

## Synopsis of 2020 Bureau of Land Management Oregon/Washington State Director Award Recipients

### Goal 1 – Public Service

The award recipient for Goal 1 – Public Service is **Kirby Bean** from the Medford District.

Kirby demonstrated outstanding public service through his ability to take on the complexities of the Medford minerals program and work directly with members of the public to answer their questions.

With two mining proposals in critical habitat, multiple patent exams, and difficult occupancy cases, the minerals program in Medford is complicated. Kirby navigates these complex cases with the highest level of professionalism and expertise, regardless of whether he is working with a member of the public, a solicitor, or the Department of Justice.

When it comes to members of the Medford community, Kirby is approachable and responsive. He has worked alongside members of the public through the permitting and National Environmental Policy Act process, ensuring that projects stayed on track and that the BLM was seen as a valuable and approachable agency contributing to the community in a meaningful way.

Kirby has also taken the time to volunteer his expertise to other states. He assisted both the Colorado and California Certified Mineral Examiner candidates with their validity examinations and reports. As an expert in placer mining, Kirby has shared his knowledge of mining law, mining operations, geologic mapping, and economics with those who would benefit most.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has a complex stewardship mission, and Kirby's ability to take on difficult cases, explain mineral regulations to both the public and BLM employees, and collaborate with other states furthers our goals.

## **Goal 2 – Organizational Sustainability**

The award recipient for Goal 2 – Organizational Sustainability is **Jeff Jackson** from the Coos Bay District.

Jeff has done exceptional work developing and maintaining partnerships to fund, design, plan, and construct several restoration projects. He has had a significant influence on management practices and project implementation. He has received many positive recognitions from watershed associations and other partners due to his diligent efforts securing grants to fund aquatic restorations and monitoring.

Jeff's restoration work has been carried out in partnerships with numerous resource agencies and landowners. For example, he has worked closely with the Coquille Watershed Association to replace or remove fish barriers throughout Coos County; partnered with the Curry Soil and Water Conservation District to design the Panther Creek project, which mitigated the effects of extreme sediment in the Chetco River; and served on a technical team for the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve habitat and watershed improvement project on Wasson Creek.

Jeff has also gone above and beyond in his community – co-mentoring the BLM's annual Hutton summer students and developing curriculum for the Coquille Valley Elementary and Winter Lakes School to teach students about salmon and riparian habitat.

Working closely with a variety of partners, Jeff's efforts are unique and far-reaching. He is a champion for designing and implementing projects that support the protection, enhancement, and viability of watersheds and watershed health throughout the southern and central Oregon coasts. His skills, knowledge, willingness to assist others, and dedication to natural resources and his community make him an invaluable asset to the BLM.

### **Goal 3 – Sustainability in Natural and Cultural Resources**

The award recipient for Goal 3 – Sustainability in Natural and Cultural Resources is the **Greater Sage-grouse Team** from the Prineville District.

For almost a decade, staff with the Prineville District have been exceeding goals for restoring and enhancing Greater Sage-grouse habitat across the High Desert. This team of Prineville employees, including Larry Ashton, Stephanie McKinney, Guy Chamness, Rob Fore, Emily Lent, Cari Taylor, Ryan Griffin, and Audrey Peffermen, has exemplified what it means to seek sustainability, protect cultural and natural resources, and effectively collaborate with partners.

Thanks to the work of this team and their proactive implementation of the High Desert Shrub-Steppe Environmental Assessment, almost 111,000 acres of sage-grouse habitat has been restored through mechanical juniper removal and prescribed fire. Most of this restoration occurred in the past five years alone.

The restoration required constant collaboration with Federal and State partners, the Local Implementation Team, the Crook County Soil and Water Conservation District, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the USDA Forest Service, and other private groups and entities. Via these partnerships, the BLM was able to share scientific guidance, pertinent data, techniques, plans, and results of our on-the-ground treatments, which ultimately benefitted all those involved. In 2020, the team persisted despite setbacks related to COVID-19, and close to 11,000 acres were treated mechanically, and another 4,500 acres were burned.

This team represents a core group of employees who led the way in the conservation and restoration of Greater Sage-grouse habitat; not only completing an environmental assessment to programmatically implement habitat restoration but also committing to working together each year to balance multiple workloads and priorities.

## **Goal 4 – Operational Sustainability**

The award recipients for Goal 4 – Operational Sustainability are **Lisa Meredith** and **Evan Corrales** from the Medford District.

In the wake of the 2020 fire season, the growing demand for tree seedlings was larger than what seedling nurseries could provide. The pioneering work of Lisa and Evan is allowing the BLM to conduct trials that use conifer pucks as a potential reforestation tool. The pucks negate the need for nursery space and are designed to provide suitable habitat to germinate conifer seedlings by providing a protective microsite with a growing medium and a proprietary blend of seed amendments.

As team leaders, Lisa and Evan kept the study going after numerous setbacks. They sourced the pucks, designed the study, and recruited BLM employees to distribute 50,000 pucks in the Medford District's South Obenchain Fire burn area. The BLM returned to the sites in the spring to inspect germination and will return in the fall to inspect survival.

The pucks can be manufactured in a matter of a few weeks, as opposed to the one to two years necessary to grow a seedling in a nursery. If the trial proves successful, it will provide a new tool that could be scaled up to allow for rapid reforestation.

## **Goal 5 – Collaboration**

The award recipient for Goal 5 – Collaboration is **Sheldon Rhoden** from the Prineville District.

Sheldon has repeatedly demonstrated the highest levels of professionalism, consistency, and excellence in his roles as a Fire Management Specialist and Fire Trespass Investigator.

Fires have a significant impact on the landscapes of BLM public lands and the BLM's complex stewardship mission. While investigating these fires, millions of dollars is often at stake and many parties are often involved. Sheldon has demonstrated excellence in the field of collaboration by navigating these complex situations and producing outstanding results.

Throughout his time as a Fire Trespass Investigator, Sheldon has collaborated with the Forest Service, Oregon State Police, Oregon Department of Forestry, DOI Solicitor's Office, Oregon State Fire Marshalls Office, home and ranch owners, and others. He is often instrumental in finalizing trespassing resolutions, and his professionalism and ability to coordinate with multiple parties has helped the BLM to resolve unfortunate situations.

Sheldon has also navigated situations in which there was a great deal of public attention. He has been able to protect information and maintain the integrity of the BLM's investigation and firefighting efforts while also being considerate of the parties involved.

Sheldon's diligent work and ability to collaborate effectively have made him an asset to his District and to the BLM as a whole.

## **Goal 6 – Diversity and Inclusion**

The award recipient for Goal 6 – Diversity and Inclusion is **Marissa Theve** from the Northwest Oregon District.

Since January 2019, Marissa has been the chair of a very active Diversity and Inclusion Committee in the Northwest Oregon District. She has approached her role with both enthusiasm and gravity, and she realizes that the ideals of diversity and inclusion are more than just a Government initiative – they are vital to the proper function of an organization and a community. She is also committed to making the conversations about these serious topics as fun and accessible as possible.

Within the committee itself, Marissa has raised awareness and helped to improve communication. She has encouraged the use of appropriate pronouns, promoted awareness surrounding holidays that often go unrecognized in the workplace, provided the districts with guidance surrounding current events, and increased polling that helps demonstrate the level of diversity within the BLM.

Under her leadership, the Diversity and Inclusion Committee has taken on several initiatives, including LGBTQI+ awareness, pronoun training, a book club, the creation of a “best practices for inclusivity” document, and increased employee participation in the Department of the Interior Diversity Change Agent Program.

Throughout the pandemic, Marissa and her committee have hosted several open discussions on matters of diversity and inclusion, often tackling thorny but necessary conversations. Marissa has been a stalwart advocate for diversity, growing the program and ensuring that inclusion is a top priority in the Northwest Oregon District.

## **Goal 7 – New Tech/New People**

The award recipient for Goal 7 – New Tech/New People is **Kyle Sullivan** from the Medford District.

In April 2020, it was unclear how the Medford District would conduct its two, necessary public meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic. Kyle's fearless efforts diving into the controversial public needs of the Medford District and ability to problem-solve allowed the BLM to conduct these meetings entirely via a virtual platform.

In June, Kyle empowered the Medford District to virtually run the Ashland Field Office's Environmental Assessment Bear Grub Vegetation Management Project meeting. Kyle obtained a Zoom.gov webinar license, ran the public technology test, encouraged the public to test the platform tools, and addressed any technological issues the public may have had. He also led the back office during the live Q&A, coordinating with resource specialists so they could answer questions and post answers in real time. This was by far the most challenging component of the meeting.

In July, Kyle once more stepped up for the Integrated Vegetation Management Project for Resilient Lands virtual public meeting. Both meetings were considered a success. It was the first time the District felt they were able to convey a clear message, address misinformation, and answer questions without interruptions. The BLM employees also added that they felt safer on the virtual platform, as it was the first public meeting in a long time where law enforcement did not need to attend.

Kyle continued to offer his expertise in hosting public meetings throughout the pandemic. When southern Oregon experience a 100-year, rare wind event that fueled devastating wildfires, Kyle hosted emergency briefings at all hours of the night.

Kyle began his work for BLM Oregon/Washington during the unpredictable and overwhelming challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this, he dove headfirst into the virtual world and embraced a new technology platform for the BLM. This achievement has helped maintain public obligations, provide controversial project transparency and emergency communication services, and streamline the Western Oregon Resource Advisory Council process for Title II funds of all O&C Lands.

## **Goal 8 – Identity**

The award recipient for Goal 8 – Identity is **Kevin Hoskins** from the Vale District.

The employees of the Vale District, Baker Field Office, often refer to Kevin as their Swiss Army Knife. He is so versatile and handy that they are able to rely on him for a wide variety of agency needs. With more than 20 years of experience at the Baker Field Office, Kevin has a wealth of institutional and on-the-ground knowledge that is detailed, specific, and irreplaceable.

Among the many tasks Kevin takes on, he has been consistently available to provide training for backcountry safety, tire chaining, winch training, UTVs, and seasonal river staff. He acts as a boat guide when the BLM requires access to lands only reachable via the water. When an employee has vehicle trouble or gets stuck in the mud, Kevin is there to see that the employees and their equipment make it home safely. He is constantly working with staff to update signs containing public safety information, helping keep public lands clean, assisting with recreational improvements, and monitoring locations that get heavy recreational use.

As a Park Ranger, Kevin works with the public daily, often in a variety of complex situations. He is an accountable and approachable public servant who is willing to chat about fishing, hiking trails, fire education, local history, or anything else the public may need help with. He reminds folks of the rules and provides directions to the lost. Over the years, he has encountered numerous contentious situations and has a knack for quickly assessing and diffusing them.

Kevin genuinely cares about the BLM's commitment to serving the public. He has a sense of pride in his work as a public servant and a calm, instructive, take-charge demeanor that inspires trust in both his colleagues and the public. Kevin's high level of professionalism, transparency, and consistency make him an invaluable member of his team.



## **Team Excellence**

The award winners for Team Excellence are **Nakie Williamson-Cloud**, Nez Perce Cultural Resources Program Director; **Katy Coddington**, Vale District Archaeologist; and **Dave Johnson**, Oregon/Washington Tribal Liaison.

The BLM's partnership with the Nez Perce Tribe aimed to engage Native youth in cultural resource monitoring and the ethnographic research of the Tribe's cultural connections to and knowledge about its traditional lands along the Grande Ronde, Wallowa, and Minam Rivers. The study area in northeastern Oregon and southeastern Washington includes BLM lands associated with Nez Perce legend sites, traditional cultural properties, places of historic and religious significance, archaeological sites, and various natural and cultural resources important to the cultural, physical, and spiritual wellbeing of the Nez Perce Tribe.

The collaboration would not have been possible without the diligent work of Nakie, Katy, and Dave and their collaboration with the Nez Perce Tribe in developing a vision for the project. The Tribe provided the proposal, the intern hiring, mentoring, materials needed for interviewing the elders, a river trip chaperone, camping gear, and necessities for the three-day rafting trip during which the BLM and three Nez Perce interns worked together. The BLM provided the agreement, the survey and monitoring projects, mentoring during the river trip, the River Ranges, and the boating gear.

The BLM archeologists also worked with the interns to monitor known precontact and historic archaeological sites and ensure that they are preserved for future generations. During the river trip, the interns were able to conduct archaeological surveys in areas that have not been previously surveyed with the hope of identifying new archaeological sites on BLM public lands. The interns worked under the guidance of the Tribal staff to conduct interviews with Tribal elders. Some of this traditional knowledge is shared with the BLM and provides the BLM with a much deeper understanding of the landscape we manage.

When it comes to working with stakeholders, working with Tribes, and engaging in transparent and inclusive ways, Katy Coddington has the trust, respect, and confidence of the Tribes the BLM works with. She holds a corporate perspective of our agency values and our mission, while at the same time building stronger relationships with our Tribal partners. Dave Johnson has the skills and expertise to make the BLM's vision a reality. Nakia Williamson has the experience, the energy, and the will to build upon past successes and build even stronger relationships for the future.