**Smokey Bear - Still Going Strong at 75**

The March 27th SALT Speakers Series will feature Bec Veerman of Tonto National Forest. Bec’s presentation will honor Smokey Bear -75 this year.  Many only know Smokey from posters, but generations have grown up with him - both the original creation as well as the real life bear. Veerman will cover how and why Smokey was created, who he’s worked with as well as the deeper meaning behind his famous quote “remember…only you can prevent wildfires.”  There’s a lot more to Smokey than meets the eye, which is why he is Americas favorite bear, and a national treasure.

Veerman has had quite a journey. She grew up outside Chicago.  Following high school she spent 3 years in Australia and England, and visited other European and Asian countries. A cold, wet English winter prompted a move to hot, dry Phoenix. Here she fell in love with Superstition Mountain, and the rest of the Sonoran Desert; which led her to ASU to study ecological restoration. Her degree is in Natural Resource Management, emphasis on Rangeland Management.

She started working for the Forest Service as a senior at ASU.  Four years later she was hired permanently - initially for a year in Colorado, then a year in nearby Tonto Basin, and now as Zone Partnership Liaison. Mesa Ranger District. “I’ve always had a passion for  community involvement and events,” Bec says.  “so this position has allowed me to combine all the things I love.  While I’m still fine tuning a lot of it, I’m excited to continue to reach out and work with people from all over, with all different interests.”

One thing Bec feels she has learned is that America has something not found anywhere else - we have these huge, wide-open spaces, owned by the public and protected for the future of our nation.  She feels they are our nation’s most valuable resource, and should be our greatest treasure.

Ms. Veerman’s SALT Speakers Series presentation will be March 27th from 6:30-7:30 PM in Rm. B-114 of the Apache Junction Multigenerational Center, 1035 N. Idaho Rd. The series is co-sponsored by the Superstition Area Land Trust (SALT) and the Apache Junction Parks & Recreation Department. It is offered every 2nd and 4th Wednesday October through April, and is free and geared for the public.

SALT is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. You can learn more about us, what we do, and how to join and/or contribute at [azsalt.org](http://azsalt.org).