

# Conservation Education Task Force Report and Recommendations

## Vision-to-Action Strategy

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest Service

Cooperative  
Forestry

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# Executive Summary

## Issue

Public involvement and collaboration with partners are critical to the future of ecosystems, natural resources, and their management, and conservation education should be the cornerstone for each. The need to focus on communicating the sustainability of natural and cultural resources in forests, grasslands, and aquatic ecosystems and the interconnectedness of land and people requires a coordinated and effective Service-wide conservation education strategy. This strategy is designed to equip present and future resource users, decisionmakers, and partners with the tools they will need to make informed decisions regarding public and private lands, and to simply help them connect. This strategy is an investment in the future of natural resources on America's public and private lands.

## Summary

The Forest Service has provided education programs since its infancy. Today, we provide a myriad of public education and outreach programs at a significant cost in both dollars and personnel. In some parts of the country, we are a conservation education leader. However, we are inefficient. The programs are fragmented, are disconnected, and lack agency coordination. There is no clear corporate strategy, no prioritized messages. As a result, conservation education has been viewed as "nice to do" when available resources permit. Current public demand dictates that the Forest Service shift from piecemeal education programs to a solid and coordinated conservation education system.

In September 1996, under Chief and Staff direction, the staff directors of Cooperative Forestry; Recreation, Heritage, and Wilderness Resources; Wildlife, Fish, and Rare Plants; and the Office of Communication commissioned a task force to develop a national corporate vision for all education programs of the Forest Service. Under the oversight of these staff directors, the Conservation Education Task Force was also directed to develop a clear strategy to accomplish Forest Service education and outreach programs. To do this, the task force conducted 24 listening sessions around the country, involving Forest Service employees and representatives from other Federal and State agencies, nonprofit organizations, and educators. At these listening sessions, the following questions were asked: Should educating the public about natural and cultural resources be a Forest Service priority? What should the main themes be in educating the public? Who should~ be our target audiences?

Using the valuable input from these sessions, the task force formulated a Service-wide response to these questions and then developed a strategy for Service-wide implementation.

## Vision and Mission

By 2002, Forest Service conservation education will be an effective, dynamic means for the Forest Service to connect the American people with their environment. The Forest Service will provide the tools Americans need to participate effectively in the critical task of sustaining our Nation's natural and cultural resources. This undertaking shall be a coordinated, Service-wide effort that will affect all aspects of the agency's operations.

## Vital Priorities

The following priorities are necessary to give conservation education pre-eminence in the Forest Service.

**Interdeputy Leadership and Coordination.** Interdeputy leadership and coordination at the national level will ensure that all education efforts are integrated across Forest Service program areas.

**Core Themes.** Forest Service core conservation education programs will support two key themes:

- Sustainability of natural and cultural resources in forest, grasslands, and aquatic ecosystems.
- Awareness and understanding of interrelationships in natural systems and between people and the land.

**Target Audience.** Forest Service education efforts will focus on three primary audiences-visitors, youth, and urban communities.

**Partner Involvement and Coordination.** Partners will continue to be involved, both strategically and tactically, in all of our education efforts. Emphasis will be given to increasing partner involvement at all levels and in all phases of financing, fundraising, development, and implementation.

**Program Collaboration With Local Flexibility.** Share successes and failures, information, and materials among the different local and national programs.

Increase efficiency in utilization and distribution of conservation education tools and in training staff.

Complement Forest Service priorities under the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA).

## From Vision to Action

To accomplish these vital priorities, the following actions will be taken. Implementation plans will be developed in the near future.

**Interdeputy Board of Directors and Team.** An interdeputy board of directors will be responsible for carrying out the recommendations of the Conservation Education Task Force. An interdeputy team, under the direction of the board of directors, will coordinate implementation.

**National Messages, Audiences, and Materials.**

- *Guidelines.* Review guidelines and standards for excellence in education developed by the North American Association for Environmental Education. Modify these guidelines to encompass educational and interpretative activities in all deputy areas. Officially adopt guidelines and standards for Forest Service conservation education excellence. Focus messages based on defined themes and target audiences.

- *Evaluation.* Inventory and evaluate existing programs to ensure that they target the three identified audiences effectively, support the conservation education themes, and meet the guidelines for Forest Service conservation education excellence.
- *Revise and Develop Programs.* Modify existing programs and materials and develop a body of basic conservation education materials as needed. Develop annual emphasis areas for conservation education programs that complement Forest Service priorities under the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) (for example, riparian initiatives). Implement emphasis areas nationally for a full year.

**Funding.** Develop sustainable and adequate funding sources for education programs through leveraging partnerships, appropriated funds, and self-sustaining program opportunities.

**Land Management Planning and Collaborative Stewardship.** Incorporate educational principles and techniques into the land management planning process (for example, Leave No Trace for wilderness planning, Ske-cology for winter sports planning).

Make a direct connection between conservation education and collaborative stewardship (for example, Children's Forest, Natural Resources Youth Camps, National Envirothon).

**Support Field Efforts.** Assist the field in committing time and financial resources to targeted education efforts.

Establish and publicize a national clearinghouse for educational materials both in hard copy and Internet formats.

Train line officers on the value of education in meeting the Forest Service mission, goals, and objectives.

Train all Forest Service employees on the value of conservation education as a tool for customer service.

Facilitate the training of Forest Service employees and partners across the country on the basics of conservation education and delivery of effective educational programs.

**Partners.** Operate with partners to such an extent that a Forest Service conservation education effort not including partners is a rare exception.

Develop mechanisms with partners to leverage resources, build networks, develop materials, and implement delivery systems.

Use partnerships to reach as great an audience as possible beyond the targeted audiences recommended by this task force. Seek out national-level partners such as the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (PBS), the National Geographic Society, and the Smithsonian Institution. Continue to nurture partnerships with States, local communities, and school systems.

Utilize television, newspapers, and magazines as effective ways to reach audiences.

**Multimedia Technology.** Enhance Internet and World Wide Web access for Forest Service conservation education.

Maximize use of multimedia technology for delivering educational messages.

**Accountability.** Develop desired outcomes and measure their accomplishments. Tie accountability to the adopted standards and guidelines for Forest Service conservation education excellence.

Accomplish accountability through employee performance standards, systematic evaluation of outcomes, and recognition of and awards for employees and partners.

# Vision-to-Action Strategy

## Task Force Charter

The staff directors of Cooperative Forestry; Recreation, Heritage, and Wilderness Resources; Wildlife, Fish, and Rare Plants; and the Office of Communications realize both the opportunity that conservation education offers the agency and how current efforts have not reached their potential across the board. The USDA Forest Service has a myriad of public education and outreach programs. Current endeavors are substantial, with a significant cost in terms of both dollars and personnel. However, these efforts are fragmented and uncoordinated, with no clear strategy or priority.

In response to this situation, under Chief and Staff direction, the directors commissioned a task force in September 1996 to develop a national corporate vision for all Forest Service education programs under the oversight of the affected staff directors. They also directed the task force to develop a clear, forceful strategy to accomplish Forest Service education and outreach goals in a prioritized fashion.

To develop a vision and a strategy for Forest Service conservation education(1) efforts, the task force was to address the following questions: Should educating the public about natural and cultural resources be a Forest Service priority? What should the main themes be in educating the public? Who should our target audiences be?

## Objectives

1. Establish a corporate vision and objectives for conservation education that will guide agency efforts through 2002.
2. Develop a dynamic strategy with specific, prioritized actions and responsibilities to achieve the vision and objectives.

## Historical Perspective

The following milestones have defined the development of conservation education in the Forest Service.

### Development of Conservation Education

**Conservation education was considered a "nice thing to do" and was deemed to be a role for women.** Conservation education in the Forest Service goes back to the early 1900's. Fed at first only by catastrophic events such as wildfires, conservation education was nurtured by women like Mrs. Priscilla Edgerton, who authored *Me Forest, A Handbook for Teachers* in 1927, and Ms. Margaret Mount-March, who promoted the idea of conservation through talks to various civic and school groups in the 1920's and 1930's. Conservation crusades such as Ms. Mount-March's "Penny Pines" raised student awareness and donations to fund the planting of pines on national forests.

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<sup>1</sup> To emphasize the agency focus on conservation of natural and cultural resources, the Forest Service returned to the term conservation education rather than environmental education.

**Following its first timid steps in trying to limit the abuse of forest resources, the Forest Service institutionalized its role in conservation education.** Conservation education formally entered the Forest Service's agenda with the 1928 Forest Service Manual, which noted the importance of education to "promote the best use of all forest resources in the country, public and private." This early manual promoted cooperation with schools and publications for children.

**The interest of the American people followed the need to protect their natural resources. Conservation appeals to the hearts of people with Smokey as a symbol.** In World War II, Americans feared that an enemy attack or sabotage could destroy our forest resources. As a result, the Cooperative Forest Fire Prevention Program was organized to encourage citizens to make a personal effort to prevent forest fires. On August 9, 1944 the Forest Service and the War Advertising Council introduced Smokey Bear as a campaign symbol. The result was a great success in decreasing accidental, human-caused forest fires. In the years that followed, the focus of Smokey's campaign broadened to appeal to children as well as adults. To complement the Fire Prevention Classroom Program, in 1953 the Forest Service launched a fulfillment program called the *Junior Forest Ranger Program*.

**Efforts are geared toward helping people understand nature.** Forest Service efforts to provide forest visitors with information and interpretive services began in the 1950's. These efforts were formalized in 1962 with the creation of the Visitor Information Service Program. Over the next two decades, 25 major visitor centers and hundreds of interpretive sites and information centers were built and staffed. In 1980, the name of the VIS program was changed to Interpretive Service. Annual visitation to visitor centers and Interpretive Service sites now is about 12 million. Heritage interpretive programs, like Passport in Time, are growing in popularity.

**Official backing and support is provided. Woodsy Owl is created to focus attention on issues of environmental conservation.** The Forest Service's "Environmental Education," as it was known by then, came formally into being in 1968 under Chief Edward F. Cliff. Cliff was convinced that protection and wise use of the Nation's natural resources would only be possible if the Forest Service had the understanding and support of the public. Cliff sent an environmental education training team all over the United States to teach thousands of Garden Club members, educators, and personnel of the Forest Service and other State and Federal agencies about the principles of environmental education and how to teach them.

Nationally, legislative support and funding addressed public concerns at the Federal and State levels. The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (P.L. 91-190) and the National Environmental Education Act of 1970 (P.L. 91-516), both identified education as a mechanism for improving the quality of the human environment. The National Environmental Education Act of 1990 (P. L. 101-619) is a restatement of that goal.

In June 1974, Congress enacted Public Law 93-318, which established Woodsy Owl as a "symbol for a public service campaign to promote wise use of the environment and programs which foster maintenance and improvement of environmental quality." In 1996, Chief and Staff reaffirmed the viability of and their desire to continue Smokey, Woodsy, and the Junior Forest Ranger Programs.

**Formal curricula are developed.** The 1970's were a heyday for environmental education in the Forest Service. The Forest Service began its support of *Project Learning Tree* curriculum material developed for grades K through 12. In 1971, the Forest Service published its own set of lesson plans called "*Investigating Your Environment*," using science-based activities that develop skills for collecting, recording, and interpreting information about different parts of the environment. These materials have stood the test of time and are still regarded by some educators as examples of the best materials of their type ever produced. These materials were updated in the early 1990's.

**Conservation education expands through wildlife viewing and other outdoor recreation interests. Collaboration between public and private partners opens new opportunities for conservation education programs.** In the mid 1980's, as the American public's wildlife-associated recreation interest increased, the Forest Service developed a watchable wildlife program called Eyes on Wildlife. In 1994, this program was expanded into the current program known as *NatureWatch*, which highlights three focus areas: *Eyes On Wildlife*, *FishWatch*, and *Celebrating Wildflowers*.

These programs, as a collaboration of public and private partners, unite a wide variety of perspectives to the rich diversity of ways to learn about natural resources through educational activities, festivals, nature trails, interactive displays, educational computer programs, brochures, classes, and so forth. Other examples of cooperative efforts include 31 State *viewing guides*, *National Fishing Week*, *International Migratory Bird Day*, and other education events. Wildlife, fish, and wildflower viewing opportunities are found on every national forest and grassland and on most ranger districts across the country.

**A Service-wide, focused conservation education effort with local implementation is instituted.** The Natural Resource Conservation Education (NRCE) Program was created as "a Service-wide focused program jointly sponsored by the USDA Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters." The Chief and Staff established the program in February 1991 to move the public from awareness to informed actions concerning all natural resources, particularly conservation. Designed as a lifelong learning program, the NRCE program has helped national forests, State forestry agencies, and research units carry out 200 projects each year since 1992.

**Conservation education expands into urban communities.** The increasing urbanization of the American people created the need for the Forest Service to reach a different kind of audience and expand its education programs to help the urban population connect with their natural environment.

Following the 1990 Farm Bill, the Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program was expanded and education became one of its integral components. State forestry agencies and other partners have promoted classroom lessons aimed at inspiring students in urban communities to appreciate their natural environment through discussions and interactive teaching materials as well as experiential activities. At the higher education level, the Forest Service has funded the development of a baccalaureate degree program in urban and community forestry

In 1991, Forest Service Research established the Urban Tree House as a community-based, cooperative education and outreach effort. Three Urban Tree Houses exist today around the country.

Lessons Learned  
From History

Despite the early recognition in the Forest Service Manual of the importance of conservation education to carry out the mission of the Forest Service, in reality this task has largely been considered as "a nice thing to do." It has often been viewed as an extracurricular duty of Forest Service employees and appropriate for Forest Service volunteers.

Changing values in America have caused many Forest Service programs to include conservation education. The growth of so many education programs reflects the agency's attempt to respond to what the public expects. At town hall meetings held around the country in 1994, the public told our leaders that the Forest Service has a responsibility to educate the public on natural resource issues (see appendixes C and D).

Smokey has been extremely successful, and his fame is carried on by people who believe in his mission. Adults who have grown up with Smokey have passed his message on to a younger generation that realizes the importance of saving our forests and wild lands from careless fire. Other programs, such as Nature Watch, have also been very successful at niche marketing. The Forest Service now needs to identify other niches and create a national approach that balances niches to achieve its vision for conservation education.

The Forest Service has launched conservation education programs from many different directions and at many different audiences. Across the board, Forest Service personnel have conducted these programs with much enthusiasm and dedication. However, without an overall structure to guide conservation education and to integrate the multiple pieces, programs across the board have not been as successful as they could have been, and the return for the investment has not been maximized.

**Current Realities**  
Current Assets  
of Existing  
Conservation Efforts

**Programs.** The existence of nearly 40 programs (see appendix B) speaks volumes about the Forest Service's desire to provide education.

**Facilities and Research.** Our visitor centers and campgrounds are places where people who are anxious to learn congregate. Research facilities are also places where the knowledge and expertise of our scientists can be shared. Forest Service research is the largest natural resource science organization in the world, having the breadth, depth, and credibility to provide factual, scientific, information on a wide range of natural resource topics and issues.

**Partners.** This is an area of strength at the national, State, and local levels. National partnerships are in place (or the groundwork has been laid) with the major providers of environmental education in this country. Local units have also established partnerships with hundreds of local entities. The partner listening sessions indicated strong desire for more partnerships involving more than just money. Conservation groups are anxious to develop and deliver programs jointly. The Forest Service relies on the following support:

- *Project Learning Tree* is the premier school environmental education program for elementary students. PLT teacher training is provided by State forestry agencies and the Forest Service, and educators.
- *Partners in Resource Education* is a multiagency collaboration among the Forest Service, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, and the Fish and Wildlife Service. Work currently underway includes the creation and dissemination of educational toolkits.
- *Interpretive Associations* exist at both the regional and local levels. They offer customer service and extend the Forest Service's limited ability to provide interpretive material to visitors. There are currently 55 of these nonprofit organizations working with national forests in all regions, creating a network of viewing sites with interpretive signing. The Forest Service has long been a leader in the National Association for Interpretation.
- The *National Forest Foundation* offers great promise in bringing in partners and their resources. The foundation has leveraged funds for recreation and wildlife challenge cost-share programs and is very interested in a similar program for conservation education. The foundation has shown a particular interest in leveraging the opportunity to reach a large volume of visitors at our major visitor centers.

**National Studies.** Numerous national studies, including the President's Commission on America's Outdoors, have identified wildlife-associated recreation as extremely popular for millions of Americans. This has encouraged educators to integrate environmental education into basic school curricula.

Federal resource agencies are called to play a greater role in providing viewing opportunities for people to experience the Nation's wildlife resources. In response to the President's Commission on America's Outdoors, Defenders of Wildlife, in cooperation with Federal land management agencies, published a report entitled "Watchable Wildlife: A New Initiative." This launched the national Watchable Wildlife effort and also provided a framework for Federal and State agencies and private conservation groups to unite a number of scattered efforts to provide new recreation, conservation, and educational opportunities.

**National Networks.** Conservation education networks exist in every region, area, and station as well as in virtually every State forestry agency. Every region has interpretive specialists, biologists, and botanists who focus on

education. Many national forests have full-time or part-time educators, interpreters, and biologists who conduct education programs.

**Funding.** The Forest Service has mixed apples and oranges in the way it funds conservation education. NRCE has been funded from the top as a consolidated program. Various other program areas, such as wildlife and fire prevention, have supported their own education programs. Consolidated funding has been an area of controversy for two reasons: individual programs have been developed by dedicated individuals to accomplish program objectives (therefore the programs are responsive to their needs), and program leaders do not want someone else to tell them what to do with their resources.

Nevertheless, the NRCE earmark provides funds, albeit limited, to be spent by national forests, State forestry agencies, and research units specifically for education purposes. Some units have stated that without this designated money, they would have none for education.

The Interpretive Services Program benefits most resource areas, and Interpretive Services programs exist for almost every natural and cultural resource the Forest Service manages. Despite these wide-ranging benefits, most Interpretive Services programs are funded entirely from a declining recreation (NFRM) budget line item. The congressional earmarks to build new, multimillion dollar visitor centers continue, but our inability to adequately staff and maintain existing centers and programs has resulted in a self-imposed moratorium on all new major visitor facilities. A few regions have begun to multifinance Interpretive Services programs at major visitor centers, but such efforts are inconsistent, sporadic, and time consuming.

**External Funds-Challenge Cost-Share.** Leveraging resources for conservation education from public-private partnerships has been quite successful. Among other activities, the National Forest Foundation has started to provide opportunities for private investors, individual and corporate, to support the Forest Service in its funding of conservation education programs. NRCE and other programs, such as Urban Tree House and Nature Watch, have matched every appropriated dollar with one to two dollars each year.

#### Core Assumptions of Operations Until Today

Some of the Forest Service's core assumptions about conservation education are apparent in what the agency has been doing in education and outreach and the way it has been done. A dichotomy appears between the philosophical approach, the degree of local autonomy, and the national direction among Forest Service programs. NRCE programs have largely functioned autonomously with the belief that programs should be locally initiated, developed, and delivered. All of the programs have sought and benefited from the creation of national partnerships, networks, and coordination.

#### Strengths and Weaknesses

Today, operations benefit from intricate networks of partners, educators, and committed individuals who provide access to a wealth of resources. The Chiefs and key staff directors' interest in conservation education is an essential support and driving force behind current efforts to reorganize the Forest Service's vision for conservation education. The current

Administration's focus on education, children, and the environment provide a favorable political context in which to improve our programs.

The main impediments to conservation education efforts are internal coordination, communication and sharing of materials, funding, understanding of NRCE, and targeting of audiences. These areas also offer the main opportunities for improvement.

## **Signals in Our Operating Environment**

Often the ability to effect change is determined by the ability to listen and to understand the signals emitted in our operating environment. The signals in today's environment tell us it is the appropriate time and context to give greater emphasis to conservation education as a Forest Service priority.

## **Signals for Interpretation In the Forest Service**

The Chief has indicated a strong interest, through speeches and other communications, in making conservation education more effective.

The agency focus on customer service, especially for visitors to national forests, is greater than ever.

There is a growing willingness to take an entrepreneurial approach in carrying out the Forest Service mission through collaboration, partnerships, and enterprise teams.

Appropriated funds are down, triggering the need to explore nontraditional funding sources and the need for programs that are focused and supported.

Forest Service employees are overworked and have less time to devote to programs not seen as a measurable target. The incredible volunteer work force that has emerged consequently shows the undeniably strong public support and interest in this matter.

Emphasis across government on collaboration and coordination is increasing.

The public demand for visitor facilities and need for them is growing at a time when budget constraints may cause us to cut back on hours of operation.

## **Signals in the External Operating Environment**

The number of people living in urban areas (80 percent of the American population) continues to grow. At the same time, their knowledge and awareness of the importance of natural resources and functioning of natural environments are declining.

Critics of environmental education are questioning its impartiality and threatening the future of the National Environmental Education Act.

The world of environmental education and edutainment has expanded to include many nonscientific sources. Television is the most important source of knowledge about the environment for most Americans, followed by news papers and magazines.

Education in the schools is being rethought and reshaped to be more efficient and effective in making what youth learn more real to them.

Many partners and other organizations are providing significant conservation education around the country. They are interested in working with the Forest Service because of its land base resources and scientific management and expertise. The academic environmental education community is putting into place national guidelines for excellence for environmental education materials and learner outcomes for students and educators. It is also analyzing existing environmental education materials with those new standards.

## Reason for Existence

Vision for Conservation Education

By 2002, Forest Service conservation education will be an effective, dynamic means for the Forest Service to connect the American people with their environment. The Forest Service will provide the tools they need to participate effectively in the critical task of sustaining the Nation's natural and cultural resources. This undertaking shall be a coordinated, Forest Service-wide effort that will affect all aspects of the agency's operations.

Reason for Existence

Sustaining America's natural and cultural resources requires the participation of an informed public. Conservation education builds an understanding of the connection between people and their environment so they can effectively participate with the Forest Service in attaining the agency's mission. The agency needs people to understand the problems and potential solutions so that it can take necessary steps on behalf of the public, but for that to happen people need to understand the effects of their own actions.

As a conservation leader, the Forest Service is expected to provide information and education to the public. The Forest Service has the organization, knowledge, people, partnerships, and experience to deliver a balanced conservation message.

Our Destination

We are now at a critical juncture where the various educational strands can be woven together to create a synergistic program that supports the Forest Service's mission and transforms the role of education in the Forest Service.

What Value Do We Deliver and to Whom?

The program at the national level will focus on the following groups:

- Youth: Providing educational experiences in a variety of environments.
- *Urban* communities: Providing a connection for the land to those who are becoming increasingly disconnected from it.
- Visitors: Enhancing the recreational experience of forest visitors, influencing visitor behavior and providing information to protect the resource.

Core Assumptions of the New Strategy

Long-term conservation education is critical to the Forest Service's mission. The public must understand the need for, and feel connected to, natural resources. Future legislators and future members of the executive and judicial branches need to understand the environmental and natural resource implications of their decisions.

Conservation education is critical to accomplishing both immediate and long-term goals and benefits, and it should be integral to program delivery. Conservation education programs should support the development of land management plans with input from diverse, informed members of the public.

Coordination between deputy areas can eliminate duplication and competition among programs and increase cost-effectiveness. Coordination and sharing of information among all Forest Service units can improve the quality of service and reduce costs by not reinventing the wheel.

**From Vision  
to Action**  
Vital Priorities

The following priorities are necessary to give conservation education preeminence in the Forest Service:

**Interdeputy Leadership and Coordination.** Interdeputy leadership and coordination at the national level will ensure that all education efforts are integrated across Forest Service program areas.

**Core Themes.** Forest Service core conservation education programs will support two key themes:

- Sustainability of natural and cultural resources in forest, grassland, and aquatic ecosystems.
- Awareness and understanding of interrelationships in natural systems and between people and the land.

**Target Audiences.** Forest Service education efforts will focus on three primary audiences-visitors, youth, and urban communities.

**Partner Involvement and Coordination.** Partners will continue to be involved, both strategically and tactically, in all Forest Service education efforts. The Forest Service will emphasize increasing partner involvement at all levels and in all phases of financing, fund-raising, development, and implementation.

**Program Collaboration With Local Flexibility.** The Forest Service will share successes, failures, information, and materials among the different local and national programs. It will increase efficiency in using and distributing conservation education tools and in training staff. Program collaboration will complement Forest Service priorities under the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA).

Concrete Action

To accomplish these vital priorities, the following actions will be taken. Implementation plans will be developed in the near future.

**Interdeputy Board of Directors and Team.** An interdeputy board of directors will be responsible for carrying out the recommendations of the Conservation Education Task Force. An interdeputy team, under the direction of the board of directors, will coordinate implementation.

## **National Messages, Audiences, and Materials.**

- *Guidelines.* Review the guidelines and standards for excellence in education developed by the North American Association for Environmental Education. Modify these guidelines to encompass educational and interpretative activities in all deputy areas. Officially adopt guidelines and standards for Forest Service conservation education excellence. Focus messages based on defined themes and target audiences.
- *Evaluation.* Inventory and evaluate existing programs to ensure that they target the three identified audiences effectively, support the conservation education themes, and meet the guidelines for Forest Service conservation education excellence.
- *Revise and Develop Programs.* Modify existing programs and materials and develop a body of basic conservation education materials as needed. Develop annual emphasis areas for conservation education programs that complement Forest Service priorities under the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) (for example, riparian initiatives). Implement emphasis areas nationally for a full year.

**Funding.** Develop sustainable and adequate funding sources for education programs by leveraging partnerships, appropriated funds, and self-sustaining program opportunities.

**Land Management Planning and Collaborative Stewardship.** Incorporate educational principles and techniques into the land management planning process (for example, Leave No Trace for wilderness planning, Ske-cology for winter sports planning).

Make a direct connection between conservation educational and collaborative stewardship (for example, Children's Forest, Natural Resources Youth Camps, National Envirothon).

**Support Field Efforts.** Assist the field in committing time and financial resources to targeted educational efforts.

Establish and publicize a national clearinghouse for educational materials both in hard copy and Internet formats.

Train line officers on the value of education in meeting the Forest Service mission, goals, and objectives.

Train all Forest Service employees on the value of conservation education as a tool for customer service.

Facilitate training of Forest Service employees and partners across the country on the basics of conservation education and delivery of effective educational programs.

**Partners.** Operate with partners to such an extent that a Forest Service conservation education effort not including partners is a rare exception.

Develop mechanisms with partners to leverage resources, build networks, develop materials, and implement delivery systems.

Use partnerships to reach as great an audience as possible beyond the targeted audiences recommended by this task force. Seek out national level partners such as the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the National Geographic Society, and the Smithsonian Institution. Continue to nurture partnerships with States, local communities, and school systems.

Use television, newspapers, and magazines as effective ways to reach audiences.

**Multimedia Technology.** Enhance Internet and World Wide Web access for Forest Service conservation education. Maximize the use of multimedia technology for delivering educational messages.

**Accountability.** Develop desired outcomes and measure accomplishments. Tie accountability to the adopted standards and guidelines for Forest Service conservation education excellence.

Accomplish accountability through employee performance standards, systematic evaluation of outcomes, and recognition and awards for employees and partners.

# Appendix A.

## Conservation Education Task Force Team Members

### Directors and Assistant Directors

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## **Appendix B.**

# **Forest Service Programs Providing Conservation Education**

### **Natural Resource Conservation Education**

**Woodsy Owl:** Through the character of Woodsy Owl, the Forest Service builds public knowledge about our environment and its proper use. Woodsy's message emphasizes caring for the land and stopping pollution.

**Branching Out to the Youth of America:** Teams of college students of diverse ethnic backgrounds and areas of study work with urban children who learn about the environment and conservation. Students are exposed to a variety of career options while learning about their environment.

**Envirothon:** A multidisciplinary, environmental problem-solving program culminating in an annual series of competitions. Individual States design and administer competitions and training for schools throughout their State. A winning team from each State then advances to the National Envirothon, challenging students not only to learn about the needs of their region and issues of local concern, but to also broaden their sense of community.

**Commencement 2000:** A kindergarten through college program that introduces minority students to the world of natural resources and encourages them to seek a career in that field.

**Project Learning Tree:** A teacher-training program and conservation education curriculum that helps students from preschool through high school develop environmental awareness and the ability to make informed decisions about natural resources and management.

**School Curricula:** The Forest Service has developed the widely acclaimed *Investigating Your Environment*, *Ecosystem Matters*, and other curriculum guides at the local level.

**Urban Tree House:** A cooperative, community-based environmental research and education program. The treehouse is a simple platform shaped in the form of the United States and placed in a community green space. Its goal is to help inner-city youth and adults learn about natural resources and environmental concepts.

**Children's Forest:** An effort on the San Bernardino National Forest to guide children in discovering and understanding forest ecosystems and their management. Youth learn appreciation and stewardship and develop a connection with the land.

**Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts:** Formal partnerships with these two critical youth leadership organizations allow the Forest Service to work with millions of youths in natural settings.

## **Conservation Education About Fish, Animals, and Plants**

**Trail Boss:** A program that provides leaders of youth and outdoor-oriented organizations with training and experience that allow them to successfully accomplish conservation project work on Federal, State, and local lands and waters.

**NatureWatch:** A program that puts people in touch with the plants, animals, fish, and birds of their national forests through viewing sites, interpretive walks, festivals, and more. NatureWatch is an effortless means to education and a way for people who feel strongly about biodiversity to become partners in habitat conservation.

**Eyes on Wildlife:** An effort that facilitates habitat management and improvements for wildlife viewing on national forests and grasslands. Eyes on Wildlife provides enhanced opportunities for all people to experience wildlife-, promotes learning about forest animals and plants and their habitat requirements; and develops a broad public support of conservation that maintains healthy ecosystems for all plant and animal species.

**Fish Watch:** An aquatic and fisheries-focused educational program that elevates awareness of the importance of fish and clean water; encourages an interest in and excitement for fish viewing; provides opportunities for fish viewing; and provides opportunities for volunteers and partnerships to play a role in the conservation of our aquatic resources.

**National Fishing Week and Kids Fishing Derby:** These activities educate children and adults about streams and lakes and the plants and animals dependent upon them for survival. The activities instill in forest managers and the public a sense of shared ownership and responsibility for management of public lands and associated aquatic resources.

**Pathway to Fishing:** These educational learning stations teach children about the various aspects of fishing-habitat, fish biology, catch and release, casting, regulations, and technique.

**International Migratory Bird Day/Partners in Flight:** This program seeks to maintain, restore, and enhance populations of neotropical migratory birds by promoting conservation before species become imperiled. It is a comprehensive, habitat-based conservation program focusing on North American breeding grounds, the neotropical wintering grounds, and the migration routes connecting the two.

**Celebrating Wildflowers:** A season-long festival highlighting wildflower education, interpretation, and restoration activities on more than 640 million acres of public lands.

**Noxious Weeds Awareness:** An effort that supports the exclusion, prevention, containment, and eradication of invasive, exotic, and noxious weeds and mitigates their current negative impact on our natural resources through Weed Awareness Week, the Weed Posse, classes, and local nursery partnerships.

**Animal Inn:** A national public education campaign to build awareness that dead, dying, and hollow trees provide valuable wildlife and fish habitat for a diverse, healthy forest. The program helps motivate woodcutters and recreationists to save certain trees with broken tops, trunk holes, visible nests, or special markings.

**Warm Buddies and Pals:** A cooperative effort between the Forest Service and children's clothing manufacturers.

## **Our Natural Heritage Resources**

**Interpretive Services:** A program that provides education and provokes thought in the minds of national forest visitors about the importance of our natural and cultural resources.

**Passport In Time/Windows on the Past:** These volunteer programs invite the public to participate with Forest Service heritage professionals on a variety of historic preservation projects. They broaden public awareness of the archaeological and historical resources of the Nation through hands-on education.

**Leave No Trace:** This program is focused on minimum impact. It educates Federal land managers and the general public through training, publications, videos, and electronic web, instilling a land stewardship ethic that recognizes individual responsibility.

**Tread Lightly:** This program is dedicated to increasing awareness on how to enjoy public and private lands while minimizing impacts. It emphasizes responsible use of off-highway vehicles and other forms of back-country travel, and principles of low impact applicable to outdoor recreation activities.

**ZiNJ Education Project:** This project fosters public awareness, appreciation, understanding, and involvement with the irreplaceable and delicate heritage resources found on public lands. ZiNJ includes the publication of a magazine, which is distributed to the public nationwide.

**Ske-cology:** Through downhill ski instructors at member resorts, children learn about the principles of conservation while learning how to ski.

**Wilderness and Land Ethic Curriculum and Wilderness Box Teaching Aids:** These interactive lesson plans and teaching aids provide classroom teachers, land managers, and outdoor educators a means to promote awareness and appreciation of the many values of wilderness and other wildlands.

## **Cooperative Forestry Programs**

**Urban and Community Forestry:** This effort supports comprehensive management of forests and related natural resources in populated areas, from the inner city to the developing urban fringe to small communities. This includes an integration of natural, social, and economic systems as they affect and are affected by human activity.

**Greenlink:** A project in Los Angeles that trains residents in tree planting, tree care, agroforestry, and environmental management. The Greenlink project has helped develop partnerships to illustrate how urban forestry can help address community economic, social, and environmental needs. Greenlink also demonstrates community recycling and reutilization of salvaged urban trees. It enables urban youth to learn from resource professionals how to become conservation educators.

**Wonderful Outdoor World (WOW):** This is a multiorganizational effort that introduces inner-city youth to camping and outdoor recreation through a safe, controlled experience. WOW emphasizes the importance of understanding and respecting urban and wildland ecosystems.

**Urban Resource Partnerships:** This interagency public-private partnership meets the needs of under-served communities in urban areas. Education is a component of this program.

**Treetures:** This program is composed of a community of characters that are dedicated to tree planting. The goal is to teach children in their formative years the need for trees, how trees are used by both humans and animals, and the importance of planting and caring for trees throughout the world.

## **Education and Outreach for People Helping People**

**Youth Conservation Corps (CCC):** The CCC helps to save natural resources by developing, preserving, and maintaining public lands and waters; alleviates high unemployment among the Nation's youth; and helps its participants understand and appreciate the natural environment.

**Youth Forest Camps:** These camps provide disadvantaged youth with a meaningful experience and an opportunity to learn about the environment while completing national forest projects.

## **Smokey Bear**

**Smokey Bear:** This program brings an awareness of outdoor fire safety to citizens of all ages.

**Junior Forest Ranger:** This effort promotes forest fire prevention among elementary school students.

## **Appendix C.**

### **Forest Service Town Hall Meeting Capsule Summaries**

This was taken from the public input gathered in response to the question, "What if we (the Forest Service) could just start over?"

No program received as much public support as education.

"Forest Service has a responsibility in natural resource education." April 6, 1994, Sacramento, California.

"Forest Service should educate the public regarding natural resource issues." April 13, 1994, Seattle, Washington.

"Forest Service should educate the public regarding natural resource issues and practices." April 16, 1994, Asheville, North Carolina.

"Forest Service needs to do better educational programs and public affairs. April 26, 1994, Phoenix, Arizona.

"Forest Service needs to do a better job educating the public." April 30, 1994, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota.

"Forest Service should play a vital role in education of natural resource issues and practices." May 6, 1994, Burlington, Vermont.

"Forest Service should play a vital role in education of natural resource issues." May 11, 1994, Washington, D.C.

## **Appendix D.**

### **Information and Education Customer Survey Results**

In May 1997, the Pacific Consulting Group conducted a survey for the Forest Service. The main objectives of this survey were to identify the expectations of the Forest Service's external customers for the products and services it provides. While the public responded that they would like to see many more information and education services, the overall satisfaction rating was 6.2 out of 7. The graphs on the next page provide more information about the survey results.

*(The graphs in the printed version of this report did not translate to this electronic version. The information is presented only in narrative)*

**Improvement Opportunities – Arena Level  
Prioritized Improvements Areas – Information and Education**

**In a scale for 1 to 12 (Leverage Index)**

Information and Education Services obtained 10.0  
Service Delivery obtained 2.67  
Information Sites and Offices obtained 1.00

Note: Leverage is indexed on a 1-to-10 scale, with higher numbers indicating greater improvement opportunities. The customer value criteria with the highest leverage is shown as a “10” on the scale; that with the least leverage, as a “1”.

**Improvement Opportunities – Mean Result  
By Overall Arena Questions  
Information and Education**

**In a scale of 1 to 7 (Satisfaction)**

Information and Education Services obtained 6.06  
Service Delivery obtained 6.38  
Information Sites and Offices obtained 6.32

Note: Mean overall satisfaction = 6.23.