

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

**Forest Service Manual 1600 – Information Services
Chapter 1650 - Media Relations Program**

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Duration: This amendment is effective until superseded or removed.

Superseded Directive: 1650, Amendment 1600-2004-1, May 20, 2004

Approved by: J. Lenise Lago, Acting Associate Chief

Date approved: August 02, 2018

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 1600-2018-3 to FSM 1600_contents.

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

This amendment revises the chapter in its entirety, and recodes direction throughout. Broad adjustments include updated terminology and Office of Communication (OC) position titles.

Major changes are as follows:

1650.1: References FSM 6200, Office Management and FSH 6209.11, Record Management Handbook.

1650.2: Adds section on the Forest Service on working with members of the media.

1650.3: Captures point that subject matter and media are covered by copyright and must conform to the Copyright Act of 1976 (Public Law 94-553; 90 Stat. 2541; 17 U.S.C. Chapter 1-13) and describes the scope and limitation of exclusive rights.

1650.41a: Adds new code and caption for “Directors” Directors, National Directors, their, designees, or staff - responsible for ensuring media inquiries are referred to National Press Officer for appropriate action.

1650.41b: Adds new code and caption for “Communication Director, Office of Communication” and set forth direction.

1650.42: Changes caption from “Program Manager, Media Relations Branch, Office of Communication, Washington Office” to “National Press Officer, Office of Communication” and set forth direction.

1650.43: Revises direction for Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, Institute Director, Forest Supervisors, and District Rangers.

1651.1 & 1651.11: Adds that Unit PAOs inform National Press Office of proposed releases about an event of serious injury or death of an employee; updates position titles of OC staff and removes section 1651.11, Feature News Releases.

1651.4: Revises section to include sub-section of other communication methods such as:

Media Tours: Previously known as “Show-Me Trips”.

Features: Stories on Forest Service activities that go beyond news releases.

Social/Digital Media: See FSM 1660, Web Content and Format for guidelines to the use of social media.

1652: Adds new code and caption for “Media Clips” and set forth direction.

1653: Revises direction to be consistent with the procedures and guidance in section 1650.3, Policy.

1653.12a: Revises direction on Washington Office Procedures for Release of Information of General Interest at the National Level for media requests.

1653.2: Revises direction on Guidelines for Employees in Media Interviews.

1653.31: Adds note to review and coordinate direction with FSH 1309.19, chapter 20 (section 20.4i, Information Officer Responsibilities).

1654.1: Updated direction related to forwarding audio-visual requests, with recommendations, to the Washington Office, Communication Director.

1655: Revises direction concerning Political Activities and Election Campaigns.

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This directive outlines guidance on providing information to media, which is broadly defined as radio, television, newspaper, magazine, and internet outlets that reach or influence people widely. Information is defined as any data or knowledge provided to news and information media, especially information that has the potential to generate media attention, public interest, or inquiry.

Examples of providing information to media include, but are not limited to, interviews, press releases, media advisories, engagement with editorial boards, letters to the editor, submitting opinion-editorial columns, digital media and audio or video news releases and B-roll (video footage provided free of charge to broadcast news organizations) used to convey news or items of public interest. Not included under this definition of media are scientific and technical reports or articles, and technical information in professional journals.

1650.1 - Authority

Departmental Regulations (DR) 1440-002 and 1495.001;

Forest Service Office Management Manual 6200;

Forest Service Record Management Handbook 6209.11; and

Detailed direction on implementing these requirements are in this chapter.

1650.2 - Objective

To provide the public, through the news media, with factual, accurate, and timely information about the USDA Forest Service's policies, programs, and activities as they relate to the management, protection, and use of National Forest System lands, and to the State and Private Forestry, Research and Development, and International Programs.

The Forest Service will work with media in an open, equally available manner to provide information that is clear, concise, and accurate while protecting confidential, classified, and non-public information.

1650.3 - Policy

It is Forest Service media policy to:

1. Make relevant information about Forest Service policies, programs, and activities readily and equally available to all media outlets while protecting confidential, classified, and non-public information.
2. Answer media requests for information in a responsive and timely manner to help convey potential or current challenges, problems, and issues related to the

management, protection, and use of National Forests System lands and other agency programs and activities.

3. Not withhold information in response to legitimate requests merely to protect the Government from criticism and/or embarrassment.
4. Monitor information about the Forest Service published through the media and, on a case-by-case basis, determine whether further information or action is needed.
5. Ensure Forest Service public affairs professionals facilitate media opportunities, which may include interviews, statements, panel discussions, press conferences, engagement on social media and other appropriate activities.
6. Ensure that public affairs professionals and subject matter experts are adequately prepared to support and participate in interviews, statements, panel discussions, press conferences, engagement on social media and other appropriate activities.
7. Determine Forest Service involvement based on media inquiries from authors, film, television producers and other media outlets based upon the subject matter in question.
8. Ensure that all written media products (press releases, blogs, feature stories, social media posts, etc.) are clear and concise, as required by the Plain Writing Act of 2010, and are composed using Associated Press style.
9. Ensure that the produced subject matter and media that are covered by copyright conform to the Copyright Act of 1976 (Public Law 94-553; 90 Stat. 2541; 17 U.S.C. Chapter 1-13) and describe the scope and limitation of exclusive rights, as appropriate.

1650.4 - Responsibility

1650.41 - Washington Office

1650.41a - Directors

National Directors, their designees, or staff are responsible for ensuring that inquiries from media outlet representatives are referred to the National Press Officer for appropriate action.

1650.41b - Communication Director, Office of Communication

The Communication Director has the authority over the Media Relations Program and the responsibility to:

1. Designate the Forest Service National Press Officer

2. Determine the appropriate level of Forest Service participation in motion picture productions.

1650.42 - National Press Officer, Office of Communication

The National Press Officer, Office of Communication is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Media Relations Program. The responsibilities of the National Press Officer include:

1. Ensuring that media representatives receive timely and accurate information on Forest Service policies, programs, and activities.
2. Coordinating public affairs/communication activities and planning with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and other Government agencies as needed to expedite the flow of information to the public and to the media.
3. Providing guidance to those involved with public affairs/communication activities related to media queries to Washington Office, Regions, Stations, the Area, and the Institute.
4. Providing guidance regarding media interests of national significance, from national outlets or of a sensitive nature to Washington Office, Regions, Stations, the Area, and the Institute.
5. Developing appropriate tools, such as news release templates.
6. Developing and maintaining contacts with representatives of the national and Washington, DC-based, news media outlets.
7. Responding directly to, or coordinating responses/inquiries from national media outlets.
8. Coordinating with subject matter experts who may be asked to respond to media inquiries to ensure employee is adequately prepared.
9. Ensuring media training is provided to Agency representatives authorized to speak to the media.
10. Clearing Washington Office news releases and other information materials as appropriate with the appropriate agency and Department officials.
11. Coordinating as appropriate with the Forest Service Legislative Affairs Staff and the USDA Office of Communication on responses to information requests and materials with potential legislative and Congressional implications.

1650.43 - Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, Institute Director, Forest Supervisors, and District Rangers

With guidance from the appropriate public affairs representative, Line Officers, or their designees, have the responsibility to learn about the news media outlets and reporters within their geographic area to, in part, provide responsive and timely information about Forest Service policies, programs, and activities as it pertains to the unit.

Line Officers, or their designees, are to consult/contact the National Press Officer on inquiries related to matters of national significance or of a sensitive nature from a national media outlet.

1651 - Communication Methods

Public affairs professionals within the Forest Service use various communication methods to disseminate information. They may choose the appropriate method(s) for the appropriate audience for the desired results.

1651.1 - News Releases

1. News Releases. The Washington Office, Office of Communication, issues news releases to announce national policies, programs, and major activities. Public affairs professionals on field units shall review and issue news releases to keep their respective publics informed of current management actions or program developments. Field units will work with the National Press Officer on proposed release about issues of national significance including serious accidents and fatalities of employees in the line of duty. Releases impacting more than one region or station shall be coordinated with the Washington Office.

2. Office of Communication, Washington Office, News Release Clearance Process

The following process applies to the clearance of national-level news releases:

- a. The Office of Communication public affairs specialists assigned to assist Headquarters program offices are responsible for the development of communication products, including draft news releases, as appropriate.
- b. The public affairs specialist will provide a final draft of the news release to the National Press Officer for review.
- c. After review, the National Press Officer will forward the release to the Washington Office Assistant Director, Office of Communication, for review, concurrence, and coordination with the Office of the Chief for final agency approval.
- d. Following approval by the Chief of the Forest Service, the National Press Officer will coordinate clearance with the USDA Office of Communications.

3. Exceptions to the News Release Clearance Process

News releases may be approved for release by the Washington Office, Communication Director, Office of Communication, without USDA Office of Communications coordination or clearance after close of regular business hours during an emergency, or when public health and safety are of concern.

1651.2 - News Conferences, Advisories, News Briefings and Social Media

Public Affairs professionals shall use news conferences, advisories, news briefings and/or social media to announce actions that may generate numerous media inquiries. Contact the National Press Officer when such news conferences might have national policy implications or involve Washington Office or Department personnel. Use informal news briefings to provide background or updates on programs, activities, or anticipated controversies.

1651.3 - Interviews

Washington Office employees shall coordinate with the National Press Officer, Office of Communication, prior to agreeing to take part in an interview related to the employee's official duties. The National Press Officer will in turn coordinate with USDA's Office of Communication.

Field staff, including Line Officers, shall similarly consult with the appropriate Public Affairs Officer for the USFS Unit, Region, Station, Area, or Institute.

Forest Service public affairs professionals shall coordinate and facilitate media opportunities, which may include interviews, statements, panel discussions, and other appropriate activities.

1651.4 - Other Methods

Other communication methods that provide information to a variety of audiences include fact sheets, issues briefing papers, opinion or editorials, media tours, features, and social media. Ensure the selected method meets the need of the intended audience. Audience includes, but not limited to, employees, media, Congressional Members or their staff, Congressional Committee inquiries, general public and public with specific interests, often referred to as stakeholders.

1. Fact Sheets:

Use fact sheets to provide detailed information. Fact sheets should contain factual and up-to-date material.

2. Issue Briefing Papers:

Use briefing papers that may include talking points to provide information on a specific topic.

3. Opinion/Editorials:

When appropriate, and after receiving prior review and approval from the Communication Director, write an opinion or editorial to address issues or concerns related to a unit.

4. Media Tours:

Schedule information exchange visits for media representatives to Forest Service locations to provide additional information about operations, activities or issues.

5. Features:

All units should provide informative, people-oriented feature stories on Forest Service activities that go beyond news releases. Features of potential interest to national audiences should be forwarded to the National Press Officer, Office of Communication, Washington Office for awareness through the Regional press officer.

6. Social/Digital Media:

See FSM 1660, Digital Service for guidelines on the use of social media.

1652 - Media Clips

In the ongoing evaluation, issue identification, and tracking effort, the National Press Officer will collect and consolidate media clips on a daily basis (Monday through Friday) and distribute them to the Chief of the Forest Service and others as needed to support awareness of ongoing issues being covered in the press.

Preceding, during, and following major national policy announcements or initiatives, Regions, Stations, the Area, the Institute, and Forests and Grasslands should provide related electronic news clips to the National Press Officer, Office of Communication. If appropriate provide a media analysis.

1653 - Release of Information to the News Media

This section contains more detailed procedures and guidance in carrying out the broad policies set out at FSM 1650.3 when releasing Forest Service information to the news media. For further direction concerning release of information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and Privacy Act (PA), see FSM 6270 and FSH 6209.13.

1653.1 - Information of General Interest

1653.11 - National Level Information

1. Coordinating with, or seeking approval from, the National Press Officer to Respond to Media Inquiries on Matters of National Significance Field units and Washington Office Deputy Area staffs should submit requests for approval for media interviews to the National Press Officer, Office of Communication, Washington Office. This is imperative when the requests concern issues relating to the national budget, national policy, or local and regional issues that have the potential to become national issues or garner attention beyond the local area. This action permits timely and appropriate coordination of such requests.
2. Criteria for Information to Provide for Release by the Washington Office, Office of Communication, Washington Office, Office of Communication, normally releases general information about national level plans, policies, programs, or operations of the Forest Service. Provide information that meets any of the following criteria to the National Press Officer, Office Communication for clearance and release to the news media:
 - a. Originates in or is proposed for release by the Forest Service Washington Office or higher national-level Government offices
 - b. Has attracted or has the potential to attract national interest
 - c. Concerns policy of other Government agencies or the U.S. Government
 - d. Contains subjects of potential controversy among other Federal agencies or with the general public

1653.12 - Procedures for Release of Information

1653.12a - Washington Office Procedures for Release of Information of General Interest at the National Level

The Washington Office, National Press Officer, Office of Communication:

1. Responds to media requests for information about the Forest Service as a whole. Such information is normally obtained from the Chief's Office and/or the appropriate Deputy Chief having primary oversight of the issue. Field units should refer media requests of this type to the Washington Office, National Press Officer, Office of Communication

2. Coordinates with the Washington Office, Legislative Affairs Staff, and the USDA Office of Communications on release of information that has potential legislative and congressional implications

3. Arranges interviews and press conferences

1653.12b - Procedures for Regions, Stations, the Area, the Institute, and Forests and Grasslands for Release of General Information of National or Local/Regional Interest

1. Regions, Stations, the Area, the Institute, and Forests and Grasslands may release to regional/local media outlets information that is within the purview of the respective unit and does not meet the criteria for national level information in FSM 1653.11. Regions, Stations, the Area, the Institute, and Forests and Grasslands shall submit such material to the appropriate unit Public Affairs Officer to review and clear for release or forward to the appropriate headquarters or higher level office for review and clearance.

2. Regions, Stations, the Area, the Institute, and Forests and Grasslands shall inform the Washington Office, National Press Officer, Office of Communication, by the most expeditious means available when they receive national news media requests concerning their respective units. This procedure allows the Regions, Stations, the Area, the Institute, and Forests and Grasslands maximum flexibility in releasing information, but, at the same time, alerts the Washington Office, Office of Communication that national media representatives are interested in a particular subject and may be pursuing it at more than one location. National media requests include requests for information or coverage from network television, national news magazines, or metropolitan newspapers that have national distribution (such as the *New York Times* or *Washington Post*).

3. Each unit should make judicious use of its release authority. Expeditious release of information should be made at the lowest possible organizational level if the release does not conflict with criteria set out in FSM 1653.11.

1653.2 - Guidelines for Employees in Media Interviews

In their official capacity as employees representing the Forest Service during interviews with media representatives, agency officials shall:

1. Confine remarks to matters and activities about the unit, program, and activities they represent that are within their area of expertise. Employees should not comment about Forest Service or other matters that are beyond their knowledge, experience, or purview. Employees conducting interviews in their official capacity should express official agency positions and refrain from conveying personal opinions.

2. Work with the appropriate-level Public Affairs Specialist before the interview to determine the best way to respond to the media inquiry.

3. Refrain from discussing matters in litigation or on other program or policy matters that may be speculative.

1653.3 - Information Related to Disaster and Relief Operations

For direction related to providing fire information and the role of information officers in the Incident Command System (ICS) organization, see FSM 5100, FSH 5109.17, and the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) publication, ICS Orientation (NFES 2439) available from the National Interagency Fire Center, Boise, Idaho (FSM 5108). This section refers to disaster and relief incidents in which an Area Information Management Team including Forest Service employees is called in to work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

1. Public Affairs Officers of the Regions, Stations, the Area, and the Institute shall make information on Forest Service participation in disaster relief operations available promptly to the news media as appropriate. They shall forward information of possible national and international interest by the most expeditious means possible to the Washington Office, Communication Director, to review prior to dissemination.
2. Upon conclusion of disaster relief activities, Region, Station, Area, and Institute Public Affairs Officers shall provide the Washington Office, Communication Director, with a narrative summary of public affairs activities and their results.

1653.31 - Reporting Accidents and Incidents Involving Forest Service Employees and Equipment

The following guidelines apply to Forest Service Communications staff and others when responding to media related inquiries regarding accidents or incidents (including injuries or deaths) occurring within Forest Service units:

(See FSM 6270 and FSH 6209.13 for additional direction related to release of information under the Freedom of Information Act and Privacy Act. Review FSH 1309.19, Death and Serious Injury Handbook, for additional information on communication responsibilities.)

1. Follow the chain of command to identify a Public Information Officer to manage information for the incident.
2. When circumstances permit, a one story, single release is desirable. Ensure that all information released is accurate and verified beyond a reasonable doubt. Normally, release information with the following information:
 - a. Announce that an accident or incident occurred.
 - b. Location and time of the accident or incident.

- c. State what is being done and specify agencies involved in response and with which resources.
 - d. Explain Forest Service response activities, including interagency roles and cooperation.
 - e. In answering questions about the cause of an accident or an incident before official findings are available, use a standard reply such as, "An investigation is being conducted to determine the cause."
 - f. Report current status and do not speculate or talk off-record; only state the facts. Confirm the obvious.
 - g. State what the public can do to help and where they can go for additional information/updates.
 - h. Thank partners, cooperators, and first responders.
 - i. Withhold public release of names and addresses of dead or injured Forest Service employees until after official notification of next-of-kin. The responsible unit Public Affairs Officer shall coordinate with local jurisdictional law enforcement and the Washington Office, Region, Station, the Area, the Institute, or Forest and Grassland to ensure that the next-of-kin have been notified.
 - j. Release of names requires close coordination with local law enforcement agencies as they generally have the responsibility to release names of the deceased.
3. Develop an initial prepared statement.
 4. Learn the families' wishes about media coverage early and abide by family wishes.
 5. Keep the press informed.
 - a. Arrange press briefing(s) as appropriate, including site visits as needed.
 - b. Anticipate needs and consider providing press kit, including photos, bios, interviews and more.
 6. Remain in contact with municipality(ies), county(ies) and state(s); keep information flowing; provide town meeting as appropriate.
 7. Develop mechanism for dissemination for follow-up information to family members/survivors.
 8. For the purpose of providing information to the media, a civilian aircraft under Forest Service contract is considered a Forest Service aircraft. Release information concerning

casualties related to contracted civilian aircraft, according to the same guidelines followed for Forest Service employees and equipment.

9. Coordinate with law enforcement, CFO Budget and Finance Claims and the Office of General Counsel (as appropriate), Forest Service accident investigation team, Line Officers, response team members and other agencies involved regarding release of information to the media.

10. Agency officers shall not release official investigation information on findings of misconduct by individuals except after coordinating with the appropriate Freedom of Information Act/Privacy Act official and with the approval of the Chief of the Forest Service.

11. The following points apply to all accidents or incidents occurring outside Forest Service controlled or administered lands or facilities:

- a. If Forest Service employees are involved in accidents in civilian or Forest Service automobiles, trains, and commercial or private airplanes, or in any other types of accidents (except as provided in the following para. c), the Public Affairs Officer nearest the scene shall coordinate with local law enforcement officials and representatives of the transportation companies and ensure that the next-of-kin have received official notification prior to public release of the names and addresses of Forest Service employees. The address of the Forest Service employee shall consist of only city and state.
- b. If an accident involves a Forest Service aircraft that crashes in or on the borders of a city or town, or that causes civilian casualties or appreciable property damage, the nearest Public Affairs Officer should release the names and addresses of Forest Service personnel after the next-of-kin has been notified. Release of names requires close coordination with local law enforcement agencies as they generally have the responsibility to release names of the deceased.
- c. If an accident involves a Forest Service aircraft that crashes in a remote area, involves Forest Service casualties, but no civilian casualties, and causes no appreciable damage (that is, if there has been no major intrusion into the civilian domain), the nearest Public Affairs Officer shall withhold the names and addresses of Forest Service personnel until the next-of-kin have received official notification of the accident. Release of names requires close coordination with local law enforcement agencies as they generally have the responsibility to release names of the deceased.

1653.32 - Forest Service Studies of Accidents or Incidents

Any interim, draft, or final documents related to Forest Service studies and analyses performed in-house or by contract shall not be released outside USDA until obtaining:

1. Final approval or official review of the document, including review or consultation with the appropriate Freedom of Information Act/Privacy Act (FOIA/PA) official; and
2. Approval for release by an authorized officer at the appropriate level.

The release of any interim, draft, or final contracted document must be approved by the sponsor through the contracting officer or the contracting authority. These requirements do not preclude early discussion with State, Tribal, local, and other Federal officials as required.

1653.4 - Litigation and Debarments of Contractors

1. To prevent premature release of information, maintain close liaison with the Office of the General Counsel about matters in litigation or with potential for litigation.
2. Do not discuss matters in litigation or with the potential of litigation. At no time shall any employee speculate on such matters. Employees must advise their leadership and Office of the General Counsel of any media queries about cases in litigation.
3. Do not release information about debarment cases to the public until a final decision is made on the case. Prior to that time, Public Affairs Officers may acknowledge that a specific company has been proposed for debarment. However, refer the media, without comment, to the contractor when questions arise about the basis for the case or the status of the proceedings. Once a decision is made, the fact that a company holding a government contract has been debarred is releasable to the public.

1654 - Forest Service Support to Nongovernmental Audiovisual Productions, Advertising, and Promotions

1654.1 - Audiovisual Productions

(For additional direction regarding agency audiovisual productions, see FSM 1640. Also for additional direction regarding special uses permitting, see FSM 2725.52.)

In providing support and assistance to non-governmental productions or programs, other than those dealing with spot news events, comply with the following:

1. Public Affairs Officers are authorized to assist non-governmental audio-visual media after approval from the Washington Office, Communication Director when the production subject matter is of local interest only and will be shown only within the local area.

2. When requests for assistance involve audio-visual projects of national or regional interest and production of television motion pictures, documentaries, television series, or television specials, Public Affairs Officers must obtain appropriate advance approval of the Communication Director Washington Office, before making any commitments or giving opinions on the agency's response to such requests.
3. Unless they feature topics of local interest, Public Affairs Officers receiving requests for support with audio-visual projects should forward requests, with recommendations, to the Washington Office, Communication Director, or they may refer the requestor directly to the Washington Office, Communication Director.
4. Public Affairs Officers should assist entertainment-oriented projects when cooperation will benefit or is in the best interest of the Forest Service.

The subject matter of the production must:

- a. Be authentic in its portrayal of actual persons, places, Forest Service operations, and historical events. If fictional, the project must be a plausible portrayal;
 - b. Be of informational value and assist in the public's understanding of the Forest Service; and
 - c. Not appear to condone or endorse activities by private citizens or organizations that are contrary to U.S. Government policy.
5. The Public Affairs Officer, or other authorized officer, must inform the requester of the process and fees involved in applying for a special use authorization, which may be required for the production, and the process for requesting fee waivers (FSM 2700, FSH 2709.11). Obtain the following information:
- a. A letter describing the specific motion picture, television production, or video product, stating the story/project objectives.
 - b. A detailed list of requirements.
 - c. Agreement that the production company is responsible to reimburse the Forest Service for any expenses incurred as a result of assisting the production, including returning the natural resources and/or structures to pre-production condition. Include a copy of any agreement, or special use permit.
 - d. Agreement to comply with established Forest Service safety standards.

- e. A written statement certifying that Forest Service materials and personnel services to be used in the production are not available through commercial or private enterprises.
- 6. The official activities of Forest Service personnel assisting in any non-governmental audio-visual production, except the program officer, must be within the scope of their normal duties.

1654.2 - Nongovernmental Use of Forest Service Insignia

1. Permission to use or reproduce the Forest Service insignia (the shield) must be approved by the Washington Office, Communication Director, Office of Communication.
2. Forest Service personnel are not permitted to assist in the production of any advertisement or promotional venture that implies Forest Service endorsement of a commercial product, service, or company (FSM 1603). However, specified materials and activities of the Forest Service may be approved for use in commercial advertisements and promotions, only if there is no violation of public law, or USDA or Forest Service policy, and if the following criteria are met:
 - a. Materials or activities will be depicted factually and will be in accordance with 36 CFR part 264.
 - b. Use of the materials or activities will be in the best interests of the Government and the Forest Service.
 - c. All implication of Forest Service endorsement will be avoided.
 - d. The materials will contain a proper disclaimer, if circumstances require.
 - e. Claims made or implied in the material will not be misleading.
3. Forest Service employees are prohibited from officially endorsing commercial products or services. Forest Service employees may not use their titles or appear in uniform to express or imply official Forest Service connection with or endorsement of such products, services, or business entities.

1655 - Political Activities and Election Campaigns

The Hatch Act (5 U.S.C. 7326; 5 CFR part 734, subpart D) covers the political activities of Federal employees. The Hatch Act specifies the political activities that executive branch employees of the Federal Government may or may not be engaged in, in their personal capacity.

To ensure that the Forest Service is not associated with particular political causes or candidates, and to be in compliance with the Hatch Act, Forest Service employees shall not engage in any

political activities while on duty or, when off duty, in any way representing the Forest Service (e.g. in uniform or in a Forest Service vehicle, even outside of duty hours).

The following restrictions apply to all political activities, including election campaigning at local, state, and Federal levels:

1. Authorized Forest Service newspapers, publications, and periodicals shall not carry any partisan discussions, cartoons, editorials, or commentaries dealing with political campaigns, candidates, or issues.
2. Line Officers shall not permit the use of Forest Service facilities by any candidate (either incumbents or new office seekers), members of their staff, or their campaign representatives for political assemblies or meetings or for fundraising activities regardless of format for political candidates, parties, or causes, regardless of the sponsor.
3. Members of Congress, Presidents or Vice Presidents, whether or not candidates for re-election, may visit Forest Service facilities to receive briefings, tours, and/or informational materials.
4. Candidates for Congress, or other Federal office, or office seekers for State or local governments, whether incumbent or new candidates, may be given the same access to Forest Service facilities as that to which any other visitor is entitled.
5. Requests from candidates to film or tape campaign commercials in front of Forest Service equipment or facilities shall be denied.
6. Speeches, articles, and public comment by Forest Service personnel, in their capacity as Forest Service representatives, must not contain material that may be construed as partisan in nature. In responding to media queries, take care not to give answers that have overt political implications or express opinion on political causes, candidates, or parties.
7. Any situations regarding political election campaign activities not covered by the preceding paragraphs 1-7 should be brought to the attention of the appropriate Forest Service official for resolution.

1656 - Copyrights

(For direction on copyrights, see FSM 1630).