

2026

National Park Service Director's Awards for Excellence in Service



NPS Photo / Kim Acker

Program Schedule

Opening Remarks

Ruth Prescott – *National Park Foundation, Executive Vice President and Chief Governance Officer*

Jessica Bowron – *NPS Comptroller Exercising the Delegated Authority of the Director*
Secretary Doug Burgum

DOI Honor Awards—Meritorious Service Awards & Unit Awards for Excellence of Service

Secretary Doug Burgum

Associate Deputy Secretary Karen Budd-Falen

Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks Kevin Lilly

2026 National Park Service Director's Awards for Excellence in Service (Servicewide Awards)

Jessica Bowron – *NPS Comptroller Exercising the Delegated Authority of the Director*

Charles Cuvelier – *Associate Director, Visitor and Resource Protection*

Jason Gibson – *Associate Director, Interpretation, Education and Volunteers (Acting)*

Joy Beasley – *Associate Director, Cultural Resources, Partnerships, and Science*

Associate Director, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science (Acting)

Alicia Overby – *Manager, Park Facility Management Division (Acting)*

Nicole Woody – *Associate Director, Business Services (Acting)*

Ceremony Conclusion

Reception to follow in the South Penthouse



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Meritorious Service Awards & Unit Awards for Excellence of Service

Meritorious Service Awards

The Meritorious Service Award is the second-highest honorary recognition given to Interior employees. It recognizes significant contributions to science or management, distinguished career achievements, exceptional performance in administration or the execution of duties, or demonstrated initiative in developing improved work methods and procedures.

America's 250th Anniversary

Francis Barrows

Rachel Daniels

Darrell Echols

Daniel Fagergren

Jennifer Flynn

Eric Gabriel

Gerardo Gonzalez

Kevin Killian

Jonathan Meade

Mark Pita

Marisa Richardson

Stephanie Stephens

Robert Wissinger

DC Safe and Beautiful Initiative

Brendan Bonner

Jessica Bundy

Michael Commisso

Liam Cutri-French

Kevin Griess

Jeffrey Hitchcock

Jordan Hoaglund

Madeline Laub

Elizabeth Milnarik

Jennifer Nersesian

Jeremy Nickels

Michael Stachowicz

Tammy Stidham

Thomas Testa

Jason Theuer

Benjamin Wagner

Unit Award for Excellence in Service

The Unit Award for Excellence in Service is the second-highest honorary recognition given to Interior employees within a team. It recognizes a work unit, group, or team for exceptional contributions or accomplishments to the Department or Bureau/Office mission.

DC Safe and Beautiful Initiative

Incident Management Team

Historic Preservation Training Center

Independence National Historical Park

National Capital Region

National Mall and Memorial Parks

Steamtown National Historic Site

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Awards for Visitor and Resource Protection

Fire Prevention and Protection Award

The Fire Prevention and Protection Award recognizes employees who have demonstrated a commitment to the prevention of structural fires throughout the previous year.

Individual Structural Fire Champion

Daniel Romes, *Chief Ranger and Structural Fire Park Program Manager at Bryce Canyon National Park*

Structural Fire Group

Midwest Regional Structural Fire Team

William Dudek, *Fire Protection Specialist at Midwest Regional Office*

Rob Rothwell, *Fire Protection Specialist at Midwest Regional Office*

External Partner or Volunteer

Ron Harris, *Fire Chief for Bryce Canyon City Volunteer/Tropic Volunteer Fire Departments*

National Ranger Excellence Award

The National Ranger Excellence Award (formerly called the Harry Yount Award) recognizes rangers whose overall impact, record of accomplishments, and excellence in traditional ranger duties have created an appreciation for the park ranger profession on the part of the public and other members of the profession. Their leadership and willingness to do the tough jobs well—with style, grace, appreciation, and humor—serves as a role model for all park rangers.

Mitch Hauptman, *US Park Ranger/Protection at Rocky Mountain National Park*

Law Enforcement Instructor of the Year

The NPS Law Enforcement Training Center's Law Enforcement Instructor of the Year Award allows the NPS Law Enforcement Training Center to recognize the outstanding achievements of the National Park Service's talented cadre of LE Ranger Instructors by selecting one instructor annually who has demonstrated outstanding abilities, qualities and dedication in the field of law enforcement training.

Eric Tillson, *Richmond National Battlefield*

Director's Visitor Safety Achievement Awards

The Director's Visitor Safety Achievement Award is the highest award bestowed by the National Park Service for outstanding visitor safety achievement. The award recognizes significant employee achievements in reducing hazards or behaviors that either increase the risk of or result in visitor injuries, both fatal and non-fatal, and improving visitor injury outcomes. Formerly the Andrew Clark Hecht Public Safety Achievement Award.

Sleeping Bear Dunes Visitor and Resource Protection Team

Logan Bahm, *Law Enforcement Ranger*

Andy Blake, *Senior Staff Ranger*

Paul Chalup, *District Ranger*

Scott Dekkers, *Chief Ranger*

Nate Mazurek, *Law Enforcement Ranger*

Luke Wassink, *Law Enforcement Ranger*

Micah Webber, *Law Enforcement Ranger*

Director's Safety and Health Achievement Awards

The Director's Safety and Health Achievement Award is the highest award bestowed by the National Park Service for outstanding employee safety and health achievement. The award recognizes significant achievements in the cultivation of a safe and healthful work environment for employees.

Amber Simms, Safety and Occupational Health Manager at George Washington Memorial Parkway

Director's Wellness and Resilience Achievement Award

The Director's Wellness & Resilience Achievement Award recognizes employees for enhancing wellness and building resilience in our workplace.

Ozark National Scenic Riverways Wellness LE Ranger Team

Brandon Conaway

Jacob Crowley

Daniel Dodd

Nicholas Frazier

Patrick Jackson

Daniel Newberry

Zachary Swindle

Excellence in Wilderness Stewardship Awards

The Excellence in Wilderness Stewardship Awards recognize outstanding contributions to wilderness stewardship by an individual, team, and non-government partner. The NPS manages over 70 million acres of land as wilderness and the recipients of these awards exemplify a commitment to preserving the wilderness character of those lands and an unwavering devotion to help connect people to their wilderness heritage and the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness.

Individual Wilderness Champion Award

Erik Frenzel, Regional Planner and Wilderness Coordinator at Pacific West Regional Office

Wilderness Stewardship Team Award

Olympic National Park Wilderness Committee

Bill Baccus

Jeff Bortner

Heidi Brill

Catharine Copass

Scott Jacobs

Chase Lewine

Parker Lindenberg

Mike Nordell

Kelly Sutton

Miranda Terwilliger

Ashley Turcotte

External Wilderness Stewardship Partner Award

Jessica Hearn, Research Associate at Great Basin Institute

NPS Photo / Danielle Archuleta



Awards for Interpretation, Education, and Volunteers

Excellence in Interpretation Awards

The annual Excellence in Interpretation Awards recognizes outstanding contributions to the practice of interpretation and education by NPS employees. These awards were named the Freeman Tilden Awards for Excellence in Interpretation from 1981 to 2023.

Individual Award

Ashley Waymouth, *Chief of Interpretation at Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve*

Team Award

Bering Land Bridge National Preserve Partner Co-Creation Exhibit Project at Bering Land Bridge National Preserve

Ken Adkisson
Katheen Cullen
Nicole Braem

Letty Hughes
Jeanette Koelsch

Excellence in Volunteerism Awards

The Excellence in Volunteerism Impact Awards, previously known as the Hartzog awards until 2023, are given annually to National Park Service volunteers and volunteer management staff who demonstrate exceptional dedication to their park and community. These recipients embody the values of service, engagement, and stewardship fundamental to our national parks.

Impact Award

Team Category

Battle Road Living History Volunteers, *Minute Man National Historical Park*

Youth and Young Adult Category

Lumi Barron, *Volunteer at Zion National Park*

Adult Category

Vicki Papineau, *Volunteer at Rocky Mountain National Park*

Innovation Award

Meadow Rovers, *Volunteers at Mount Rainier National Park*

Excellence in Volunteer Management Staff Award

Katie Hostetler, *Supervisory Park Ranger & Volunteer Program Manager at Chiricahua National Monument*



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Excellence in Cooperating Association Partnership Award

The Excellence in Cooperating Association Partnership Award recognizes an individual who has made significant and lasting contributions throughout their career to strengthen partnerships between the National Park Service and cooperating associations. This award was formerly known as the Murfin Award.

Sue Husch, *Administrator of the Peaks, Plateaus and Canyons Association in Intermountain Region*

Excellence in Education Award

The Excellence in Education Awards were established in 2022 to specifically recognize expertise within the field of National Park Service education. These awards recognize innovation and adaptation within education program planning, development, and implementation.

Pollinators to Pioneers, *Saint Croix Island International Historic Site*

Karin Magera, *NPS*

Michael Zwelling, *NPS*

Trevor Flood, *Alexander Elementary School*

Ashley Lutz, *Alexander Elementary School*

NPS Photo / R. Stewart



Awards for Natural Resources

The Director's Awards for Natural Resources honor exemplary work conducted in resource stewardship and management. These awards recognize employees who go above and beyond day-to-day duties to solve problems, create new opportunities, or undertake projects through creative thinking and action. Their work may serve as examples or models for programs across the National Park Service.

Natural Resource Management Award

This award recognizes an employee for their significant contribution to natural resource management in parks, particularly a contribution that resulted in the adoption of a new or improved resource management practice and/or approach by the National Park Service.

Stacey Kehaulani Torigoe, *Ecologist at Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park*

Natural Resource Research

This award recognizes a federal employee or non-federal researcher for their outstanding contributions to natural resource research benefiting national parks.

Amelia Ryan, *Vegetation Ecologist at Pinnacles National Park*

Excellence in Natural Resource Stewardship Through Maintenance

This award recognizes an employee for outstanding contributions in natural resource management by a Facilities Management employee.

Mario Armijo, *Maintenance Worker at Pecos National Historical Park*

Natural Resource Management in a Small Park

This award rewards achievements in natural resource management in small parks.

Lindsey Yann, *Paleontologist at Waco Mammoth National Monument*

Natural Resource Management Award

This award recognizes an individual who significantly contributes to resource management successes by employing a high degree of technical excellence in a narrowly focused, professional role.

Dan Mason, *Botanist at Indiana Dunes National Park*

Superintendent of the Year for Natural Resource Stewardship

This award recognizes an individual who significantly contributes to resource management successes by employing a high degree of technical excellence in a narrowly focused, professional role.

Matthew Woods, *Superintendent at Moores Creek National Battlefield*



Awards for Cultural Resources

The Director's Awards for Cultural Resources celebrate contributions to cultural resource management by park or regional cultural resource managers or specialists, facility managers or superintendents.

Cultural Resource Management & Stewardship by a Cultural Resource Specialistist

Kristin Hoppa, *Chief of Cultural Resources at Channel Islands National Park National Park*

Cultural Resource Management & Stewardship by a Facility Maintenance Specialist

Michael Kertiss, *Maintenance Mechanic at Catoctin Mountain Park National Park*

Resources Management & Stewardship by a Superintendent

Gia Wagner, *Superintendent of Andersonville National Historic Site*

NPS Photo / Victoria Stauffenberg



Awards for Park Planning, Facilities and Lands

Planning, Facilities, and Lands (PPFL) Directorate coordinates several awards to honor excellence and dedication within its mission. These awards recognize achievements in accessibility, engineering, facility management, and transportation. Employees, teams, and partners are celebrated for innovative projects, outstanding performance, and leadership.

Accessibility Achievement Award

This award recognizes a completed project or ongoing initiative, that is innovative, improves access, involves the disability community, and sets an example that is easily documented for others to follow.

Steven Kidd, *Chief of Science and Resource Management at Timucuan Ecological & Historic Preserve*

Accessibility Leadership Award

This award recognizes individuals who have demonstrated commitment to improving the accessibility of programs, projects, and park resources for both staff and visitors, producing tangible results over a period of at least five years.

Patricia (Patti) Wold, *Interpretive Media Specialist at Mount Rainier National Park*

Excellence in Facility Management Awards

The Excellence in Facility Management Awards program honors individuals and teams who reflect outstanding achievements in park operations and maintenance, asset management, compliance, and project planning and management. Recognition highlights facilities employees who improve property and life-cycle management, further emergency preparedness and readiness, drive creative planning and procedures, advance and apply technology and innovation, provide outstanding customer service, develop phenomenal teams, promote healthy work environments, build morale, and strengthen coalitions and communications.

Frontline Hero of the Year

Paula MacNiece, *Maintenance Worker at Cape Code National Seashore*

Facility Manager of the Year

Jim Grant, *Chief of Maintenance and Engineering at Blue Ridge Parkway*

Facility Team of the Year

George Washington Memorial Parkway Tree Crew

Alexander Burke

Jonathan Colvin

Donald Noakes

Randy Scott

Rodney White

Facility Superintendent of the Year

Scott Tucker, *Superintendent at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore*

Excellence in Transportation Awards

The National Park Service, in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration, jointly administers the Federal Lands Transportation Awards Program highlighting outstanding accomplishments by both individuals and teams.

Transportation Outstanding Performer (TOP) Award

Chris Close, *Transportation Branch Chief at Denver Service Center*

Partners in Excellence (PIE) Award

George Washington Memorial Parkway Rehabilitation Team

Christopher Hershey, *George*

Washington Memorial Parkway

Maureen Joseph, *George Washington*

Memorial Parkway

Steven Kattula, *George Washington*

Memorial Parkway

Jennifer Madello, *George Washington*

Memorial Parkway

Mark Maloy, *George Washington*

Memorial Parkway

Raymond Nuesch, *George Washington*

Memorial Parkway

Matt Mohler, *National Capital Region*

Karen Arey, Denver Service Center

Chantae Moore, *Denver Service Center*

Mir Ali, *FHWA Eastern Federal Lands Division*

Mohammad Azizi, *FHWA Eastern Federal Lands Division*

Joe Fabis, *FHWA Eastern Federal Lands Division*

Nelson Ferreira, *FHWA Eastern Federal Lands Division*

Ricardo Garcia Rosario, *FHWA Eastern Federal Lands Division*

Selam Hailegiorgis, *FHWA Eastern Federal Lands Division*

Andrew Jessberger, *FHWA Eastern Federal Lands Division*

Jeff Johnson, *FHWA Eastern Federal Lands Division*

Sijan Shrestha, *FHWA Eastern Federal Lands Division*

Innovation and Development Excellence (IDEA) Award

McCarthy Road Planning & Environmental Linkages Team

Ben Bobowski, *Wrangell-St. Elias*

National Park and Preserve

Rebekah Levine, *Wrangell-St. Elias*

National Park and Preserve

Mike Loso, *Wrangell-St. Elias National*

Park and Preserve

Joshua Scott, *Wrangell-St. Elias National*

Park and Preserve

Jonathan Shafer, *Wrangell-St. Elias*

National Park and Preserve

Matt Smith, *Wrangell-St. Elias National*

Park and Preserve

Chris Wilcox, *Wrangell-St. Elias National*

Park and Preserve

Kevin Doniere, *Alaska Regional Office*

Laura Minski, *Alaska Regional Office*

Kara Sorbel, *Alaska Regional Office*

Seth English-Young, *FHWA Western Federal Lands Division*

Judy Chapman, *State of Alaska Department of Transportation*

Paul Eckman, *State of Alaska Department of Transportation*

Brett Nelson, *State of Alaska Department of Transportation*



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Awards for Management and Administration

The Management and Administration Awards recognize outstanding contributions to the advancement and service of management, administration, Information Technology, and Information Management by NPS employees. The Excellence Awards recognize employees who go beyond day-to-day duties to solve problems or create new opportunities. They do so with creative thinking and action.

Excellence in Recreation Fee Management

NoeMesha Williams, *Recreation Fee Technician at San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park*

Enhancing Visitor Experience Through Recreation Fee Management

Recreation Fee Program, Washington Support Office

Jeffrey Beauchamp, *Business Specialist*

Allison Christofis, *Business Specialist*

Jennifer Eggle, *Training Specialist*

Corey Dusin, *IT Specialist*

Shelagh Forester, *Program Analyst*

Christine Kennedy, *Training Specialist*

Leigh Schmitt, *Program Analyst*

Enhancing Visitor Experience Through Commercial Services

IMR Regional Commercial Services Team

Mitch Gerstenkorn, *Concession Management Specialist*

Erica Harris, *Acting Commercial Services Program Lead*

Emily Hunter, *Concession Management Specialist*

Sarah Kimball, *Concession Management Specialist*

Jennifer Parker, *Commercial Services Program Lead (on detail)*

Monica Rinne, *Concession Management Specialist*

Leadership in Concessions & Commercial Services

Julie Gregg-Bubac, *Chief of Commercial Services at Yellowstone National Park*

Excellence in Budget Formulation and Execution

Midwest Region Team

Kristi Brown, *Acting Comptroller*

Jamie Chalup, *Budget Analyst*

Debbie England, *Budget Analyst*

Heather O'Grady, *Budget Analyst*

Josh Wilcoxon, *Acting Deputy Comptroller*



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Best Practices in Fiscal Transparency and Accountability

Christy Morgan, *Budget Analyst at Gettysburg National Battlefield, Eisenhower National Historic Site, and Carlisle Federal Indian Boarding School National Monument*

Administration Team of the Year

AFS5 Transition Team, led by Ashley Baggett

Rajesh Alex

Rebecca Bizier

Michelle Blockberger

Donna Brown

Kristi Brown

Monica Brown

Ellen Bullock

Nikki Demers

Debbie England

Jennifer Evans

Qing Fu

Alexandra Genao

Kenneth Handwerker

Karyn Littrell

Melinda Martinez

Jason Mortensen

Heather O'Grady

Nancy Pace

Mason Roberts

Charles Sunil

Administration Leader of the Year

Kathi Palacio, *Administration and Business Services Program Manager at Point Reyes National Seashore*

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