Service Award
Kaibab NF South Zone Timber & Silviculture**

- ◆ Lisa Bighorse
- ◆ Samantha Flores
- ◆ Josh Giles
- ◆ Steve Swatling

