

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

**Forest Service Manual 1600 – Information Services
Chapter 1610 - Plans**

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Superseded Directive: 1610, Amendment 1600-2000-1, November 30, 2000

Approved by: Maitland Sharpe, Acting Deputy Chief

Date approved: September 24, 2002

Responsible Staff:

Posting Instructions: Amendments are numbered consecutively by title and calendar year. Post by document; remove the entire document and replace it with this amendment. Retain this transmittal as the first page(s) of this document. The last amendment to this title was 1600-2002-5 to FSM 1600 Zero Code.

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

1611: Changes the caption from “Information Planning” to “Public Affairs Planning.”

1611.1: Changes the caption from “Annual Information Program Plan” to “National Communication Strategy” and revises direction accordingly.

1611.2: Changes the caption to “National Communication Strategy Implementation Plan.” Incorporates and revises direction formerly in FSM 1611.1 to address this strategy. Adds direction on action items and sets out strategies for potential crises and incidents such as wildfires and plane crashes. Adds underserved communities and persons with disabilities as groups to contact.

1611.3: Adds a cross-reference to the Forest Service Strategic Public Outreach Plan.

1611.4: Changes the caption to “Communication Plans for Specific Issues and Projects.”
Changes the focus of direction in this section to address issues as well as projects.

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1610.2 - Objectives

The objectives of public affairs planning are to:

1. Identify public affairs tasks needed to meet Forest Service management objectives and clearly communicate the agency's mission both internally and externally.
2. Integrate these tasks and objectives into the agency's planning, budgeting, and management processes.

1610.3 - Policy

At each organizational level of the Forest Service:

1. Identify public affairs and public involvement objectives to accomplish the unit's management and program objectives, and to support overall national policies and objectives.
2. Ensure that the agency's public affairs and public involvement objectives are set out in the National Communication Strategy and are carried out professionally and in a timely, efficient manner, with follow-up monitoring and evaluation.

1610.4 - Responsibility

1610.41 - Washington Office

1610.41a - Staff Directors

Each Washington Office Staff Director, during the development of the staff's program of work, is responsible for identifying potential public affairs issues, problems, and opportunities, and for submitting this information to the appropriate Deputy Chief to forward to the Director, Office of Communication, Washington Office to aid in developing the agency's overall National Communication Strategy.

1610.41b - Director, Office of Communication

In addition to the responsibilities set out in FSM 1610.41a, the Director, Office of Communication, Washington Office, is responsible for developing a National Communication Strategy (FSM 1611.1) and for providing guidance and general oversight to communication planning both within the Washington Office and for field public affairs units. The Director is also responsible for developing an annual implementation plan for this strategy (FSM 1611.2) that facilitates accomplishment of national program objectives and supports the Chief's national public affairs policies and objectives.

1610.42 - Field Units

All field unit line officers are responsible for preparing an annual Field Unit Public Affairs Program Plan to support the unit's management program objectives for the fiscal year.

Managers of field level public affairs units have the responsibility to:

1. Ensure the Field Unit Public Affairs Program Plan follows Washington Office guidance for national strategic communications.
2. Adapt the unit's public affairs planning to meet local needs, while ensuring that the agency's overall national strategic communications goals and guidance are supported.

1611 - Public Affairs Planning

1611.1 - National Communication Strategy

The Director, Office of Communication, Washington Office develops emphasis areas through the National Communication Strategy and shares this information with field units for use in developing their plans so that Field Unit Public Affairs Program Plans can contribute to meeting national goals and objectives.

1611.2 - National Communication Strategy Implementation Plan

1. The National Communication Strategy Implementation Plan:
 - a. Identifies public affairs and involvement opportunities to support both short-term and long-term management objectives at the national level to be accomplished in the planning period determined by the Director, Office of Communication, Washington Office.
 - b. Deals primarily with action items that support management activities during the planning period determined by the Director, Office of Communication, Washington Office, and those activities that can be accomplished to support long-term agency objectives during that planning period. This long-term program plan should not become primarily issue- or problem-oriented.
 - c. Sets out general strategies for potential crises and incidents, such as wildfires and plane crashes.
 - d. Emphasizes national objectives and goals identified in the Forest Service National Communication Strategy, the related program of work, and planning, budgeting, and information management systems, and identifies current or potential areas of major public interest and concern.

2. The plan should include:

- a. Identification of current and potential national issues and planned public affairs actions to deal with them.
- b. Identification of actions, programs, and activities of a positive nature and planned public affairs actions to promote public understanding of Forest Service programs, activities, benefits, and services.
- c. Identification of internal and external communication procedures to ensure that minorities, underserved communities, women, the aged, and persons with disabilities are made fully aware of:
 - (1) Opportunities to make use of any Forest Service program, activity, benefit, or service;
 - (2) Opportunities to become involved in the agency's decision-making processes; and
 - (3) Any other information that may be of interest or benefit (FSH 1709.11, ch. 20; Forest Service Strategic Public Outreach Plan).

1611.3 - Field Unit Public Affairs Program Plans

The Field Unit Public Affairs Program Plan is intended to guide information outreach efforts in the coming fiscal year. Each Field Unit Public Affairs Program Plan should identify major public affairs action items that should be carried out to support agency program objectives, as well as the unit's objectives, and should include audiences such as underserved communities and individuals and communities of interest (as set out in the Forest Service Strategic Public Outreach Plan).

1611.4 - Communication Plans for Specific Issues and Projects

1. Communication plans may be issue- or project-oriented and should be developed at all levels of the agency for especially complex issues identified in the Unit Public Affairs Program Plan or for unexpected issues that arise during the year. These strategic communication plans may be relatively short-lived but are necessary to provide a communication framework for critical situations.

2. The Director, Office of Communication, Washington Office, with advice from the field units, prepares strategic communication plans for issues, initiatives, and projects that are national in scope to ensure coordination of effort and a unified message. Field units should follow a similar process for ensuring coordination of Region, Station, Area, Institute, and Forest communication plans for projects and issues.