

**Forest Service Manual
National Headquarters - Washington Office
Washington, DC**

**Forest Service Manual 1600 - Information Services
Chapter 1620 - Public Involvement Programs**

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Digest: Following is an explanation of the changes throughout the directive by section.

1626.01f: Removed section in its entirety to comply with EO 14151 (issued January 20, 2025).

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1621 - Woodsy Owl Environmental Program

1621.01 - Authority

The Act of June 22, 1974 (88 Stat. 244; 31 U.S.C. 488a; 488b-3 - 488b-6; 18 U.S.C. 711, 711a) declares the Woodsy Owl name, character, and slogan as property of the United States; authorizes collection of royalties for commercial use of the Woodsy Owl symbol and slogan (FSM 1621.4); recognizes the Woodsy Owl Environmental Program as “a public service campaign to promote wise use of the environment and programs which foster maintenance and improvement of environmental quality”; and makes royalty funds available to further the Woodsy Owl campaign.

Forest Service regulations at Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, part 272 (36 CFR 272) govern the use of official Woodsy Owl materials in the Woodsy Owl campaign; specify the conditions for public service and commercial use of the Woodsy Owl symbol and slogan; and establish conditions for revocation of licenses.

1621.02 - Objective

To create public interest in and commitment to improvement of environmental quality and wise use of the environment.

1621.03 - Policy

1. Authorize only those uses of the Woodsy Owl symbol that are consistent with the objectives of the program.
2. Authorize the noncommercial use of Woodsy Owl by appropriate cooperators, such as other Federal, State, and local government agencies, tribes, schools, businesses, and youth and conservation groups to encourage maximum educational public service benefit.
3. Use the Woodsy Owl symbol and the slogan “Lend a Hand--Care for the Land” on Forest Service signs, posters, and other print materials when such use serves appropriate educational and environmental needs; in selecting target audiences, recognize that use of the symbol has proven most successful with children and parents and less effective with teens and young adults.

1621.04 - Responsibility

1621.04a - Director, Conservation Education Staff, Washington Office

The Director, Conservation Education Staff, Washington Office has the responsibility to:

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1. Plan and conduct the Woodsy Owl environmental campaign, including:
 - a. Development and distribution of national public service advertising;
 - b. Development, procurement, and distribution of the campaign catalog and materials;
and
 - c. Approval of national public service use by national level cooperators.
2. Approve and administer commercial licensed use of Woodsy Owl and investigate unauthorized uses. Only the Director, Conservation Education Staff, Washington Office, may approve licensed commercial use of Woodsy Owl and the Woodsy Owl slogan.

1621.04b - Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, and Institute Director

Regional Foresters, Station Directors, the Area Director, and the Institute Director have the responsibility for local promotion and use of Woodsy Owl for noncommercial purposes; they may delegate this responsibility to Forest Supervisors and Project Leaders. This responsibility includes:

1. Participating in local media events and authorizing employees to make costumed appearances as Woodsy Owl;
2. Approving public service use by appropriate cooperators within their geographic areas;
3. Distributing and developing Woodsy Owl materials for local use; and
4. Placing campaign catalog orders for their units.

1621.1 - Cooperators

Cooperators in the Woodsy Owl Environmental Program may include entities such as other Federal, State, or local agencies; tribes; schools; businesses; youth and conservation groups; teacher's professional associations; and other service organizations.

1. Authorize the use of the Woodsy Owl costume and materials by prospective cooperators only if such use meets the following criteria:
 - a. The cooperator intends to use the Woodsy Owl symbol for educational or other public service purposes that are compatible with the objective of the Woodsy Owl Program.
 - b. There is a potential for long-term cooperation and educational benefits.

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- c. The Forest Service and the cooperator agree on who shall purchase and provide low-cost campaign materials for distribution.
 - d. The cooperator agrees not to sell purchased or contributed campaign materials or the costumes and agrees not to use such materials or the costumes in any manner that might imply endorsement of a commercial product or company.
2. Use appropriate means of acknowledging cooperators' efforts. Woodsy Owl certificates of appreciation are available from the Conservation Education Staff, Washington Office.

1621.2 - Woodsy Owl Costumes

1. **Ownership, Manufacture, and Purchase.** Official Woodsy Owl costumes are manufactured under license. By license, only Forest Service-approved Federal, State, and local agencies and cooperators may purchase official Woodsy Owl costumes. The authorized field unit official must document the approval in writing for cooperators to own, manufacture, and purchase the Woodsy Owl costume.
2. **Appearances in Costume.** The Forest Service encourages the appearance of Woodsy Owl at parades, fairs, conventions, schools, youth-group meetings, television shows, and other activities compatible with the Woodsy Owl conservation message. Agency and cooperator spokespersons and costume wearers shall comply with the guidelines that are issued with the costume. Copies of these guidelines are available at www.symbols.gov.
 - a. Endorse no commercial product, service, or company.
 - b. Ensure that a uniformed and knowledgeable spokesperson accompanies a costumed Woodsy Owl in order to answer environmental questions for Woodsy and to assist the wearer.
 - c. Keep the identity of the costume wearer anonymous. The accompanying spokesperson may be named, and the sponsoring cooperator may be named as presenting Woodsy Owl as a public service.
 - d. The wearer of the Woodsy Owl costume must not speak while wearing the costume. Woodsy Owl communicates with gestures.
 - e. No one may appear in less than the full costume, unless changes (such as a ski parka or fishing vest or other changes) are approved by the Director, Conservation Education Staff, Washington Office.

1621.3 - Woodsy Owl Artwork

The Forest Service encourages the use of Woodsy Owl artwork for signs, posters, publications, and other appropriate local purposes. Field units may use official artwork prepared and distributed by the Conservation Education Staff, Washington Office, or they may prepare faithful reproductions of official artwork for local use.

1621.4 - Woodsy Owl Slogan

In 1990, Woodsy Owl's current slogan, "Lend a Hand--Care for the Land," was added to his original slogan "Give a Hoot, Don't Pollute." The current slogan should be used for all new or revised and reissued Woodsy Owl artwork, informational products, advertising, and campaign materials.

1621.5 - Campaign Materials

1621.51 - Campaign Catalog

Use the Woodsy Owl on-line campaign catalog at www.symbols.gov for Forest Service and cooperator purchases of official low-cost materials for public distribution. The on-line catalog, prepared and distributed by the Conservation Education Staff, Washington Office, includes official low-cost materials for purchase and use by both Forest Service units and cooperators. Agency units should encourage direct purchases by cooperators. Catalog items may be distributed free of charge to the public only under the following circumstances: To support costume appearances at events, support conservation education activities, and to support Woodsy's presence at professional conferences and conventions.

1623 - Conservation Education

The Conservation Education (CE) Program has the following components:

1. Conservation education,
2. National symbols program, and
3. Natural resource issue education.

1623.01 - Authority

The National Environmental Education Act of 1990 (20 U.S.C. 5501): This Act restated the goal of the 1970 Environmental Education Act and stated, "Federal natural resource agencies such as the United States Forest Service have a wide range of environmental expertise and a long history of cooperation with educational institutions and technology transfer that can assist in furthering the purposes of the Act."

1623.02 - Objectives

1. To promote public awareness and understanding of the importance of natural resources and call attention to particular issues related to forest productivity, protection, and use.
2. To provide leadership in conservation education.
3. To enlist the cooperation of institutions and organizations in developing broad public understanding of and support for the wise management and use of forest, range, and prairie resources.
4. To assist agency employees in better understanding natural resource issues.
5. To assist resource managers in meeting resource management goals.

1623.03 - Policy

1. Use the Conservation Education Program to help agency employees better understand and communicate information about natural resource issues to the public. Whenever appropriate, link presentations to global resource problems and potential solutions.
2. Cooperate with and encourage educators, Federal, State, and local agencies, tribal governments, underserved communities, and private organizations to develop educational concepts, methods, and materials to teach ecological, environmental, and conservation principles, focusing on pre-kindergarten through 12th grade students and their educators, formal and nonformal.
3. Provide information about relevant natural resource issues to the public, using appropriate education techniques and methods.
4. Use volunteers to conduct Conservation Education Program activities.
5. Encourage the use of National Forest System lands for conservation education.
6. Conduct educational activities jointly with other agencies and groups interested in fostering improvement in the understanding of ecological and environmental interrelationships and the related human effects.
7. Ensure that the Conservation Education Program reaches nontraditional audiences, such as urban groups, minorities, underserved communities, and American Indians and Alaska Natives.
8. Encourage Forest Service involvement in education programs and activities and in education councils and organizations at the national, State, and local levels.

1623.04 - Responsibility

1623.04a - Director, Conservation Education Staff, Washington Office

The Director, Conservation Education Staff, Washington Office, has the responsibility to:

1. Develop education programs and policies;
2. Support and evaluate field education activities;
3. Maintain contact with education programs of other Federal agencies and national organizations; and
4. Participate in education programs at national and international levels.

1623.04b - Regional Foresters and Forest Supervisors

Regional Foresters and Forest Supervisors have the responsibility to:

1. Provide overall coordination, program planning, training, quality control, support, and evaluation for Conservation Education Program activities under their jurisdiction.
2. Include specific Conservation Education goals, objectives, and programs in the regional and forest annual conservation education program plan.
3. Coordinate Conservation Education plans with the stations, the Area, and the Institute within their zones of responsibility.
4. Coordinate cooperative Conservation Education plans and activities with State Foresters (except in Region 9, where the Area Director has this responsibility (FSM 1623.04d)).

1623.04c - Station Directors, Area Director, and Institute Director

Station Directors, the Area Director, and the Institute Director have the responsibility to:

1. Cooperate with Conservation Education specialists in carrying out activities with State forestry agencies and other cooperators.
2. Include specific Conservation Education goals, objectives, and programs in annual conservation education program plans, as applicable.
3. Recommend applicable topics and research results for use in the Conservation Education Program and participate in program activities on a planned basis.

1623.04d - Area Director

In addition to the responsibilities in FSM 1623.04c, the Area Director has the responsibility to coordinate cooperative Conservation Education plans and activities with State Foresters within the Area.

1623.05 - Definitions

Conservation Education. The educational process that deals with human relationships to natural and human made surroundings, including the relationships to population; pollution; resource allocation, depletion, and conservation; transportation; technology; and urban and rural planning.

Natural Resource Issue. An issue, problem, or condition that constrains the range of management practices as identified by the public through the land management planning process or similar processes.

Resource Management Education. The process of teaching about the manager's relationship to the land and its resources and the responsibility for stewardship through planning, conservation, and management.

1623.1 - Natural Resource Issue Education

1623.11 - Objective

To help the public better understand the factors that influence natural resource issues so that members of the public may effectively participate in natural resource decision making activities.

1623.12 - Policy

In conducting natural resource issue education activities, Forest Service employees shall:

1. Provide objective information about current natural resource issues to the public and provide ample opportunity for discussing these issues, analyzing data, and drawing conclusions.
2. Help target audiences to understand the physical, biological, ecological, environmental, social, and economic elements of an issue and to learn how these elements affect the formulation of options.

1623.13 - Determining Need and Content

Select resource issues from National Forest System planning and related activities, research results, and State and Private Forestry cooperative activities. Candidate issues should be those that the public has identified or that are important to resource managers and may be selected

at the Forest, State, Regional, or national level. Issues to consider for selection may be either existing or emerging.

1623.14 - Target Audiences

Target natural resource education activities to decisionmakers and others who are affected by or who can affect the issue. Include minority, urban, and other underserved audiences not traditionally offered education program benefits as described in the target audiences identified in FSM 1623.24.

Recreation visitors and other user groups may be contacted by Forest Service interpreters carrying out “interpretation-for-management” activities similar to activities in natural resource issue education (FSM 2390). Conservation Education Program specialists are encouraged to cooperate with interpretive, research and development, and public affairs personnel in these related activities as appropriate.

1623.15 - Methods

Select education methods that aid communication and assist in educating audiences on natural resource issues in a variety of locations and settings. Appropriate methods for the Natural Resource Issue Education Program include briefing sessions, forums, workshops, town meetings, seminars, classroom presentations, service-learning projects, and field-learning activities. Match media and teaching techniques with the selected methods and with appropriate audiences. Use such media as slides, films, video tapes, photos, computer graphics, simulations, educational curricula, activity guides, and other printed educational materials to enhance the learning process.

Where appropriate, such as in workshops or town meetings, use facilitators who have knowledge of the subject matter and basic skills in education, training, and group involvement.

1623.16 - Material Development

1. When appropriate, integrate State and Private Forestry and Research and Development topics, results, and objectives into natural resource issue materials.
2. Seek opportunities to coordinate development of natural resource conservation issue materials with other groups and Federal, State, and local agencies; organizations; and tribal governments early in the process because many issues transcend forest, regional, and national boundaries in interest and effect.
3. Use networking procedures and processes to establish lines of communication and to determine the roles that agency employees and persons from outside the agency can play in developing and using the materials. Evaluate the effectiveness of these roles during and after the development cycle for materials.

4. Use the module concept to develop natural resource issue material; that is, a central building block or unit from which related materials may be developed or adapted for use with different audiences to achieve multiple objectives.

1623.17 - Role of Forest Service Employees

Involve employees in the natural resource issue education process to serve as subject matter experts in material development; to test and evaluate materials and concepts; and to use the completed materials.

1623.2 - Conservation Education

1623.21 - Objectives

The objectives of conservation education are to:

1. Alert people to their dependency on the environment and their responsibility for its stewardship.
2. Provide people with the skills needed to make informed decisions about the environment.
3. Help educators incorporate environmental education processes and concepts into their curricula in various subject areas and grade levels.

1623.22 - Policy

It is the policy of the Forest Service to:

1. Promote understanding of natural resource management through environmental investigations.
2. Stress the teaching of ecological and environmental interrelationships while emphasizing the development of skills in collecting, recording, and interpreting data, and in drawing individual conclusions.

1623.23 - Program Elements

Consider the following for use in conservation education:

1. Conducting science-based educational activities using appropriate materials to teach ecological, environmental, and conservation principles, focusing on prekindergarten to 12th grade students and their educators, through formal and nonformal venues. It also includes workshops for the public and Forest Service employees, to provide the

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awareness, understanding, knowledge, skill, and motivation needed for making thoughtful contributions to natural resource management.

2. Using personnel from the Forest Service; other Federal, State, and local agencies; private organizations; tribes, industries; and educational institutions that have the potential and motivation to plan and carry out conservation education activities.
3. Identifying and using environmental study areas on National Forests, Grasslands, and Prairies, research sites, interpretive facilities, and other sites.
4. Helping colleges, universities, and other schools incorporate conservation education into their curricula.
5. Using techniques that help the Forest Service meet its program goals.
6. In cooperation with public affairs and interpretive services, develop media presentations about wise resource management, protection, and use.

1623.24 - Target Audiences

Direct conservation education activities toward:

1. Students at the pre-kindergarten through 12th grade levels and their educators, through formal and nonformal venues.
2. Those who have the chance to pass along awareness, knowledge, skill, and motivation to others (multiplier effect) with particular emphasis on those who reach underserved audiences as described in paragraph 5 below.
3. Those most affected by actions and programs of agencies that manage natural resources.
4. Those who make decisions regarding problems or issues related to the environment or to natural resource management.
5. Those who have the interest in and motivation for continued involvement. These include Federal, State, and local officials; tribal leaders; legislators; educators; conservation organizations; citizen groups; industry and business groups; labor and civic organizations; and professional associations.
6. Underserved customers, populations, or communities including those in minority groups such as American Indians and Alaska Natives, women, persons below the poverty line, and persons with disabilities.

1623.25 - Workshops

Design conservation education workshops to help participants accomplish defined learning objectives. Vary the format so that participants are involved in developing the understanding and skills that allow them to collect and interpret data and draw their own conclusions regarding environmental issues, problems, relationships, and solutions.

1623.26 - Workshop Facilitators

1. For each workshop, assign at least one trained facilitator whose primary responsibility is to plan and set goals for the workshop; facilitate parts of the workshop; and consult on program elements.
2. Encourage training and use of non-Forest Service facilitators.

1623.27 - Environmental Study Areas

Environmental study areas include school grounds, Forest Service special project sites, demonstration areas, and environmental education centers. Study areas may also include areas located at visitor centers and may make use of the services of the interpreters stationed there (FSM 2390).

1623.28 - Material Development

Develop conservation education materials in the following categories:

1. Content material: Facts and figures about the environment or its management, with suggestions for use of the material in ongoing programs.
2. Process materials: Instructions for participating in various tasks and activities. Include content material as needed.

1623.3 - Program Operation

1623.31 - Training

Train facilitators, including teachers, volunteers and other non-Forest Service employees, as necessary, to design and conduct activities related to the Conservation Education Program.

1623.32 - Annual Program Planning

Establish targets for the Conservation Education Program in the National, Regional, Forest, Area, Institute, and Station program planning processes. Describe and provide supporting costs for the following:

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1. Forest, regional, or national issues being considered for development.
2. Natural resource issue activities involving Forest Service employees and external groups.
3. Conservation education activities.
4. Materials to be developed for resource issue educational programs and related educational activities. Encourage funding support from resource staff groups most involved with the issue material to be developed.
5. Staff development and training activities planned.
6. Conservation Education Program research activities by type and purpose.

Include specific goals and objectives for the Conservation Education Program in annual public information program plans at all organizational levels. Where feasible, link the Conservation Education Program to other planned information functions. The need for some projects cannot be anticipated; develop plans for unanticipated projects as the need arises.

1623.33 - Monitoring and Evaluation

Assess program progress and administration by means of annual reports, program management, and activity reviews.

1623.34 - Accomplishments

Document accomplishments for planned Conservation Education Program activities, projects undertaken to assist in meeting special agency goals and objectives, and cooperative activities with other agencies, groups, tribes, and educational institutions.

1623.4 - Research Needs and Results

Assess the effectiveness of the Conservation Education Program by funding, where appropriate, research of Conservation Education Program concepts, methods, materials, and techniques as a part of the Conservation Education Program planning process. The purpose of such research is:

1. To assess how well natural resource issues and general program concepts are being communicated to agency employees and to the public; and
2. To assess the effectiveness of materials, methods, and techniques used in the agency's conservation education program.

Apply the findings of these studies at all levels of the Forest Service Conservation Education Program.

1624 - Cooperative Outdoor Environmental Programs

1624.01 - Authority

The Act of December 12, 1975 (89 Stat. 804; 16 U.S.C. 565a1-a3) authorizes the Forest Service to enter into cooperative agreements to perform forest protection work.

1624.02 - Objective

To increase public awareness of natural resource management and to improve the environment by engaging in cooperative projects and activities with private organizations, groups, and commercial organizations.

1624.03 - Policy

1. Encourage development and use of commercial and noncommercial agreements to conduct environmental improvement projects.
2. Give public acknowledgment and credit to noncommercial cooperators who conduct environmental improvement projects.
3. Do not endorse or advertise commercial cooperator products or services in any cooperative outdoor environmental project.

1624.04 - Responsibility

1624.04a - Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry, Washington Office

The Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry, Washington Office, through the Directors of Conservation Education, Urban and Community Forestry, and Cooperative Forestry has the responsibility to develop and coordinate with cooperators those projects that are national or multiregional in scope.

1624.04b - Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, and Institute Director

Regional Foresters, Station Directors, the Area Director, and the Institute Director have the authority and responsibility to execute agreements with either commercial or noncommercial cooperators for projects that are principally regional in nature. Regional Foresters may delegate the authority to Forest Supervisors to enter into agreements with noncommercial organizations for local projects.

1624.1 - Cooperative Projects

Cooperative outdoor environmental projects may involve any type of work or activity that benefits the environment. Projects may include wildlife habitat improvement, recreation

development and maintenance, establishment and maintenance of educational trails and learning areas, tree planting, and interpretive improvements.

1624.2 - Project Identification, Signs, and Publicity

1. **Project Names.** Do not name projects for sponsoring cooperators or for living persons. Follow established geographic or other appropriate naming procedures (FSM 1242, 7140.14, 7140.41, 7147 and FSH 7109.14).
2. **Project Identification Signs.** Units may erect a sign on a project area showing the name of the project, name of sponsors, date of establishment, and other pertinent information. For sign standards see EM-7100-15, Sign and Poster Guidelines for the Forest Service (available from the unit or Washington Office, Engineering Staff).
3. **Project Commemoration and Publicity.** Forest officers may help sponsor or arrange suitable commemorative or publicity activities. Although there are restrictions on awards (FSM 6511), the Forest Service encourages the use of local press releases, commemorative events, and other means of publicity for commemorative projects and participants.

1624.3 - Cooperators

Involvement in cooperative outdoor environmental programs is voluntary. However, Forest Service officers may encourage development and use of agreements with commercial and noncommercial cooperators to meet environmental improvement needs (FSM 1580).

1624.31 - Commercial Cooperators

A commercial cooperator is a company that promotes a product or service by donating a specific amount of money to the Forest Service for a specific environmental improvement project. Usually, the cooperator's contribution is based on a consumer's return of a product label or coupon. Often, the cooperator mails a certificate of acknowledgment to the participating consumer. Prepare a collection agreement with the commercial cooperator according to FSM 1580 and in accordance with the following guidelines:

1. Prohibit agency endorsement or advertisement of commercial cooperator products or services.
2. Ensure that contributions total \$10,000 or more per year for national agreements; \$1,000 is the suggested minimum level for regional and other local agreements.
3. Require Forest Service approval of all cooperator publicity, advertising, information, and certificates related to the project.

1624.32 - Noncommercial Cooperators

Noncommercial cooperators normally include schools, youth and adult civic and fraternal organizations, conservation and nonprofit associations, and other National Forest System user groups. The cooperator may do actual field work or contribute funds to pay for part or all of a project. See FSM 1830 for use of volunteers and FSM 1580 for preparation of collection agreements. A participating agreement may also be developed with a profitmaking organization that is noncommercial in nature. See FSM 1580 for guidance on developing participating agreements.

1624.4 - Plant-A-Tree Program

The Forest Service has established this special program to enable persons and organizations to donate money for planting trees. These contributions commonly commemorate birthdays, retirements, and other events and qualify as charitable contributions under the Internal Revenue Code. Follow the specific requirements in FSM 1580 governing collection agreements for the Plant-A-Tree Program, and also comply with the following guidelines:

1. Inform potential contributors that under the program, the Forest Service plants unmarked trees for multiple-use purposes and that eventually the trees may be harvested.
2. Discourage contributions of less than \$10 each.
3. Whenever possible, complete, sign, and send to contributors a Plant-A-Tree Certificate, Form FS-1600-15. This form may be obtained from Beltsville Service Center, 6351 Ammendale Road, Beltsville, MD 20705 (telephone (301) 394-0400) (FSH 1509.11, sec. 33.2).
4. Deposit all contributions in the special Plant-A-Tree Cooperative Work Forest Service account described in FSM 6514.

1625 - Group Contacts

1625.02 - Objectives

The Forest Service consults and communicates with groups, organizations, and associations affected by, or interested in, Forest Service programs, policies, or projects in order to:

1. Keep these groups well informed of and obtain their advice and comments on agency plans and decisions.
2. Improve public understanding of natural resource management, protection, and use.

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3. Build relationships with communities of place and interest and develop their trust through cooperative activities of mutual interest and benefit and collaborative management.

1625.03 - Policy

The Forest Service establishes and maintains group contacts as part of its overall public involvement mission and activities. In conducting group contacts, it is agency policy to:

1. Identify those external groups affected by and interested in Forest Service programs, policies, and projects and seek opportunities to establish continuing communications with these groups.
2. Give emphasis to establishing contacts with organizations that have not traditionally cooperated or communicated with the Forest Service, to facilitate working with a broad range of organizations that represent diverse social, cultural, ethnic, racial, economic, and philosophical interests and presently underserved groups or communities (FSM 1626.04c, FSM 1720, and FSH 1709.11, ch. 20).
3. Plan and conduct group contacts in an orderly, systematic, and coordinated fashion through such mechanisms as developing group contact rosters which assign primary contact responsibilities to specific individuals; planning group contact efforts in the context of developing the annual program of work; and reviewing periodically the degree and effectiveness of contacts with external groups.
4. Conduct group contact activities at a level commensurate with the scope and intensity of the areas of mutual interest between the Forest Service and outside groups as well as to the degree commensurate with the priorities established in the annual budget program of work.
5. Routinely inform external groups of proposed activities and pending decisions and consider the formal and informal comments of officers, leaders, and members of external groups in decision making.

1625.04 - Responsibility

1625.04a - Chief and Staff

The Chief, Associate Chief, Deputy Chiefs, and Associate Deputy Chiefs, have the responsibility to actively contact, consult, and otherwise communicate, to the degree appropriate and feasible, with the officers and staff of those national organizations and tribal governments that have an interest in or may be affected by Forest Service policies, programs, or activities.

1625.04b - Deputy Chiefs

Each Deputy Chief is responsible for delegating to specific Washington Office staff directors and/or to staff assistants the responsibility to develop, maintain, and coordinate continuing contacts with specific groups whose primary areas of interest relate closely to the Deputy Area responsibility. Each Deputy Chief has also the responsibility to keep designated staff directors or staff assistants informed of significant developments resulting from contacts they make with officers and leaders of national organizations and tribal governments.

1625.04c - Designated Staff Directors and Assistants

In carrying out assigned group contacts responsibilities, designated staff directors, or staff assistants in the Washington Office have the responsibility to:

1. Identify those groups, organizations, and associations that may be interested in, or affected by, the programs or activities associated with their areas of work, and update the electronic group contact roster for their staffs maintained on the FSWEB/intranet.
2. Identify officers and key leaders of those groups, organizations, and associations, and update the intranet group contact roster for their staffs.
3. Identify current mutual areas of interest with identified groups.
4. Develop cooperative activities and collaborative relationships with external groups, where appropriate and feasible.
5. Keep line officers and other appropriate staff informed of potential problems, issues, or cooperative opportunities.
6. Review group contact activities annually to evaluate the effectiveness of group contact efforts and whether these efforts should be continued.

1625.04d - Regional Foresters, Forest Supervisors, and District Rangers

All National Forest System line officers have responsibilities similar to those of the Deputy Chiefs (FSM 1625.04a, 1625.04b) for their level of organization and geographic area of responsibility. Regional Foresters have the responsibility to delegate specific responsibilities through Deputy Regional Foresters to Regional Staff Directors. Forest Supervisors and District Rangers have the responsibility to delegate group contact responsibilities to the most appropriate unit staff officers for their level of the organization and geographic area whose duties are similar to those set out at the national level for designated staff directors and assistants (FSM 1625.04c). Line officers also have the responsibility to ensure that group contact activity is evaluated annually.

1625.04e - Station Directors, Area Director, and Institute Director

Station Directors, the Area Director, and the Institute Director have responsibilities similar to those of the Deputy Chief (FSM 1625.04b, 1625.04c) for their level of organization and geographic area of responsibility. Station Directors, the Area Director, and the Institute Director may delegate specific contact responsibilities as appropriate. Station Directors, the Area Director, and the Institute Director also have the responsibility to ensure that group contact activity is evaluated annually.

1625.1 - Developing Group Contacts

1. Develop contacts and cooperative relationships with external groups in a systematic manner that includes the following minimum actions:
 - a. Identify a cross section of publics that represent a broad spectrum of interests, including underserved customers, populations, or communities. Consider groups that are or may be directly affected by management policy or actions, that have shown an interest in programs or policy, or that are capable of assisting the Forest Service in informing and educating others about natural resource conservation, management, and issues.
 - b. Identify current officers and key leaders of these external organizations. Keep lists of officers and key leaders updated electronically as changes occur (para. 2). Determine how groups prefer to be contacted.
 - c. Identify areas of mutual interest.
 - d. Establish specific objectives for working with each group and select appropriate approaches and methods for working with these groups (FSH 1709.11, ch. 20) and the Forest Service Strategic Public Outreach Plan--Reaching Out to America (FS-665, April 2000). http://www.fs.fed.us/cr/national_programs/correspondence/spop/fsspop.pdf
 - e. Assign to specific personnel the primary responsibility for maintaining and coordinating contacts with each group and for providing feedback from these contacts to appropriate line and staff officers.
 - f. Evaluate unit group contact efforts at least annually to determine if all appropriate groups are identified, if contact plans have been carried out and are effective, if contact responsibility should be reassigned, or if new approaches devised (FSM 1625.3).

2. Maintain group contact rosters electronically and review these electronic lists at least annually as part of the unit's group contact efforts.

1625.2 - Group Contact Methods

Select methods of establishing and maintaining working relationships with groups and organizations according to circumstances, opportunity, and mutual interests. Consider the following activities:

1. Arranging one-on-one meetings and consultations with group officers or key leaders.
2. Attending or speaking at meetings of groups and organizations.
3. Conducting "show-me" Forest Service trips and open houses.
4. Encouraging group and organization involvement in specific Forest Service planning and decision making processes.
5. Conducting workshops on natural resource management issues or processes.
6. Arranging for articles in organization publications and newsletters.
7. Arranging cooperative outdoor environmental programs and activities.
8. Providing groups with appropriate informational materials on Forest Service programs and policies and on current Forest Service natural resource issues.

1625.3 - Review and Evaluation

1. **Periodic Review.** Forest Service officers assigned to plan for and make contacts with external organizations should make periodic reviews of their group contact activities and adjust objectives, methods, and approaches as the review indicates. These reviews should assess or examine such factors as:
 - a. The degree to which the organization and agency have achieved two-way communication and mutual understanding of the other's interests, objectives, and concerns.
 - b. The scope and degree of cooperative activities undertaken and the degree of mutual benefit achieved.
 - c. The extent of change, if any, in major areas of concern or interest.
 - d. The effectiveness of and frequency with which those with primary contact responsibilities are reporting back to appropriate line officers and staff.

e. The need to modify the intensity or type of contacts or cooperative activities.

f. An identification of individuals, groups, organizations, associations, or underserved communities that the Forest Service is not now contacting, but should contact.

2. **Evaluation.** Responsible line officers shall annually evaluate group contact performance for their units (FSM 1625.04a - 1625.04b). Line and primary staff officers shall also consider performance of assigned group contact responsibility as part of a designated employee's performance appraisal.

1625.4 - Group Contact Records

In developing records to coordinate group contacts, do not include any information that would impinge in any way upon the privacy of any individual if made available to the public. United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service Records System 19, titled Persons Interested in Forestry and Related Programs, sets forth the type of information and records the Forest Service develops and maintains in working with external groups (FSM 6270; FSH 6209.11, FSH 6209.13).

1626 - Public Involvement Program

The Forest Service Public Involvement Program is an organized effort to ensure public involvement in Forest Service planning and decision-making processes.

1626.01 - Authority

The Forest Service carries out public involvement activities and programs pursuant to various statutory and executive authorities that require the agency to give the public notice of and an opportunity to comment on proposed actions and decisions. The major authorities are set forth here.

1626.01a - Public Involvement in Land Management Planning

The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (16 U.S.C 1600 (note), 1600-1614), the National Forest Management Act (16 U.S.C 1600 (note)), and implementing forest planning regulations at 36 CFR part 219 set forth specific requirements for providing public notice and comment in long-term and short-term resource planning (see FSM 1910, FSM 1920, and FSH 1909.12 for implementing direction).

1626.01b - Public Involvement in Environmental Analysis of Proposed Agency Actions

The National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4371(note)) specifies that the public must have opportunity to participate and comment on the analysis of proposed agency actions.

Regulations issued by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) at 40 CFR part 1500

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implement the public involvement requirements of the act. Chapter 60 of FSH 1909.15, Environmental Policy and Procedures Handbook, sets forth the text of the act and CEQ regulations. Other chapters of FSH 1909.15 as well as FSM 1950 provide additional requirements established by the Forest Service for providing public involvement in environmental analyses.

1626.01c - Public Involvement in Formulation of Agency Directives

Section 11 of the National Forest Management Act (16 U.S.C 1600 (note)), requires the Forest Service to give public notice and an opportunity to comment in the formulation of agency standards, criteria, and guidelines. Agency regulations at 36 CFR part 216 implement this requirement. Under the regulations, Forest Service officials must determine if proposed policy and procedures to be issued in the Forest Service Manual require public notice and comment.

The rules establish criteria that officials must consider in making this determination, set forth documentation requirements, specify the appropriate media for giving notice and the timeframes for public comments on directives issued at various levels of the agency, and require public notice of the final decision along with a summary of public comments received and the agency's response to those comments.

1626.01d - Public Involvement in Agency Rulemaking

FSM 1013 sets forth the requirements for public involvement analysis and promulgation of regulations.

1626.01e - Public Involvement in Other Resource Management Proposals and Recommendations

The following agency regulations implement statutory requirements governing public notice and comment for specific resource management actions:

1. **Landownership Adjustments.** Regulations at 36 CFR 254.8 require public notice of land exchanges and opportunity to comment on proposed exchanges. The rules at 36 CFR 254.23 governing sale of lands for townsite purposes require public notice of intention to designate townsites and a 45-day public comment period.
2. **Wilderness-Primitive Areas.** The rules at 36 CFR 293.5 require at least 30-days' public notice of any hearings to be held on establishing, modifying, or eliminating wilderness or primitive areas and publication of a notice in the Federal Register.
3. **Travel Management.** Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR part 212 require public involvement in the designation of National Forest System roads, National Forest System Trails, and areas on National Forest System lands and revising those designations (36 CFR 212.52).

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Executive Order 13084, Consultation and Coordination with American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal Governments, directs the agency to conduct its programs, policies, and activities in a manner that establishes regular and meaningful consultation and collaboration with American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments in the development of regulatory practices on Federal matters that significantly or uniquely affect their communities. Departmental Regulation 4300-3, Equal Opportunity Public Notification Policy (FSM 1720; FSH 1709.11, ch. 20) gives direction to ensure positive and continuing notification of equal opportunity in Department programs to the public. Departmental Regulation 4360-1, Communications with Under-Served Communities (FSH 1709.11, ch. 20; FSM 1720, 1770, 1780, and 1790) directs that educational and technical assistance services and communications materials be distributed in ways and in languages appropriate to those communities.

1626.02 - Objectives

The Forest Service conducts public involvement activities in order to:

1. Accommodate the public's desire to know about Forest Service plans and proposals and to obtain the public's views.
2. Encourage public involvement in planning and decision making.
3. Become aware of and respond to the values expressed by the public.
4. Reach all affected and interested publics, especially underserved communities.

1626.03 - Policy

1. Ensure that public involvement is an integral part of any agency resource planning process, not a separate procedure.
2. Incorporate public involvement into long-range, programmatic planning, program management, and project planning activities early in the process to identify public concerns and to create a forum for people to communicate their ideas, thoughts, and opinions regarding policies, programs, and activities.
 - a. Identify adequate and appropriate opportunities in which the internal and external publics may participate.
 - b. Recognize social, economic, cultural, and geographic circumstances that influence involvement by affected and interested publics, especially the underserved individuals and communities.
 - c. Consider the agency's needs and requirements to exchange information with the public regarding specific projects or programs.

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3. Develop and maintain a continuing dialogue between agency employees and the public to hear a variety of viewpoints and attitudes.
4. Notify the public in advance of planned programs and activities. Include in such notices an invitation to participate and an adequate description of actions involved. Give specific notice to potentially interested and affected publics (including public agencies, minorities, women, persons with disabilities, and other groups not traditionally contacted).
5. Provide both the general public and selected publics with useful and understandable information to help them understand the decision to be made, the significant factors influencing the decision, the decision making process, and the opportunities for them to participate. Provide the public with adequate time to respond.
6. Objectively report and analyze comments received from the public.
7. Document public involvement plans, activities, and analyses of public comments in the decision making process (FSM 1626.2).
8. Inform those who participate of the final decision and the rationale for the decision.
9. To the extent practicable, provide the public with environmental analysis documents, decision notices, and records of decision free of charge.

1626.04 - Responsibility

To successfully plan and carry out public involvement programs, it is responsibility of the decision makers (line officers), program administrators or planners, and public affairs/Office of Communication staff at each administrative level of the Forest Service to coordinate the public involvement efforts on the unit.

1626.04a - Line Officers

Line officers or their designees have the responsibility to:

1. Ensure adherence to the public involvement requirements of statutory and executive authorities and of Forest Service policy.
2. Designate one person to carry out the information function and to prepare the public involvement plan for specific projects, land management planning, or other agency responsibilities.
3. Within their jurisdiction, review, approve, and monitor the effectiveness of public involvement plans, including documentation.

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4. Attend or provide a representative to attend public involvement activities.
5. Ensure continuing dialogue between appropriate Forest Service personnel and the public.
6. Coordinate development of various public involvement plans, including coordination with other government agencies.

1626.04b - Responsible Staff Officer

The officer designated responsibility for coordinating public involvement plans and activities for proposed projects, land management planning, or other Forest Service responsibilities has the responsibility to:

1. Assist and train agency employees in public involvement policies, methods, procedures, and techniques to ensure objectivity in the collection and analysis of public comments.
2. Ensure that information provided to the public is understandable and is presented in a manner and form that enables participants to make informed comments.
3. Ensure public participants receive information concerning the decisions made and the reasons they were made.
4. Monitor public reaction to decisions and evaluate effectiveness of public involvement actions after implementation of plans.

1626.04c - Public Information Officers

The person assigned responsibility for public information and involvement for a specific project, planning action, or other activity has the responsibility to:

1. Prepare the public involvement plan for the project or program, identify interested and affected publics (including nontraditional groups), and coordinate news media and other information contacts.
2. Implement a process to collect, analyze, and summarize public comments for use by line and staff officers in decision making.
3. Document public involvement actions as needed.

1626.1 - Public Involvement Plans

Prepare public involvement plans as early as possible for proposed actions, policy changes, or programs determined to be of public interest. Develop plans in the degree of detail that reflects the magnitude and significance of the decision under consideration and the degree of

public interest in the proposal. Through a logical step-by-step process, integrate public involvement plans with proposed actions, policy changes, or program development.

1626.2 - Documentation and Records Retention

Many Forest Service decisions are subject to administrative appeal pursuant to the provisions of 36 CFR parts 215 and 251 and to subsequent litigation. Other Forest Service decisions are subject to predecisional review and the opportunity to object (36 CFR 219.13). Public involvement plans, activities, and summaries are often an important part of the administrative record or used as evidence in litigation. Document public involvement plans and activities with care and full attention to the standards and requirements established in law and regulation.

1626.21 - Documentation Requirements

1. Document the results of public involvement activities. Follow the instructions under file designation 1620-6-3 in FSH 6209.11, Records Management Handbook, for retention of these documents. Public responses to environmental impact statements (EIS's) may be retained as part of the Administrative Record for the period approved under file designation 1950 (FSH 6209.11). See FSM 6272.11 for direction on the applicability of the Privacy Act.
2. See 36 CFR 219.9 and FSH 1909.12 for the documentation required for land management planning.
3. See 40 CFR 1503.4 and 40 CFR 1506.6, set out in FSH 1909.15, chapter 60, for the documentation required by the National Environmental Policy Act.
4. See 36 CFR part 216 for the documentation for public involvement required in the formulation of standards, criteria, and guidelines in Forest Service Directives.

Line officers may establish documentation standards beyond the minimum required by law or regulation.

1626.22 - Maintaining Systems of Records

Records of public involvement activities should be maintained in broad categories of participation rather than by names of individual participants. If it is necessary to keep records by participants' names or other identifiers, the records must fit within the system set forth USDA/FS-19. This system of records is limited by the terms of the Privacy Act Issuance for the Agriculture Department, Forest Service, which may be accessed at <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>

1626.23 - Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) describes the conditions of and procedures for making various kinds of records available to the public (FSM 6271, FSH 6209.13). To avoid misunderstandings with the public, inform people during public involvement activities that their responses are to become part of the agency record and are to be available to legitimate requests under FOIA. As a matter of courtesy, the line officer may notify the person or persons whose record is the subject of a request to inform them of the request and the requestor.

1626.3 - Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitor ongoing public involvement plans to ensure they meet agency objectives and public needs. Evaluate completed plans for accomplishment of stated objectives and compliance with law, regulation, and policy. Use evaluation results as an aid in developing future public involvement plans.

1626.4 - Coordination of Public Involvement Plans

1. Coordinate Forest Service public involvement activities with those of other Federal, State, and local governments; American Indian and Alaska Native tribes; citizen groups; and organizations. Where possible, schedule public involvement activities to avoid multiple agency requests that involve the same publics in similar programs during the same time period.
2. As appropriate, include representatives of agencies, governments, and organizations in the development of public involvement plans; in exchange of public involvement informational and educational material; and in conferences or training sessions on public involvement.

1626.5 - Constraints

1626.51 - Questionnaires, Surveys, Interviews, and Informal Responses

Information collected by Federal agencies by means such as questionnaires, surveys, and interviews is subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 101) and the Washington Office, Assistant Director for Records and Information Services, Office of Regulatory and Management Services (ORMS); USDA Chief Information Officer; Office of Management and Budget (OMB); and notice in the Federal Register. These requirements and constraints on information collection may not apply to certain types of informal responses such as those submitted at a public meeting or workshop sponsored by the agency or through a website "contact us" link or feedback request (FSH 1309.14, sec. 41).

1. **Questionnaires, Surveys, and Interviews.** Prior to creating questionnaires, surveys, interview questions or similar methods to collect information from the public during

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Forest Service public involvement efforts, see FSH 1309.14, section 41, for direction about the review and clearance requirements for public information collections.

2. **Informal Responses.** The public may express various ideas and concerns to the agency through informal responses to public involvement or other outreach efforts without formal approval by the Office of Management and Budget pursuant to the Paperwork Reduction Act.

1626.52 - Federal Advisory Committees

Forest Service Manual 1350 sets forth special mandatory procedures to follow when the Secretary through the Forest Service establishes or utilizes groups for the purpose of obtaining advice or recommendations for the President or agency officials on issues or policies within the scope of agency officials' responsibility (41 CFR 102-3.25).

1626.6 - Public Involvement by Contractors

If units contract with individuals or enterprises to conduct public involvement activities on behalf of the agency, the responsible line officer, or representative, shall attend public involvement activities conducted by contractors. Contractors are subject to agency public information collection policies, requirements, and constraints (FSM 1625.51).

1626.7 - Principles of Public Participation

Exhibit 01 sets forth principles of effective public participation.

1626.7 - Exhibit 01

Principles of Public Participation

In 1994 and 1995, the Chief of the Forest Service wrote several letters to employees concerning the agency's interactions with the public. Set forth in those letters are the following basic principles regarding effective public participation:

Make It Timely. The process allows enough time for the public to participate fully, with enough advance notice for all activities and crucial points in the process.

Make Your Process "Free." The public is able to participate at minimum cost and commitment of time, while meeting your public involvement objectives.

Emphasize Fairness. Participants agree that the process is fair, that all views offered are considered.

Practice Openness. Dialogue is welcomed and facilitated among all interests. Anyone who wishes to participate can. Information to the public (documents and so forth) is accessible to all and is in language [and format]¹ that people can understand.

Make Involvement Early and Continuous. The public is involved from beginning to end, and relationships are built over the long term.

Make It Tangible. Results of the public's input are clearly demonstrated, and the public understands how public involvement affected the decision or outcome.

¹ [Ed. Note: Added to original letter in accordance with Departmental Regulation 4300-003 8 c.]

1626.8 - References

The following references provide models and guidance for building relationships with the general public and underserved groups and developing public involvement plans and activities to reach out to groups and individuals:

1. Strengthening Public Involvement: A National Model for Building Long-Term Relationships with the Public.
2. Public Involvement Guide: A Desk Guide to Public Involvement.
3. Unlocking the Barriers: Keys to Communicating with Under-Served Customers.

The references are available <https://www.fs.fed.us/pao/>