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**Route To:**

**Subject:** Service-wide Memorandum of Understanding with the Smithsonian Institution

**To:** Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF Director, Deputy Chiefs and WO Directors

The Director of the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center and I finalized a new service-wide Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This MOU recognizes our mutual interest in the conservation and management of native plants, especially native orchids. The Smithsonian, through its North American Orchid Conservation Center (NAOCC), leads a coalition of organizations dedicated to conserving the diverse orchid heritage of the U.S. and Canada. The initial groups of public and private organizations that support NAOCC have joined forces with a common goal: to ensure the survival of native orchids for future generations. To this end, the NAOCC's collaborators are working to preserve habitats; create and maintain national collections of seeds and orchid mycorrhizal fungi; and support research on orchid ecology, conservation, and restoration.

The U.S. Forest Service has a proven record of working in collaboration with the Smithsonian. One of our mutual goals is teaching our employees and interested publics about the value of native plants, especially native orchids, and the ecosystem services they provide society and the environment. By managing for native orchids and their habitats on our national forests and grasslands, we know that we help ensure the conservation and resiliency of our Nation's biodiversity and create a healthier environment for both wildlife and people.

I know partnerships take valuable time, effort, and energy; but, at the same time, partnerships such as this provide a means for the Forest Service to accomplish conservation work beneficial to society as a whole.

I encourage you to review the enclosed MOU and become more involved with the NAOCC and its orchid conservation program. You can also visit NAOCC's website at <http://northamericanorchidcenter.org>.

*/s/ Thomas L. Tidwell*  
THOMAS L. TIDWELL  
Chief

Enclosure

