



Montana Forest Collaboration Network (MFCN) Awards

2025 Award Nominations and Recipients

MFCN awards were established this year to celebrate outstanding collaboration to improve forest and grassland health and reduce wildfire risk in Montana.

1. **Group of the Year Award.** Recognizes a collaborative group that has demonstrated outstanding collaboration and achieved significant progress in restoring or improving forest or grassland landscapes.

Nominees: None.

Recipient: **Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Collaborative.** Chosen by the MFCN Awards Committee for their outstanding leadership and collaboration with the Kootenai National Forest on forest restoration projects and the Kootenai Winter Travel Plan. The Kootenai Forest Stakeholders have worked collaboratively since 2006 to find common ground solutions. This past year KFSC completed a community fire awareness project, provided input to the Kootenai NF on restoration and recreation projects. A sub-group successfully applied for an MFCN grant, hired a facilitator, and convened several dozen stakeholders in a collaborative effort that found common ground for the Kootenai Winter Travel Plan.

2. **Partner of the Year Award.** Recognizes a landowner, agency, tribe, group, business, or other organization that has demonstrated an outstanding ability to collaborate to restore or improve forest and grassland conditions.

Nominees:

Idaho Forest Group: Nominated by the Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Collaborative for outstanding leadership and support with the Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Coalition and other collaborative efforts in Montana

Mark "Zev" Hunting, Forest Service Region One Energy Coordinator. Nominated by the Montana Liaison with the Bonneville Power Administration for leadership in bringing together diverse partners to plan actions to reduce wildfire risk with high voltage transmission lines in corridors crossing the Lolo, Flathead, and Kootenai National Forest.

3. Recipient: **Idaho Forest Group**

Idaho Forest Group has supported KFSC since it's founding in 2006. Tim Dougherty of IFG has served as co-chair for the Stakeholders group for many years. IFG has been a financial contributor to KFSC and MFCN. Tim helped the Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Winter Travel Committee obtain a grant from MFCN which allowed them to acquire a facilitator and convene stakeholders in a significant collaborative effort that resulted in an agreed upon proposal for the FS to present as an alternative in their winter travel plan EIS.

Education and Outreach Award: Recognizes an individual or group that has demonstrated an outstanding ability to increase public awareness, support, and engagement through collaborative education and outreach activities.

Nominees:

Jeff Schmidt, General Manager of Red Lodge Mountain Ski Resort: Nominated by the Custer Gallatin WG for many years of outstanding collaboration with the Custer Gallatin Working Group and Montana Forest Action Council.

Sean Steinebach, Sun Mountain Lumber: Nominated by the B-D Working Group For outstanding leadership in facilitating partner engagement and collaboration with the B-D WG, leadership with the Sun Mountain Partnership Meeting, and with other collaborative groups and efforts in Montana.

Family Forest Expo Planning Team (Holly McKenzie, Chair): Nominated by the Flathead NF Partnership Coordinator for planning the annual Family Forest Expo event in the Flathead Valley where over 1200 students learn about natural resources and forest management.

Mark "Zev" Hunting, Forest Service Regional Energy Coordinator: Nominated by the Montana Liaison with the Bonneville Power Administration for leadership in bringing together diverse partners to plan actions to reduce wildfire risk with high voltage transmission lines in corridors crossing the Lolo, Flathead, and Kootenai National Forest.

Recipient: Sean Steinebach, Sun Mountain Lumber

As Outreach Forester for Sun Mountain Lumber, Sean has sat at the tables of many forest collaboratives where his open-minded approach to promoting forest health wins buy-in to engage from a wide range of differing interests. Sean is currently co-chair of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group, member of the Lolo Restoration Committee and has roles with the Custer-Gallatin Working Group and Beaverhead County Collaborative.

Sean takes the lead in planning and delivering Sun Mountain Lumber's Annual Partnership Meeting. This meeting brings together industry, agency leaders, NGOs, researchers, county commissioners, and congressional representatives to discuss natural resource policy and stewardship.