

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest Service

Technology &
Development
Program



BUILT ENVIRONMENT IMAGE GUIDE

Image & Identity

BEIG Chapter 4, Part 1



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**U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service
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A. Image & Identity

- 1. Image2
- 2. Good design within its appropriate context18

B. Recreation Opportunity Spectrum—ROS22

- 1. ROS & Degree of Development23

C. Premise24

- 1. Our visitors arrive with a set of expectations24
- 2. Meet the Griswolds25
- 3. Trip map for the Griswold Family vacation26

D. Ranger Station Stop29

- 1. Site plan30
- 2. Myers Ranger Station—Four functional zones32
- 3. Approach and entry zone34
- 4. Parking and building access zone37
- 5. Outdoor activity zone40
- 6. Operations zone42
- 7. Summary.....44

E. Forest Entry Portal/Scenic Byway47

- 1. Site plan48
- 2. Scenic byway entry signs49
- 3. Information/Orientation49
- 4. Summary.....50

F. Overlook Stop53

- 1. Site plan54
- 2. Elements.....55

3. Approach signs.....	56
4. Parking	57
5. Restrooms.....	58
6. Viewing decks	60
7. Interpretive kiosks.....	61
8. Access trails and paths.....	64
Surfacing for accessible trails and paths	64
Amenities	65
9. Interpretive signs and wayside exhibits	66
10. Summary.....	68

G. Recreation Area Stop	71
1. Site approach signs	73
2. Site identification signs.....	74
3. Directional signs.....	75
4. Information and orientation signs	75
Fee signs	75
Bulletin boards	76
5. Campground design.....	77
Campground spurs	78
Campground use pads.....	78
6. Other amenities	79
7. Summary.....	82

H. Trailhead Stop	85
1. Site plan	86
2. Access and identification signs.....	88
3. Trailhead information and orientation	88
4. Registration	89
5. Summary.....	90

I. Trip Ending and Forest Exit	93
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***What does *image* have to do with
the Built Environment ?***

***The Built Environment is about
the *design of place*...***

***The design of place conveys a
message....***

This old Mill is in complete visual harmony with this pastoral landscape.

The message is: *harmony and beauty*



Photograph by Mike Booher



The Washington Mall is replete with National Monuments, blended into the open park landscape which commands the viewer's attention, and reflection of our national heritage.

The message is: heritage and history

The Vietnam Memorial reflects a profound reverence to all who enter.

The message is: reverence and respect



Columbia Gorge offers a thematic consistency displayed by the structure and sign.

The message is: design theme in context with the landscape of the Gorge



***Here are a few more examples of
how *image* conveys *message*.***



Design applies to many elements of the built environment. Good design should flow through all elements that we provide for the public's use and enjoyment.

The message is: this facility has to do with waterfowl and wetlands.



Photograph by Thorp Assoc. PC Architects and Planners

This inviting entry statement at a Rocky Mountain NP Visitor Center reflects the theme of its setting as well as establishes a "design theme" for this area of the park.

The message is: this is the Rocky Mountains, come in and see us.



These two entry stations were designed without considering the elements of the surrounding natural environment. The one on the left appears as a prison check point, while the one below may be a result of watching too many 'Star Trek' episodes.

The message is: poor or no design consideration. Function is the primary consideration.





In this ranger station we see a very horizontal structure with repetitive windows presented as a somewhat rigid and unimaginative design. The result is a common or basic building.

The message is: not very interesting.



This wilderness entry kiosk defines clutter. The response of the reader would likely be, "which message do you want me to read?" The incentive to read the message is destroyed. The reader will likely read the most dominant and legible first, and not pay any attention to the rest. It reflects poor maintenance and organization, and too many messages.

The message is: the Forest Service does not really care about its image, the public, and perhaps the resources it manages.

**What *message* or *image* should
we and our partners convey?**



Our message should convey quality recreation facilities and demonstrate that we value natural resources and protect natural settings.



We care about the land and about the people who visit and work in the forests and grasslands.



We value special places and protect natural settings.

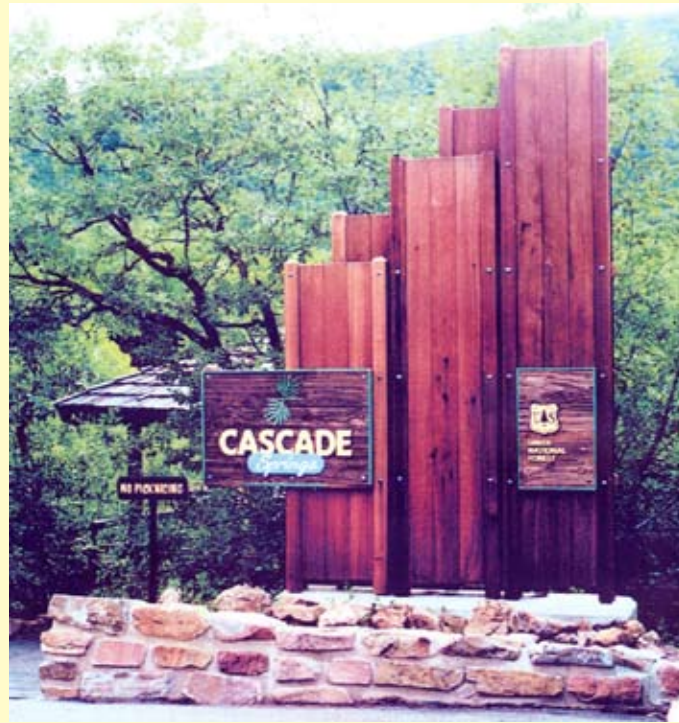


We offer quality recreation experiences and facilities with noticeable concern for universal design.



What we build is soft on the land and sustainable.





The appearance and design of our facilities and attractions advertise who we are and how we manage the land.



The Forest Service has over 200 million opportunities to convey its message each year. We get only one chance to make a first impression. Eighty-seven percent of human perception is based on sight. Visual observation and social experience form impressions and opinions, which, in turn, form the perception of the agency's identity and image.



By observing and experiencing the physical landscape and scenery of the forest, and learning about its cultural and natural history, people build connections and memories.

But it's not just about good design...

It's about...good design within the appropriate context.



This campground site is blended aesthetically into the landscape. In part, the context is the landscape in which the facility is located.



This Wupatki National Monument entry sign is a good example of a design within the appropriate context. It reflects the resources that the park manages and blends into the characteristic landscape.



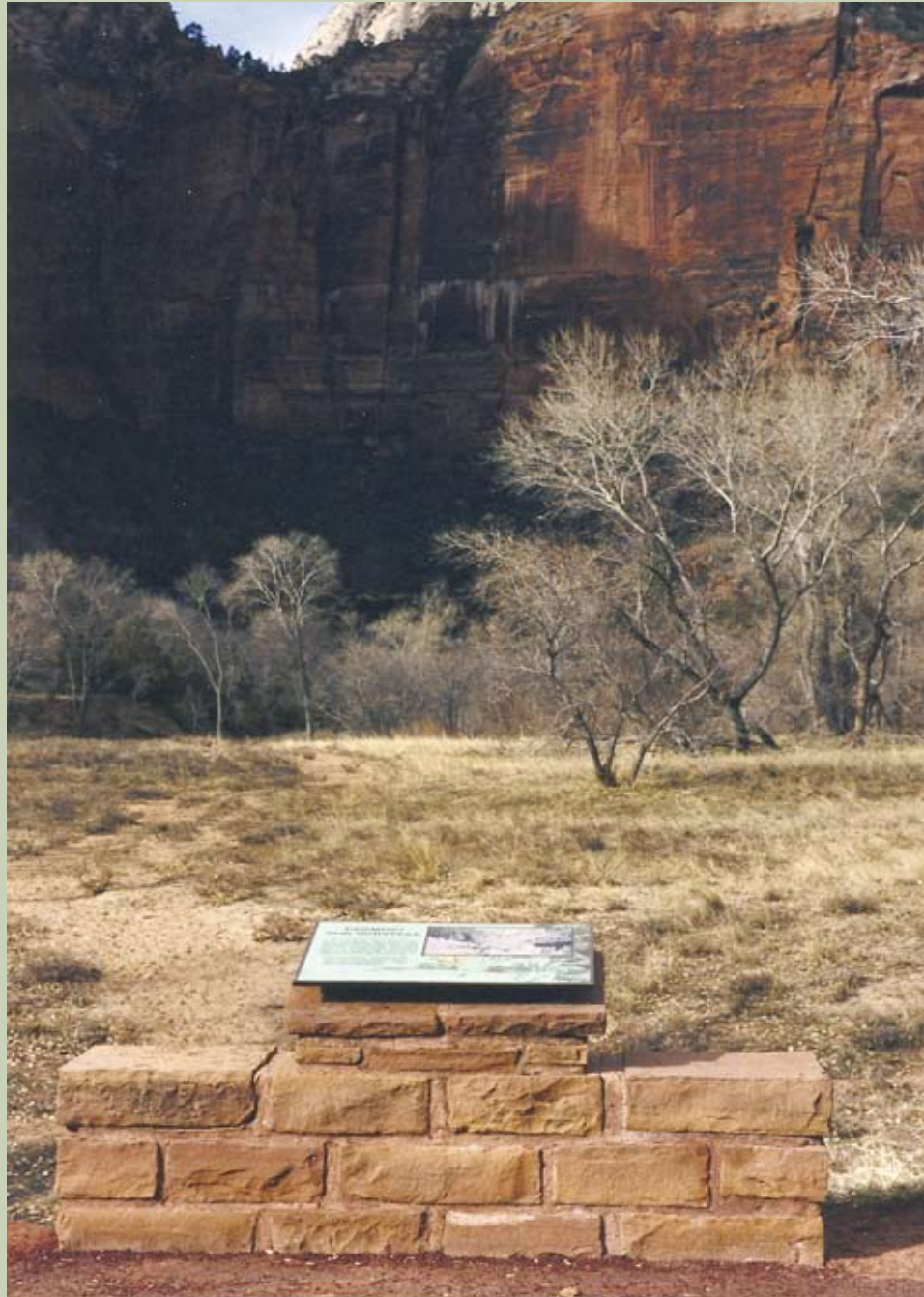
This Mt. St Helens viewing deck uses materials from the site and offers a good view into the surrounding landscape and the volcanic event. The overlook reflects the design theme developed for the area.



These overlooks use materials that fit the context of the BEIG Rocky Mountain Province. They fit well into the landscape and are designed to give a direct view of the spectacular scenery.

Recreational Opportunity Spectrum (ROS)

Research has shown that people choose a specific setting for each recreational activity in order to realize a desired set of experiences. The ROS offers a framework for understanding these relationships and interactions.



ROS & Degree of Development

Consider first the management ROS category of the area, along with other planning considerations such as an interpretive plan, before investing in significant efforts in the site planning, design, and subsequent development of the area.

Premise

Our visitors arrive with a set of expectations.

How we first greet them, through their visual observations of our signs and facilities or in person, form the basis of the image they will ultimately develop.

Excitement and interest are high during the planning of a trip and during the early stages of a trip and will continue to grow or diminish according to how one's expectations are met.

During a trip the first few observations of our facilities and attractions will determine the degree of interest for future stops.

Let's ride along with a family and see what we can learn from their experience as it relates to our Image.



Meet The Griswolds

The Griswold family from Moffet, Kansas, is spending its summer vacation traveling the Stokes Scenic Byway and camping on the Bedwell National Forest.

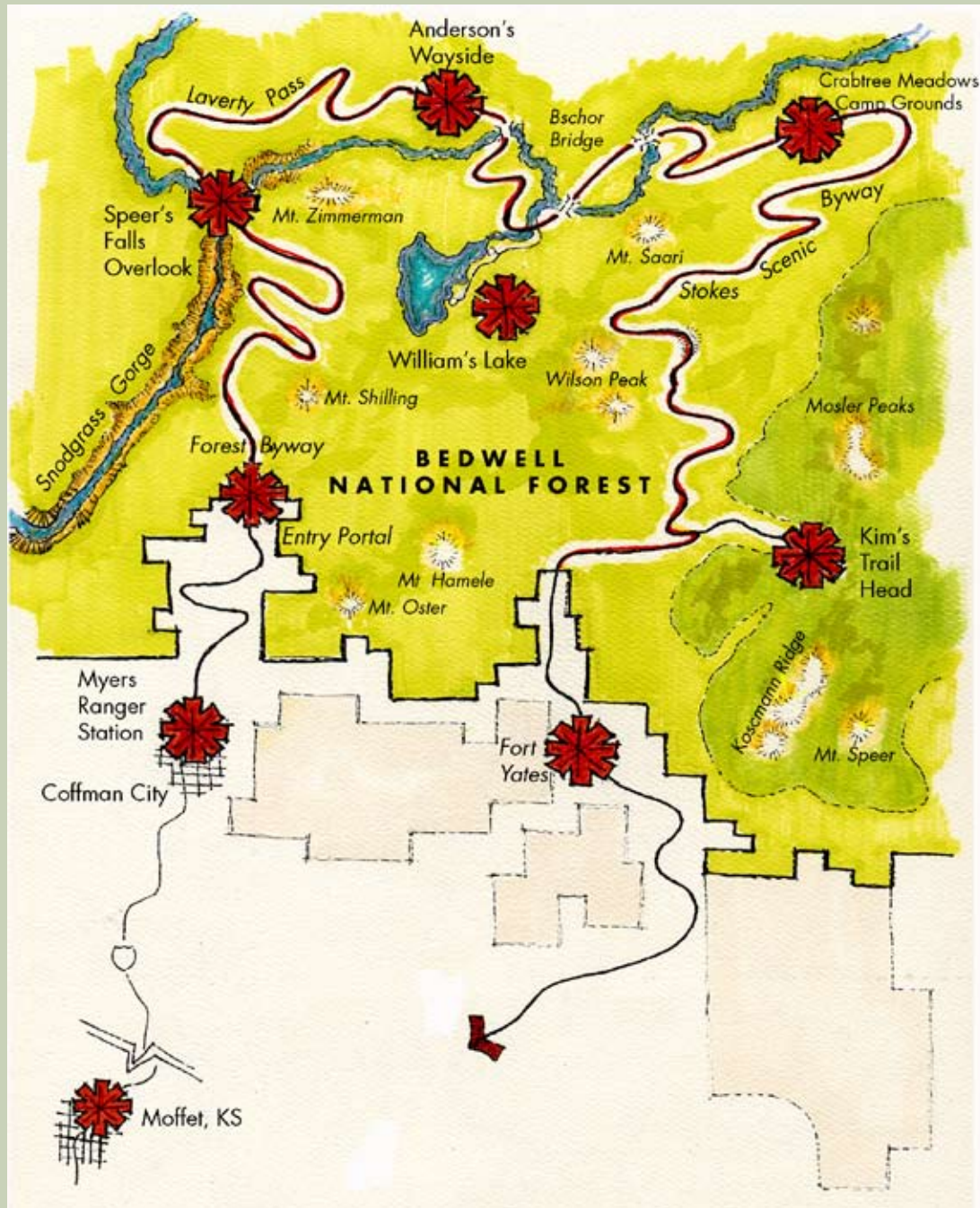
Family Vacation

Planned Itinerary

- Visit ranger station
- Visit the forest
- Travel the byway
- Visit the attractions, overlooks, campgrounds, the lake and the Bob Ross Wilderness

Expectations

- Get more information and refine itinerary
- Sense of arrival
- Sightsee, photograph/learn about the resources and history of the forest and area
- Camp, explore, hike, fish, waterplay, etc.

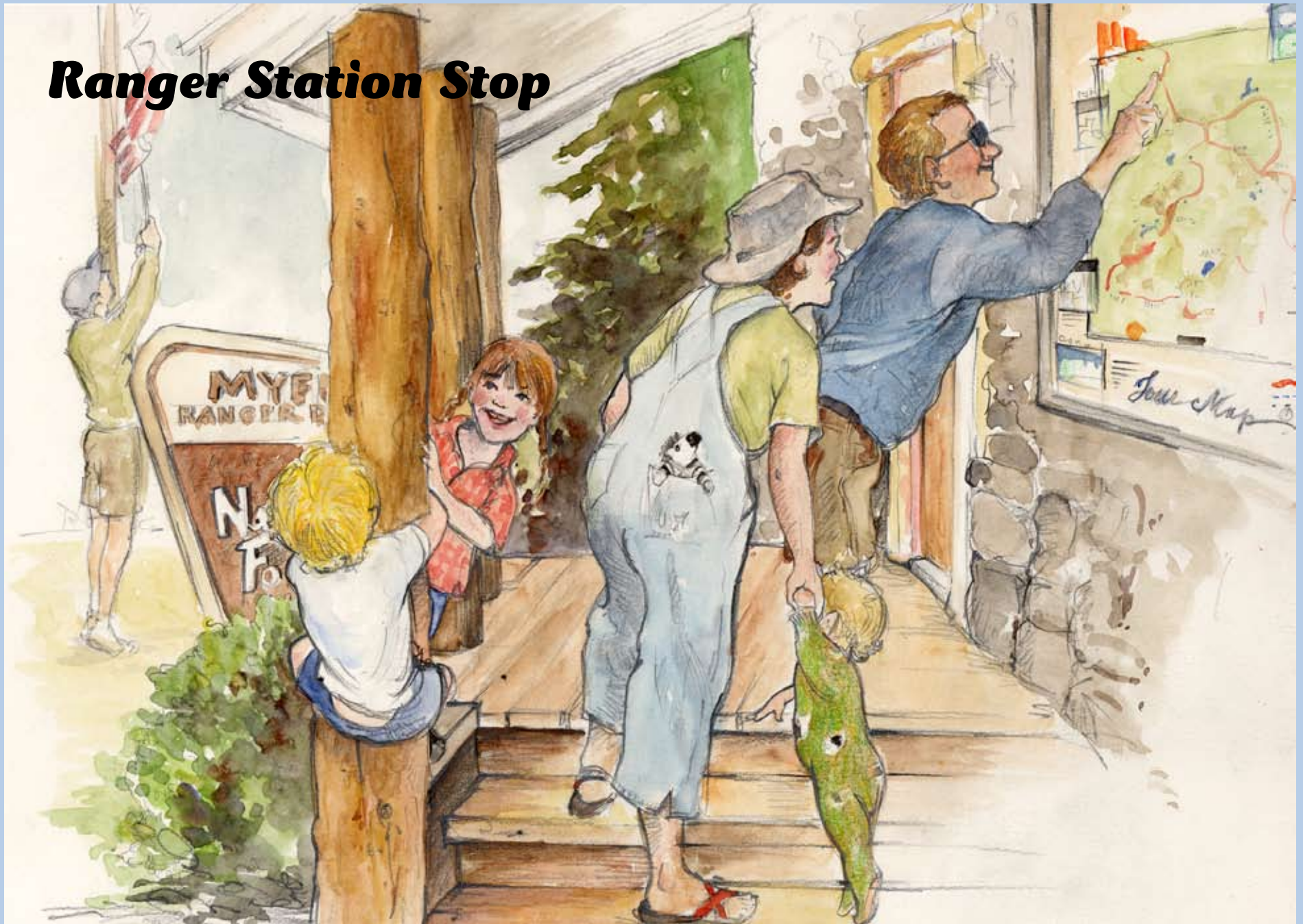


Trip map for the Griswold-family vacation

They will leave from Moffet, Kansas, and travel a day to get to Coffman City where they will stay overnight in a motel. They will visit the Myers Ranger Station the next morning for information and orientation. They will then travel to the entry portal for the forest, which also is the beginning of the Stokes National Scenic Byway, and stop to take pictures and get further information. They spend the next few days traveling the scenic byway visiting overlooks and wayside exhibits; camping, fishing, and hiking throughout the area. Their first stop after they have entered the scenic byway is at a scenic overlook. They have expectations for their trip which will be expanded or diminished by their visual observations, social experiences, impressions, and opinions formed during the vacation.

They will be going from urban- and rural-developed landscapes to natural and primitive landscapes.

Ranger Station Stop



Ranger Station Site Plan

The family's first stop will be at the Myers Ranger Station for forest and scenic byway information, orientation, and to read interpretative displays. They refine their itinerary at this stop.

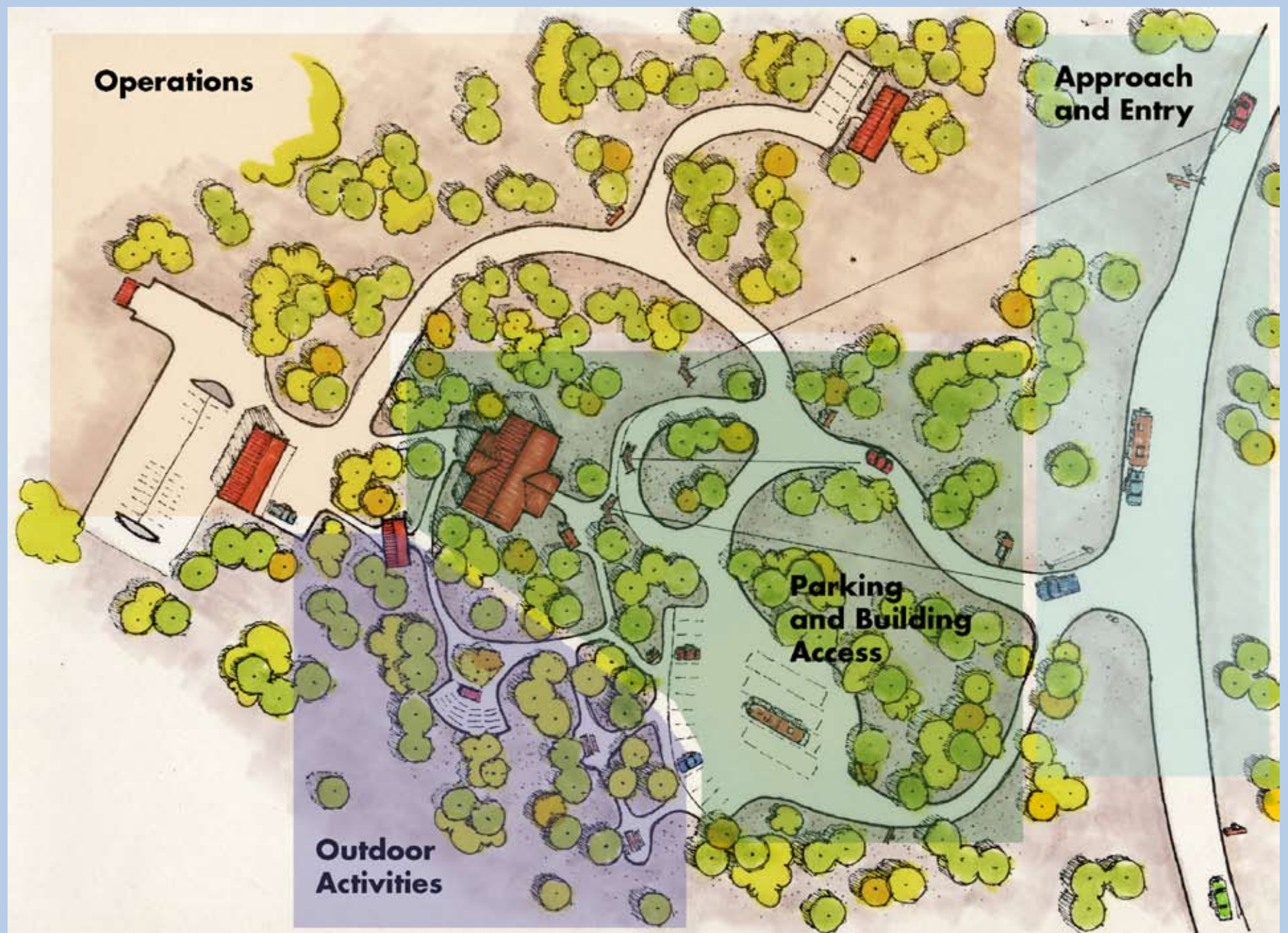


Myers Ranger Station Four Functional Zones

Myers Ranger Station is an ideal facility that contains a full complement of services for the public and operations for administration. For the purpose of this discussion we will divide the ranger station into four functional zones:

1. Approach and entry
2. Parking and building access
3. Outdoor activities
4. Operations

Each zone presents an image which is valued depending on how it looks, functions, and is designed.



Approach and Entry Zone

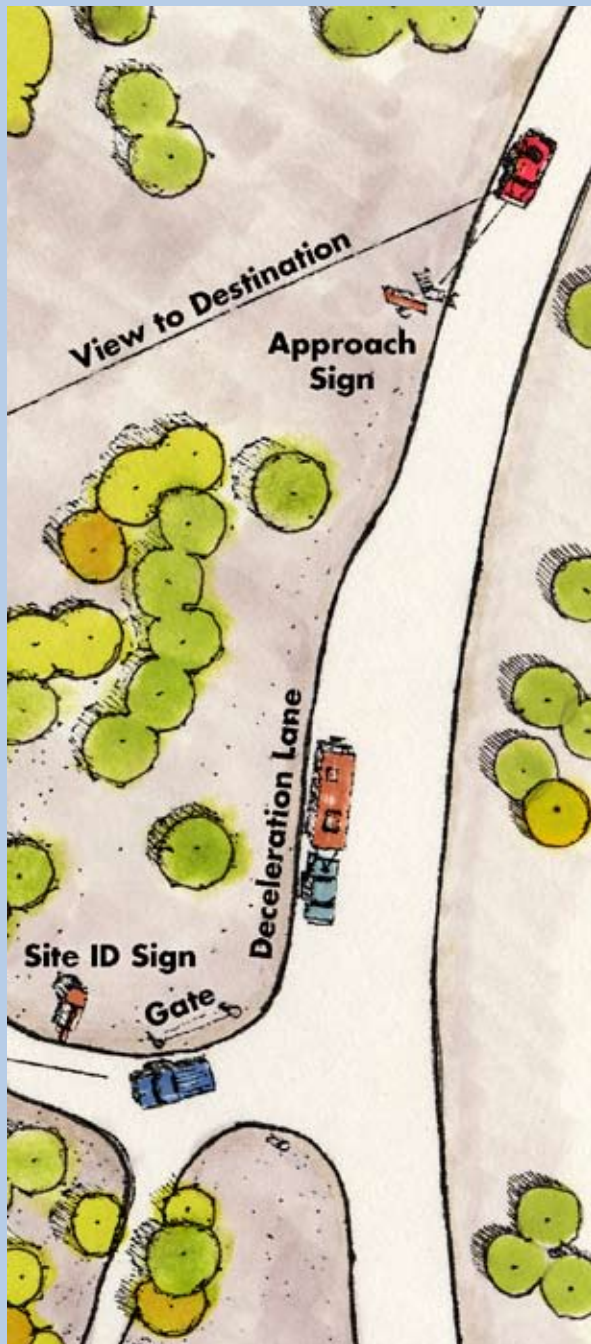
The first function is a way-finding activity to find and enter the facility. The blow up shows the approach by vehicle and elements that should be considered when designing this part of the facility. A highway approach sign would be appropriate, accompanied by the full view of the facility from the road. Normally, a deceleration lane would be provided from a highway, and then a wide intersection where vehicles enter the site. A site identification sign should be prominent and easily read to confirm the sense of arrival. Fences and gates would be located as necessary.

Definition:

Way-finding: to find and enter the site

Elements:

- Approach Sign
- Site "ID" Sign
- Views to destination
- Intersection
- Fences
- Gates

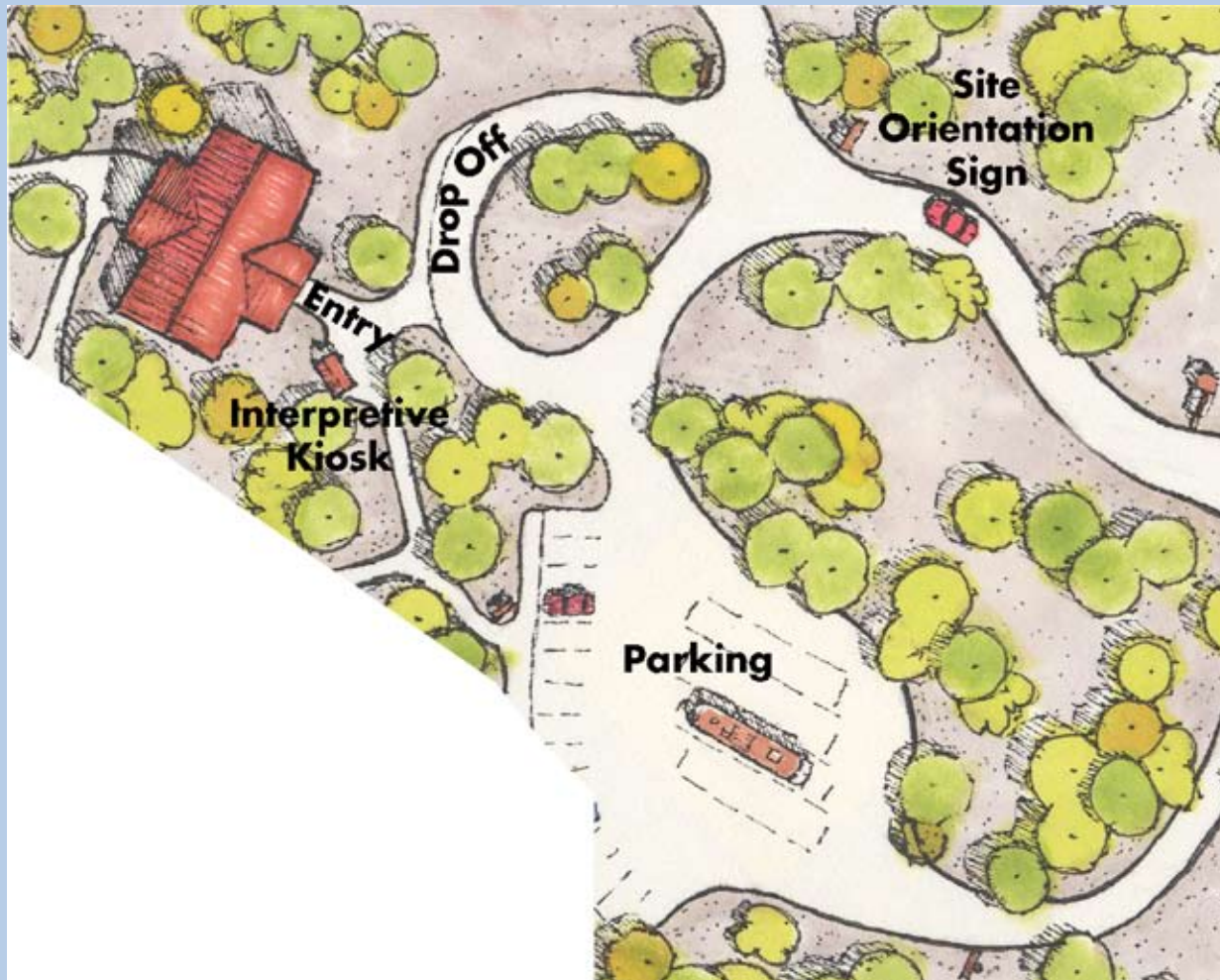




Examples of an approach sign and a site identification sign



Parking and Building Access Zone

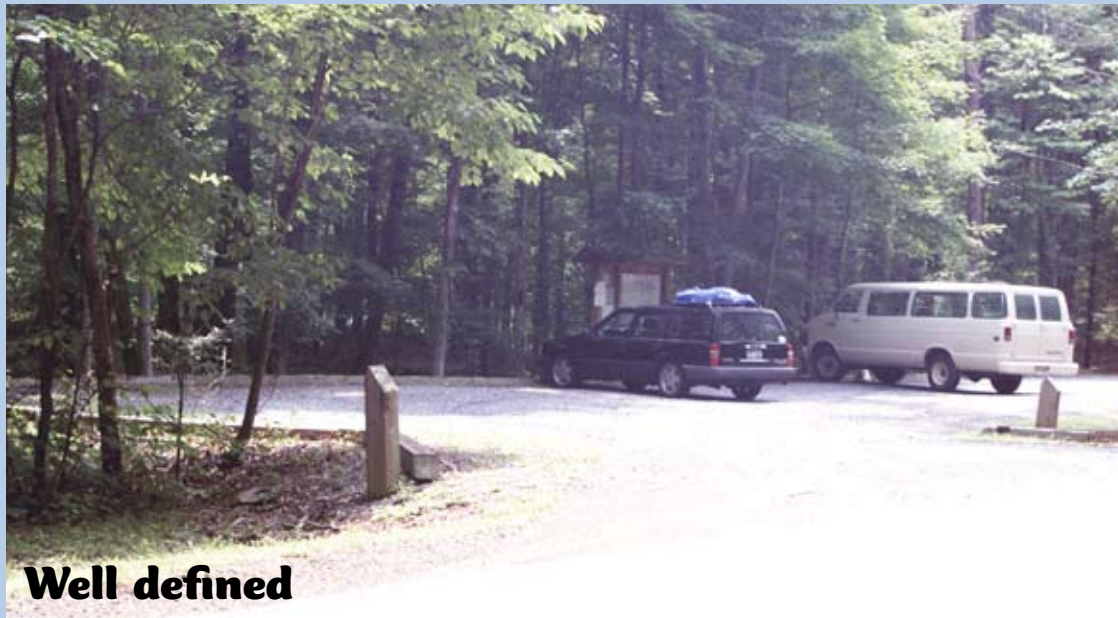


Definition:
Vehicle parking and pedestrian access

Elements:

- Site orientation area
- Parking lot/walks
- Visibility of building and sense of arrival
- Directional signs

The entry transitions into the parking and building access zone. It contains parking lots, walkways, visibility of facilities, and directional signs.



Well defined

It should be clear where to park. It is also desirable to see the facility from the parking area.



Entry visibility



Well designed access in two different buildings in which both are fully accessible. Appearance and aesthetics for the entry is critical. Remember, we only get one chance to make a first impression.



Is there a sense of arrival? If "Yes," this is when you know you have arrived. The facility and the entry is fully visible and designed to be inviting. Thus, a sense of arrival.

Outdoor Activities Zone



Definition:

Gathering and picnicking space

Elements:

- Picnic tables
- Amphitheater
- Nature trail
- Interpretive signs/displays

The composition of an outdoor activity area depends largely on available space. It provides opportunities for outdoor education and for visitors to rest and enjoy the surroundings.



Outdoor Activities—Application of a design theme is critical to providing consistency and applying design principles of color, line, texture, and form. It will blend the facility into the characteristic landscape and borrow from the natural landscape.

Use of fundamental design principles is critical in all aspects of the facility. The interior courtyard area is spatially defined by mature trees and shrubs in the understory.



The small amphitheater blends well into the hillside and is appropriately scaled.

Operations Zone



Definition:
Administrative facilities

Elements:

- Warehouse
- Storage buildings
- Fleet parking
- Outdoor storage
- Crew quarters



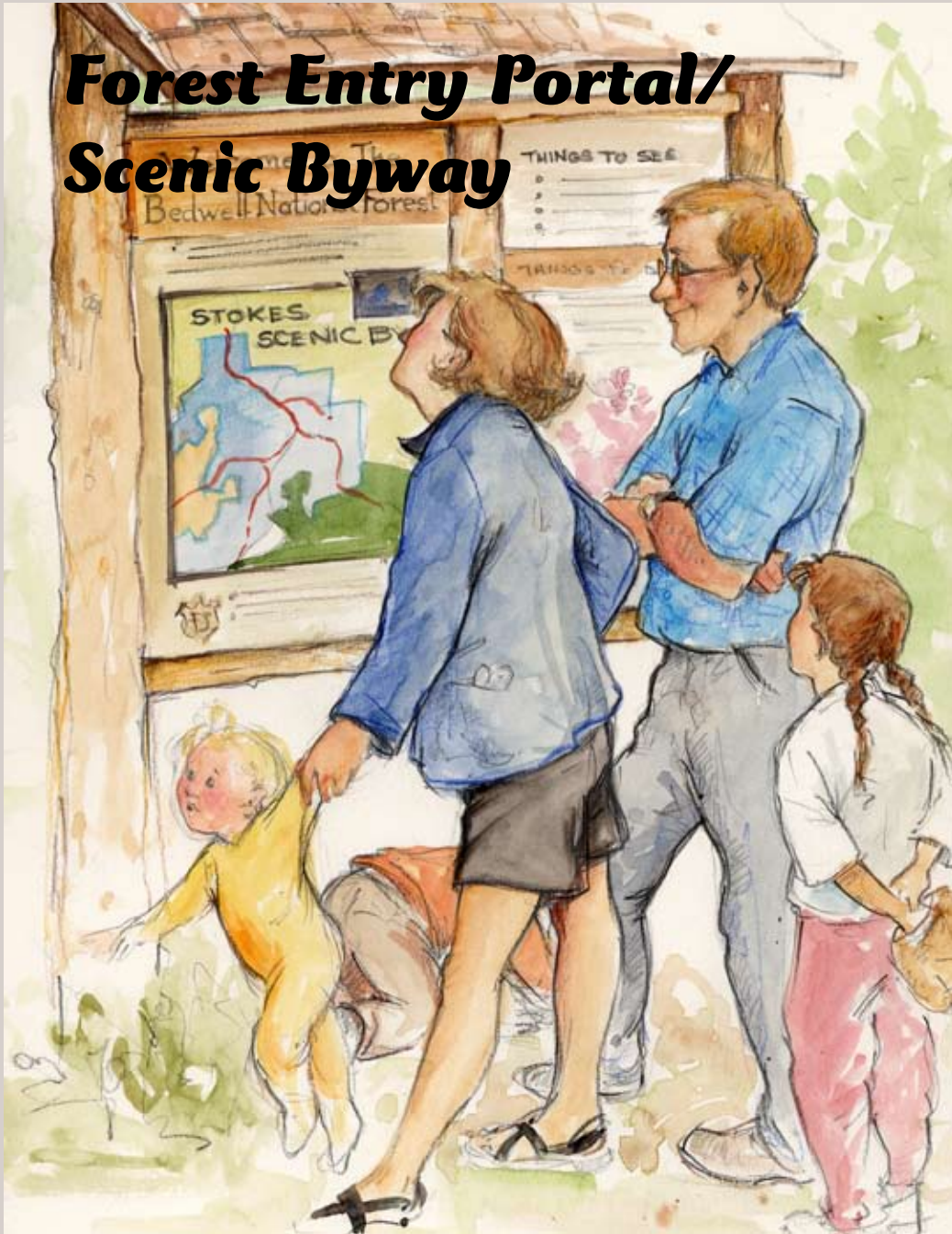
This example shows the three structures of the operations zone and depicts architectural themes and continuity for all structures.



Summary—Ranger Station Stop

- **Could the Griswold's find the station?**
- **Was parking and building access easy?**
- **Was their first impression a sense of arrival?**
- **Did they find the information they wanted?**
- **How helpful was the staff?**
- **As they looked at our facilities, what impressions did they have?**

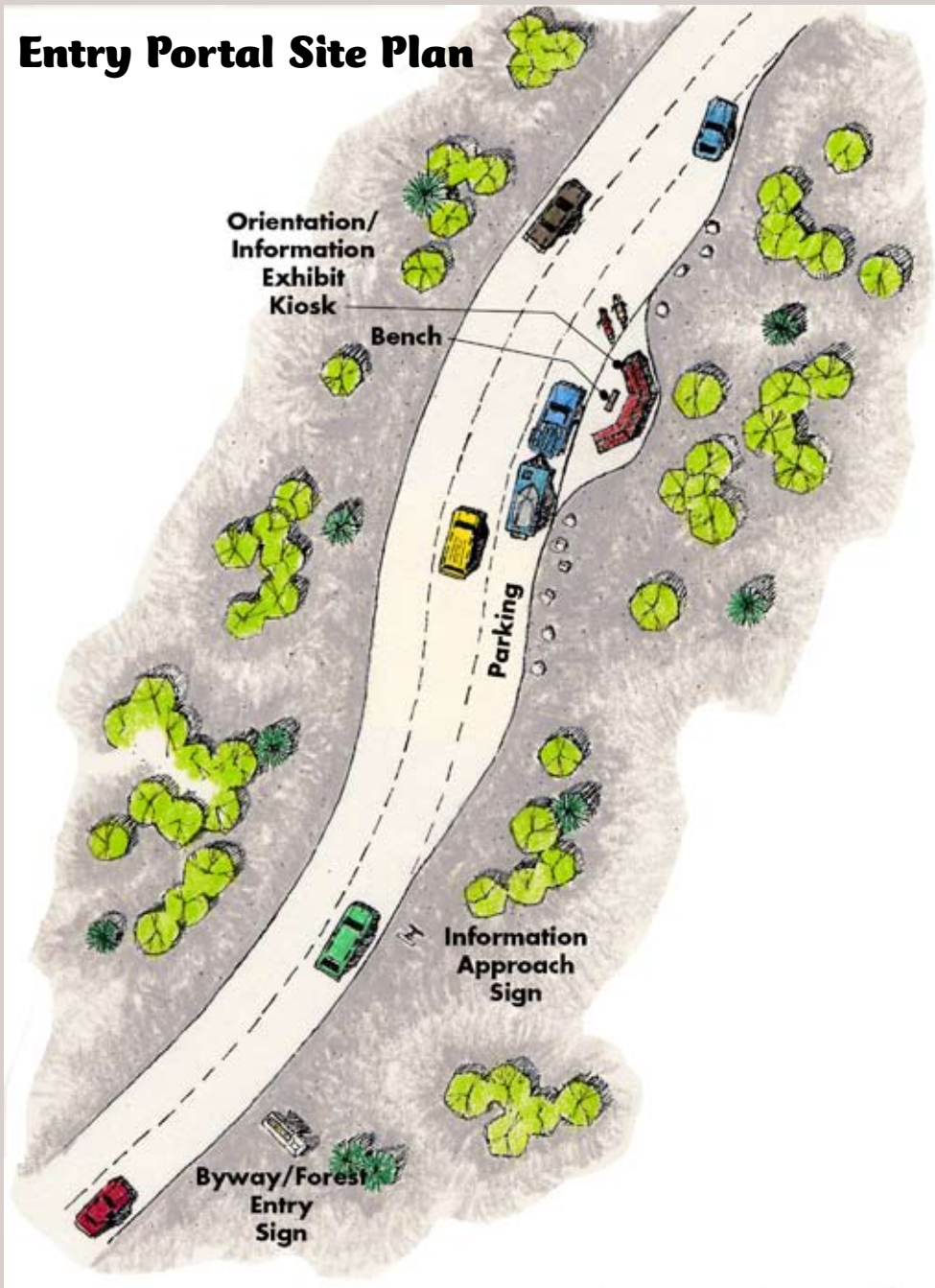
Forest Entry Portal/ Scenic Byway



The first stop for the Griswold family after leaving the ranger station and Coffman City is the forest entry portal. This is also the beginning of a national scenic byway.

An entry portal is defined as a boundary entry along a travel way normally containing a statement of identification and other information. It represents a very important sense of arrival, more so than the ranger station. The travelers should know they have arrived at their planned destination.

Entry Portal Site Plan



Definition :

Boundary entry along a travel way normally containing a statement of agency identification.

Elements:

- Entry signs

Optional:

- Parking
- Information/Orientation kiosk
- Approach signs
- Benches



Scenic Byway Entry Signs

Shown here are scenic byway and forest portal entry signs. Two are modified Forest Service family-of-shapes signs.



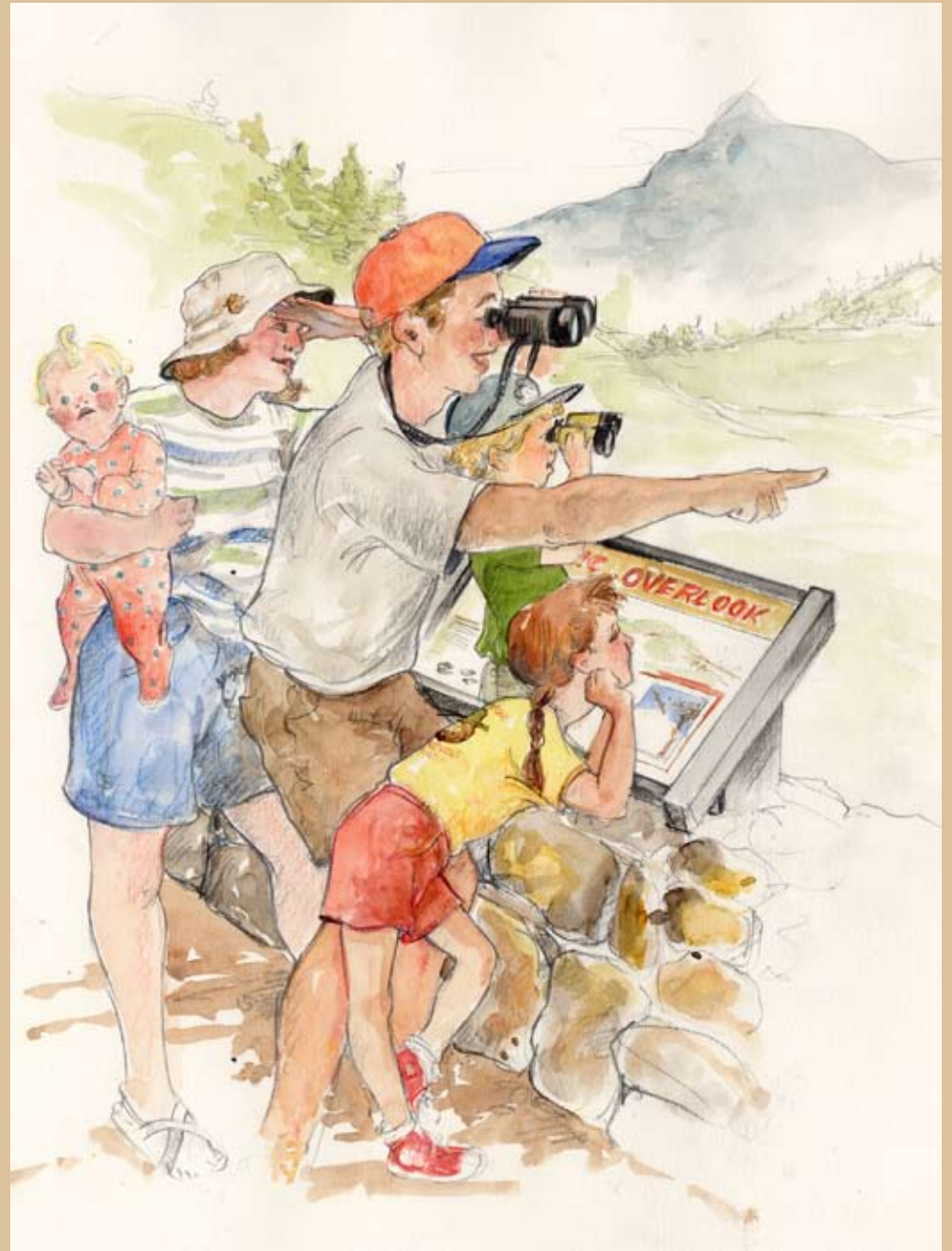
Information/Orientation

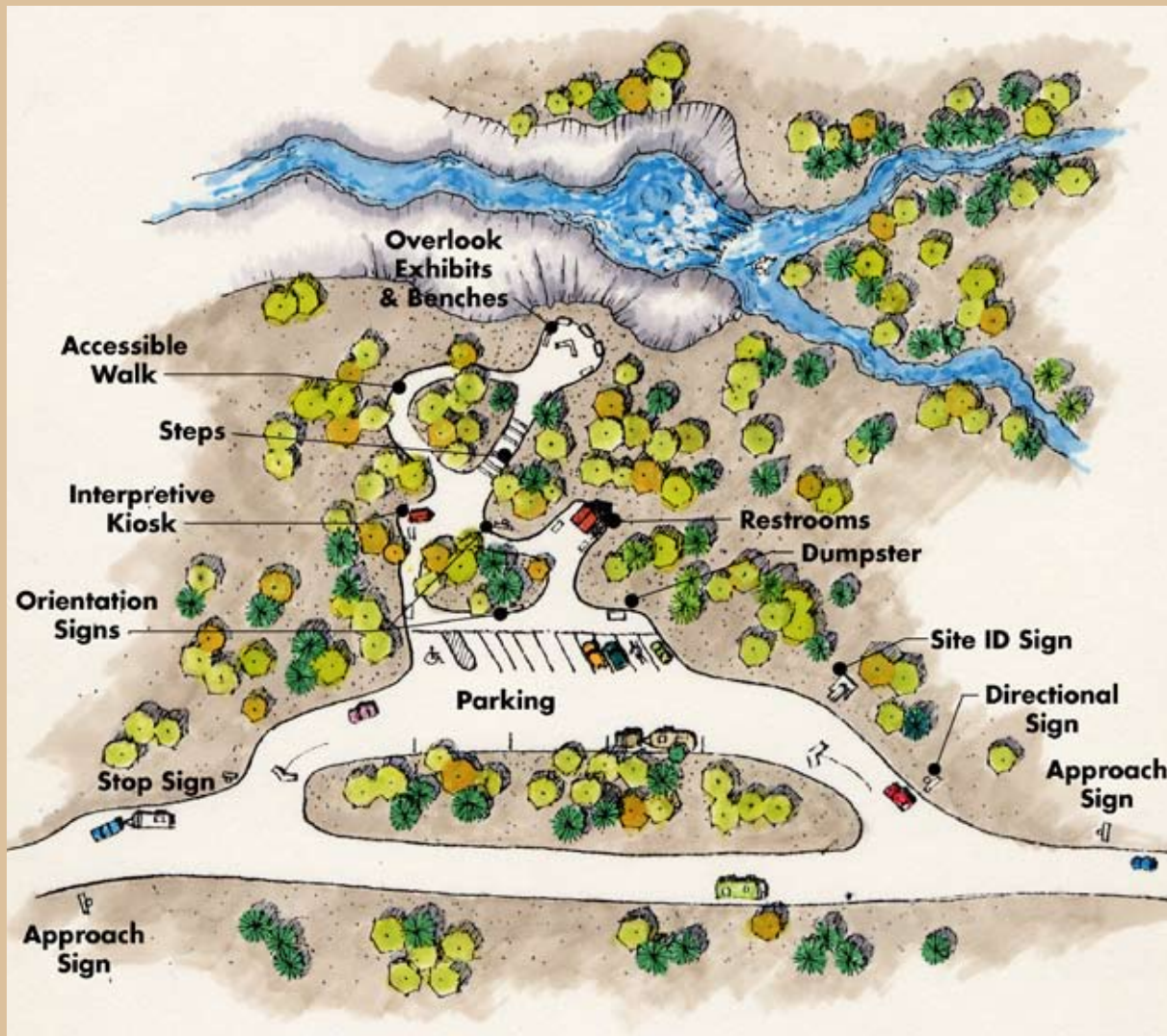
An entry portal normally would contain an entry or identification sign. Other optional facilities could be information/orientation kiosks, parking benches, and approach signs.

Summary—Forest Entry Portal Stop

- **What were the Griswold's expectations?**
- **What was their first impression of the forest?**
- **Did they have a sense of arrival?**
- **Was the information and orientation provided adequate?**
- **Were the signs in good repair?**

Overlook Stop





Overlook Site Plan

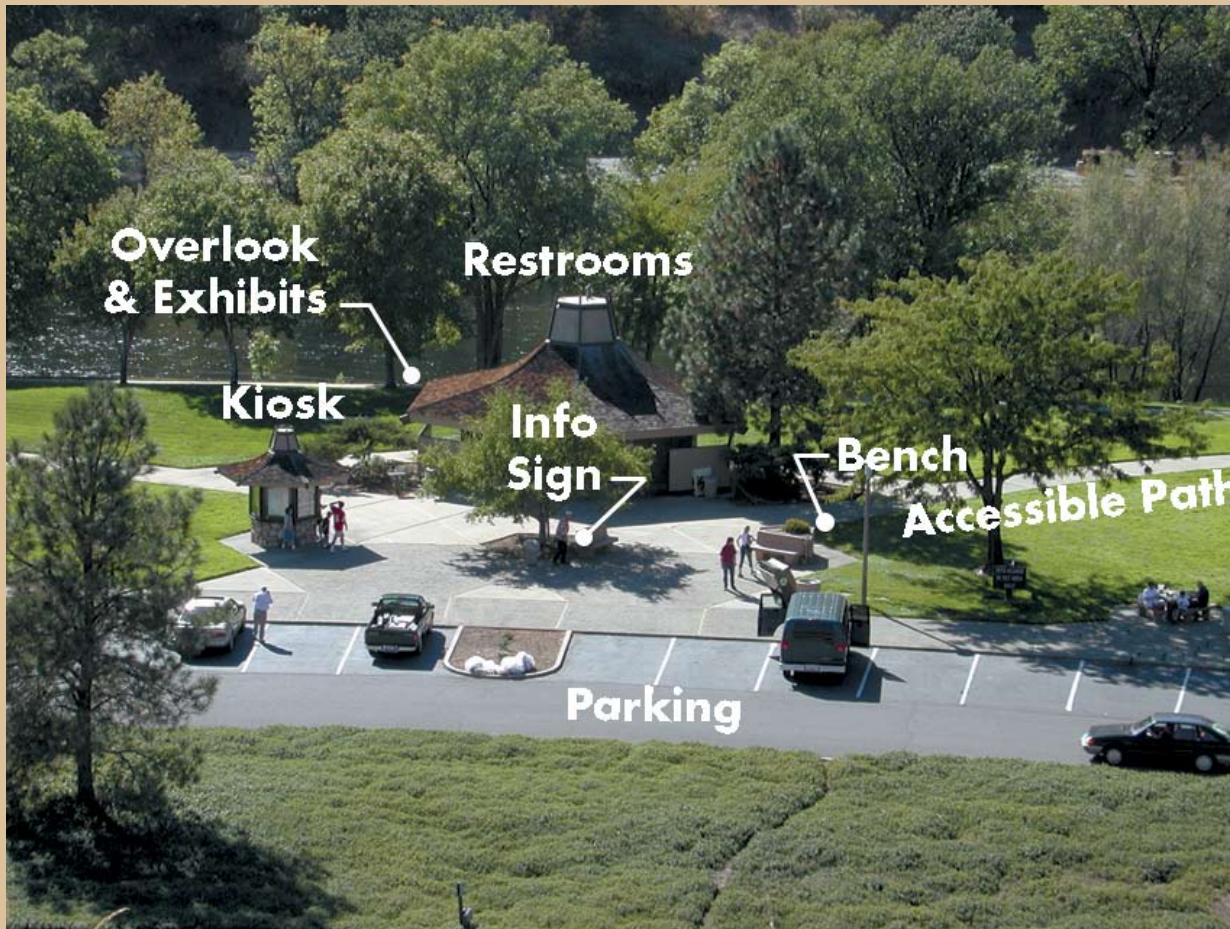
The family proceeds along the Stokes Scenic Byway to the Speer's Overlook.

Definition:

A place that provides an observation platform to view the landscape or cultural features.

Including:

- Parking
- Signs
- Dumpsters
- Restrooms
- Kiosks
- Walks/trails
- Benches
- Railings, and so on



Elements

Overlooks may contain multiple improvements including parking areas, approach signs, directional signs, site ID signs, dumpsters, restrooms, interpretive kiosks and signs, accessible walkways, benches, and railings. The function of an overlook is to provide an observation platform to view the landscape or cultural features. It should be accessible, inviting, spatially adequate, and easy to circulate through. It should be located to maximize the view into the attraction and/or landscape panorama. Aesthetically, the viewing platform and other elements of the overlook should blend into its surrounding; borrowing from the textures, colors, and materials of its landscape setting.

This is an oblique view of an overlook facility. It includes parking, walkways or paths, directional signs, restrooms, overlook site, and exhibits.



Approach Signs

Definition:

Signs that notify the traveler there is a point of interest ahead.





Parking

Parking is also an overlook element. The design of the parking area should provide adequate room for an accessible walk in front of the wheel stops as shown to the left.



The rock island is used to separate the parking area from the main travel way.



Restrooms

These restrooms are designed to fit into their respective sites and complement their locations. Note the use of color in the example on the left.



Restrooms should reflect a design theme based on the regional character. They should borrow from colors, lines, and textures found in the characteristic landscape to blend into and harmonize with the site.

Always design for sustainability and accessibility.



These restrooms blend with color and local building styles. The middle one shows a Pennsylvania Lakes Provincial styles of lap siding, while the lower one demonstrates the use of native stone in the Rocky Mountain Province.





Viewing Decks

Two overlooks in dramatically different settings that are designed for function and aesthetics.





Interpretive Kiosks

Interpretive kiosks are significant design structural examples. The following are six examples of sensitively designed kiosks following individual design themes.

The top kiosk is a good example of designing for image and identity. It shows art in design and makes a statement in the North Pacific Province. Look for opportunities to enforce or make a statement of area identity.

The middle kiosk shows a creative divide between two forests as well as the interpretation on the Continental Divide.



Two examples of interpretive kiosks that follow design consideration of the respective areas. They have followed a design theme of using large timbers and stone masonry reflective of the Rocky Mountain Province.



This kiosk reflects the use of a "CCC" timber theme used on many of our traditional facilities.



These two kiosks have similar configurations in regard to the interpretive exhibits they provide.





Access Trails and Paths

Surfacing For Accessible Trails and Paths

The function of trails and paths is to provide access to portions of a facility. They can be constructed using compacted gravel, concrete, asphalt, or wood decking and other building materials.





Amenities

Some amenities for access trails can include a small rest area, which may have benches and exhibits, or an interpretive book that addresses the area.





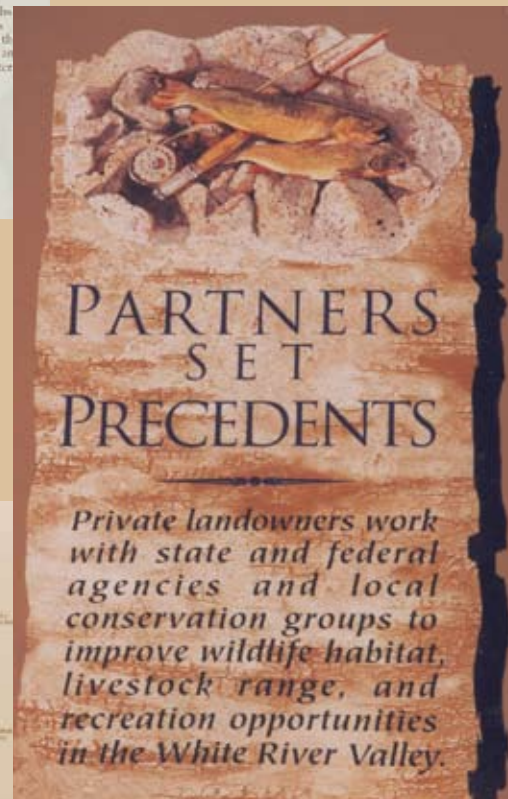
Interpretive Signs and Wayside Exhibits

We communicate with more visitors through signs and interpretive exhibits than all other media combined.

Today's variety of media allows graphic execution in full color.

Some principles of effective graphic design and communication are:

- Select a design template or area theme to provide continuity, use only high quality graphics (art and photography)
- Keep text brief (75-125 words maximum)
- Keep sign face simple and uncluttered
- Select material appropriate to theme and the exhibit location.





Design Guidelines:

- Follow a design theme
- Select an effective sign face medium
- Select the proper structural materials
- Sign supports should compliment the setting and theme



Summary—Overlook Stop

- **What were the Griswold's expectations?**
- **What was their experience and what impressions did they form?**
- **Was the site clean, accessible, and well designed?**
- **Was the information informative and helpful?**
- **What did they learn or feel after reading the exhibits?**
- **Were the text and graphics clear?**
- **Was the stop memorable?**

Recreation Area Stop





After a day of sightseeing the Griswold's progress to a recreation area, Crabtree Meadows. They plan to camp for the next few days and use their campsite as a base to explore the area.

Definition:

A developed campground provides amenities for overnight camping: toilet, potable water, campsite with a fire ring, table, tent pad, RV hookup, and roads. It also should offer information about the area.

It often serves as a base for other recreation activities such as biking, fishing, hiking, boating, and so on.



Site Approach Signs

Campground and day use areas as well as other attractions should have site approach signs provided. A simple and recognizable International recreation logo would serve the need adequately.



Site Identification Signs

Site identification aids the Griswold's once they have entered the recreation area. These two nicely designed signs follow a design theme. One is fabricated in durable recyclable materials and has a beautiful sandblasted wood appearance. The other is a conventional Forest Service site identification sign.



Directional Signs

Directional signs should be designed to be brief and bold. International recreation symbols are easily recognized while directional arrows and mileages are also helpful.



Information and Orientation Signs

As people enter and use any of our recreation facilities, there is always a need to provide further information and orientation.

Here are examples of two nicely designed sign displays in simple but effective kiosks. Panels can be added or subtracted in either as needed.



Fee Signs

One of the first things our visitors see is a fee station which has professional appearing registries. They should be inviting, concise, clear, and well designed. A station can stand on its own or can be combined with other recreation area information, orientation, and regulations. Make them welcoming in appearance and easy to understand and use.



Bulletin Boards

Within recreation areas and campgrounds we traditionally provide bulletin boards to provide supplemental information and notices. This is another opportunity to design an element that follows a design theme and presents a strong image. An important guideline is to manage the board, maintain a fresh and professional appearance, and include only what is necessary. The messages are designed to communicate simply and effectively. They should be inviting, easily read, and appear professionally done.



Campground Design

Sensitive design of campgrounds is critical. The amenities should be blended aesthetically into the site and should be functional and accessible. The campground should also be designed to allow ecosystem function.





Campground Spurs

In designing campground vehicle spurs, consider accessibility requirements and adequate width and depth required by today's variety of recreational vehicles.

Campground Use Pads

Tables, tent pads, and fire grates are standard furniture for a campground. The ROS should aid and guide the types provided. Provide functional, durable, and sustainable furniture.

Bear in mind that people are living here. This is going to be their home away from home for a while. It should be comfortable, accessible, easy to circulate within, and aesthetically pleasant.



Other Amenities

Some other campground amenities could include table shelters and benches. Water hydrants are usually a standard requirement. These elements should also fit within a central design theme for the province and area.



In larger recreation areas some amenities could include amphitheaters, playgrounds, and fishing decks. As previously suggested, establish and follow a design theme that complements the area, BEIG, and the province.



Summary—Recreation Area Stop

- **What were the Griswolds' expectations?**
- **What were their experiences and impressions?**
- **Would they return again?**
- **How did our facilities meet customer satisfaction?**
- **Were the facilities well designed, clean, and accessible?**
- **Did they feel safe and welcome at the campground?**

Trailhead Stop



Trailhead Site Plan



Definition:

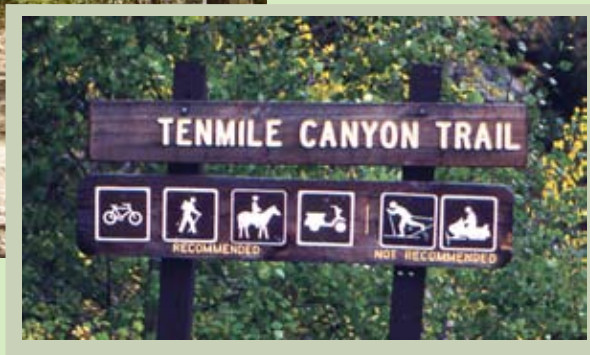
A trailhead is the beginning of a trail and a gathering spot.

Elements:

- Parking—trailheads vary in size from a wide spot in the road to a large developed site with car and trailer parking.
- Trail sign naming trail and giving trail length (milage)
- Restrooms
- Informational sign showing topographical and/or contextual map of area, you are here, what to expect, helpful hints, do's and don'ts.

Optional:

- Picnic tables
- Trash receptacles
- Water—depending on the degree of development



Access and Identification Signs

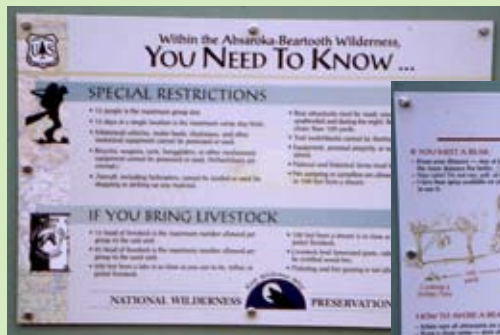
These are examples of site ID signs and a trailhead approach. Images and text again should be brief and graphically bold.

Areas with special classification, such as wilderness, should be signed with appropriate designation and markers.



Trailhead Information and Orientation

It is important, if not a legal responsibility, to give vital information to our visitors using primitive areas or classified wilderness.





In trailheads the information/ orientation/registration is a critically important element. How do we look and communicate with the public? This is another element where we can repeat design theme.



Registration

When looking at the trailhead panels in detail, there are ways we can convey information by the use of icons (logos) and sensitive development of text that provides easily understood instructions, information, and orientation that can be absorbed by the reader quickly. This is much better than posters and papers which have been stapled up and seldom last more than a few weeks.

Summary—Trailhead Stop

- **What were the Griswolds' expectations?**
- **Did they feel welcome?**
- **How did the facility work for the Griswolds?**
- **Were they able to find parking easily?**
- **Was the information and orientation of the area easy to understand and professionally presented?**
- **Were the trail condition and trail markers adequate?**
- **After their visit, will they want to come again or will they tell their friends or family about it?**

Trip Ending and Forest Exit



- **The Griswold's left with what impressions?**
- **From their visual observations and social interaction, what are their impressions and opinions?**
- **What made it memorable? Good or bad?**
- **Did our facilities provide a positive image?**
- **How do we improve upon it?**
- **From their impressions and experiences, what was their FINAL IMAGE of the Forest Service?**

What we provide for the public in facilities, opportunities, and experiences results in the formation of their impressions and opinions. These are the foundation of the mental image of the Forest Service that will remain with them.

The appearance of built image elements reflects the quality of our management, stewardship, and the care that our agency provides for the land.

