



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

CITATION

PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION AWARD

SHELDON SANKEY

In recognition of Sheldon Sankey, Bureau of Indian Affairs, for his unmatched dedication and collaborative skills in establishing partnerships with local communities and various agencies to promote stewardship of one of America's greatest legacies, the land.

A forestry technician in the Eastern Oklahoma Region of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Mr. Sankey has established a fire prevention outreach program that has promoted partnerships with many agencies at the local, state and Federal levels and with the Tribes. This is a unique region in Indian Country in that there are no "reservations" but a checkerboard of trust and restricted lands with multiple governmental jurisdictional areas. Mr. Sankey has developed numerous alliances with organizations throughout Oklahoma to promote fire awareness and education. He partnered with the School for the Deaf in Sulphur, Oklahoma, and the U.S. Forest Service to have Smokey the Bear use sign language to teach the children how to prevent fires. He had Smokey the Bear be an active participant in the program, not only meeting and greeting the children, but utilizing the children's own "language", sign language, to capture their attention while they learned how to prevent fires. He worked with the Chickasaw Nation to promote good stewardship of the land through prevention programs. He participated in the Nation's annual "Night Out," which is a multi-agency/local partnership event that educates and reaches out to local communities on the shared goals of our great inheritance, the land. Mr. Sankey established collaborative partnerships with sister Federal agencies, the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to provide training that meets wildland fire standards, sharing lessons learned and the common ground among all three agencies. Mr. Sankey also partnered with the Northeastern State University to help promote and expand trainees' growth potential in a collaborative effort to preserve the land for tomorrow's generation. These partnerships resulted in quality training for over 222 Native American firefighters. For his vision, unyielding dedication, leadership and commitment to promote the Department's stewardship goals through training, education, and outreach partnerships in eastern Oklahoma, Sheldon Sankey is granted the Department of the Interior's Partners in Conservation Award.