

## South Dakota National Guard Public Affairs Office

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

## **SD National Guard receives U.S. Forest Service award**

DENVER – The South Dakota Army National Guard received the Partner of the Year award here yesterday from the Rocky Mountain Region of the U.S. Forest Service for their partnership and support to the Black Hills National Forest.

“For the past 27 years, the South Dakota Army National Guard and the Black Hills National Forest have worked hand in hand to produce an extremely effective partnership that greatly benefits the training of today’s military, provides for the care and maintenance of natural resources, and enhances the public’s experience in the forest,” said Craig Bobzien, Black Hills National Forest supervisor.

According to Bobzien, the SDNG was nominated for its contributions in providing resource protection and improvement, recreational facilities construction, and promoting the health and safety of the forest.

“I congratulate the South Dakota Army National Guard for earning and receiving this award. I have the utmost respect and admiration for the professionalism, dedication and determination of our National Guard Soldiers,” said Gov. Dennis Daugaard. “They not only know how to do the job, they get it done and do it well – no matter if it’s interacting with the National Forest Service, helping fight Missouri River flooding, or serving our nation in the war against terrorism.”

The Rocky Mountain Region award encompasses a five-state area, which includes Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas and Nebraska. Nominations for this award come from National Forest Service units in the region that partner with organizations, individuals or conservation groups that provide a mutual benefit to each other.

“Our partnership is one that not only serves each other, but the land and the people in remarkable ways,” said Bobzien. “Resource rehabilitation, resource improvement, public understanding and humanitarian assistance are a few of the ways the public also benefits from this partnership.”

The most notable display of this partnership is during the SDNG’s annual training exercise known as Golden Coyote. Since 1984, the Guard has conducted this major, joint-force exercise in the Black Hills National Forest. It is one of the few exercises held in the nation on federal land for the purpose of training Soldiers.

In exchange for training experience, the Guard has provided equipment and military expertise to perform various projects and tasks for the forest. Soldiers and U.S. Forest Service employees experience the mutual benefit of working together and caring for the public lands.

“The partnership forged decades ago with the Black Hills National Forest has provided countless opportunities to enhance the readiness of the South Dakota National Guard,” said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch,

adjutant general for the SDNG. “This partnership also allows the Guard to help maintain and rebuild parts of the forest to be enjoyed by the public for generations to come.”

In 2011, the Guard improved numerous water crossings, dredged ponds and constructed water channel repairs and improvements. The Guard also constructed road and trail bridges, built parking lots at recreation facilities, and constructed wooden informational kiosks to educate the public.

To help promote the safety of the forest, the Guard demolished a decaying building, removed construction materials associated with a recreation house, made various road improvements, and cleaned up and closed an unauthorized shooting area.

The partnership has also helped to provide humanitarian assistance to Native American Reservations.

During the past six years, the National Guard has loaded, hauled, and distributed wood from the Black Hills National Forest to tribes on the Pine Ridge, Oglala and Crow Creek Reservations.

“The humanitarian mission helps reduce the fuel load on the forest, as well as provide much needed wood for heating for Native Americans,” said Bobzien.

In 2011 alone, the firewood mission provided 500 cords of wood for heating purposes to 10 locations on the Pine Ridge Reservation. Since the program was initiated, more than 1,000 semi-truck loads and 2,300 cords of wood have been distributed.

“The National Guard has proven to be an incredible partner of the National Forest; a partnership that continues to serve the Black Hills National Forest and the American people,” said Bobzien.

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Craig Bobzien, far right, forest supervisor for the Black Hills National Forest, congratulates representatives from the South Dakota Army National Guard for receiving the Partner of the Year award from the Rocky Mountain Region of the U.S. Forest Service, for the Guards partnership and support to the Black Hills National Forest on April 4, 2012, in Denver, Colo. Also pictured, from left, is Lt. Col. James Peterson, Lt. Col. Dan Iverson, Brig. Gen. Ted Johnson, and Dan Jirón, regional forester, Rocky Mountain Region, U.S. Forest Service. (Courtesy photo from U.S. Forest Service) (RELEASED)



South Dakota Army National Guard trucks line up on a road in the Black Hills National Forest as they prepare to haul timber to Native American Reservations for use as firewood and ceremonial purposes during the Guard’s annual Golden Coyote training exercise in June. (South Dakota Army National Guard photo) (RELEASED)

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