2019 National Sense of Wonder Award Winner:

Leah Schrodt

The annual Sense of Wonder recognition program acknowledges a Service employee who has shown visionary leadership in environmental education programs that foster a sense of wonder and enhances public stewardship of our natural heritage.

For 2019, the Pacific Region Sense of Wonder nominee is Leah Schrodt, Interpretive Lead with the Oregon Zoo Partnership. Based out of Oregon’s State Ecological Services Office in Portland, Leah spends most of her time at the Oregon Zoo.

Leah won the prestigious national Service award on Nov. 14, 2019 at a ceremony in Denver, CO. This marks two years in a row this award has gone to our region. She is recognized for her excellent work starting, building and maintaining a thriving interpretive program in partnership with the Oregon Zoo in Portland, OR.

“I am feeling amazingly honored and supported in our efforts. My head is still spinning.” Leah said about winning the national award. (Leah pictured above with ARD Will Meeks after receiving the award.)
She has been a part of the team since 2016 when we started this unique partnership and has developed educational kits, outreach tools and ways to get the word out about the Service and conservation ever since. Each year, her work has grown with the development of special events, and collaboration across the board to make this partnership thrive. She has continued to grow the program and partnership for the Service using an innovative approach to urban engagement, reaching a wider audience in her work over the past three years.

Leah is passionate and engaging in her interactions, making her a wonderful fit for this position and a great nominee for the Sense of Wonder Award from the Pacific Region. Her work has already reached thousands of visitors, spreading the Service mission.

“Since day one of being hired to guide the creation of this program, I've felt deeply honored and thrilled to serve in this capacity! The work is a labor of love. Having the opportunity to apply the lessons learned from my 20+ year career in the conservation education field, to the creative process of developing this program over the last three years, for this remarkable agency, has been a lot of work, but pure joy. It is also one of the highlights of my wide-spanning career!” Leah says on her award nomination.

Leah has a deep gratitude to all of the fantastic people within both the Service and the Oregon Zoo who have been instrumental in its creation. “This is truly a "One Service" success story with every single one of our Region's programs being actively involved. I want to thank everyone who has contributed! I also am consistently inspired by our Region’s leadership for being willing to step outside of our traditional box of doing outreach and choosing to support this innovative approach. I believe that if we want the public to understand who we are as an agency and how they play an important role in helping us all achieve our conservation mission, we must find ways to reach people where they are. Additionally, the Zoo’s visionary leadership and staff’s willingness to support this collaboration is paramount, and I am grateful.

Fundamentally, we are better when we work together, which is why collaboration is vital to both organization’s successfully achieving our conservation work.”

Engaging the Zoo’s 1.6 million annual visitors helps our Region continue to reach various audiences. We have many other opportunities to engage the public around the Region and now we have a wonderful example of how to do it in an effective and impactful way. The success of the partnership lies with Service members getting involved. Check out the Annual Outreach Calendar to learn more. Congratulations Leah! Keep up the good work!
The Sense of Wonder Recognition Program recognizes a Service employee who has designed, implemented, or shown visionary leadership in an interpretive or environmental education program that fosters a sense of wonder and enhances public stewardship of our wildlife heritage. The program recognizes individuals who (1) performed outstanding work in the field of interpretation and environmental education during the last year or several years (project based), or (2) have demonstrated sustained quality performance in the field of interpretation and environmental education over a longer period.