

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

**Forest Service Manual 1600 – Information Services  
Zero Code**

**Amendment:** 1600-2020-1

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**Duration:** This amendment is effective until superseded or removed.

**Superseded Directive:** 1600 zero code, Amendment 1600-2002-5, June 12, 2002

**Approved by:** Tina Terrell, Associate Deputy Chief, NFS

**Date approved:** August 02, 2020

**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 1600-2019-2 to FSM 1660.

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

**1604.34:** Changes caption from “District Rangers” to “National Technology & Development Program Director and Geospatial Technology & Applications Center Director” and sets forth delegation of public relations and public information authority to the National Technology & Development Program Director and Geospatial Technology & Applications Center Director.

**1604.35:** Recodes to this section direction previously set out in 1604.34.

**1604.36:** Establishes code and recodes to this section direction previously set out in 1604.35.

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## **1601 - Authority**

1. Department of Agriculture Organic Act of 1862 (12 Stat. 387; 7 U.S.C. 2201). This act authorizes establishment of a Department of Agriculture and directs that its general design and duties be to “diffuse among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with agriculture in the most general and comprehensive sense of the word.”
2. Solicitor's Opinion 4088 (1942). In this opinion, the Solicitor ruled that information may be disseminated through exhibits, motion pictures, radio broadcasts, or other media that are found to be administratively expedient, provided such information relates to the authorized activities of the Department, and it is administratively determined that such dissemination of information is reasonably requisite or materially advantageous in the promotion and development of such Department activities.
3. Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Research Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 1600 (note)). This act authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to implement a comprehensive program of forest and rangeland renewable resources research and to disseminate the findings of such research.
4. Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 2101, July 1, 1978). This act authorizes cooperative efforts in respect to non-Federal forest lands and provides for coordination with State Foresters in management and planning assistance, and for transfer of technology based on forest research findings.

## **1602 - Objectives**

The broad objectives of conducting information programs and activities are to:

1. Increase public awareness of and understanding of Forest Service programs, activities, benefits, and services, and stewardship of natural resources.
2. Facilitate the participation of individuals, organizations, groups, other Federal agencies, and State, local, and tribal governments in Forest Service decision-making processes, programs, and activities.

## **1603 - Policy**

1. Inform the public of how they may make use of and benefit from National Forest System lands, resources, programs, facilities, and services.
2. Disseminate information useful to the management of privately owned forested lands, and information on the technical and financial assistance available for improving these lands.
3. Disseminate research results in a form that is easily understandable by, and available to, potential users of the research, be they professional land or resource managers, scientists,

private landowners, individuals, organizations, groups, businesses, other Federal agencies, State, local, and tribal governments, or National Forest System users.

4. Provide educational opportunities for the public to develop knowledge, interest, and understanding of natural resources and the environment.
5. Distribute background information on potential Forest Service decisions and provide individuals, organizations, groups, businesses, other Federal agencies, and State, local, and tribal governments opportunities to become involved in the various stages of the decision-making process.
6. Inform individuals, organizations, groups, businesses, other Federal agencies, State, local, and tribal governments on the status of ongoing programs, projects, and activities.
7. Offer orientation to, and interpretation of, the cultural, historical, and natural resources found within the National Forest System.
8. Provide Forest Service employees with a continuing assessment of public concerns, interests, and attitudes that relate to the development and operation of Forest Service programs, activities, and services.
9. Conduct public information and involvement activities in a professional and cost-effective manner.
10. Inform employees and retirees about Forest Service issues, decisions, programs, and developments, with the objective of motivating increased efficiency, high morale, and organizational cohesiveness.
11. Evaluate and understand public opinion toward the Forest Service as it relates to meeting the public's needs and expectations as a natural resource management agency.
12. Make recommendations to agency officials concerning policies and actions that affect or are likely to affect public opinion about the Forest Service.
13. Evaluate the effectiveness of Forest Service policies and actions on issues of public concern.

#### **1603.1 - Availability of Information**

Within the constraints of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and Privacy Act, respond promptly and fully to requests for information. Follow policies and procedures in FSM 6270 and FSH 6209.13 in responding to requests made pursuant to FOIA and the Privacy Act.

#### **1603.2 - Equal Opportunity Requirements in Information Programs**

1. In preparing informational materials released to the public, include, as appropriate, a statement that the program or activity is conducted on a nondiscriminatory basis; see

Departmental Regulation (DR) 4300-3 for the standard nondiscrimination statement for use in public information materials and publications. Use photos and other graphics to convey the message of equal opportunity. This requirement applies to materials published and distributed by either the agency or its non-Federal cooperators and partners. Press release logos are specifically excluded from this requirement.

2. Provide timely information on new or changed programs, services, and activities to organizations that represent or serve minorities, women, persons with disabilities, and underserved communities by mailing or other appropriate methods. Information on such organizations is available from the Department's Office of Civil Rights and the Forest Service Strategic Public Outreach Plan (FSM 1720), and other public notification plans developed at the unit level.

3. Take active measures specifically designed to increase the awareness, involvement, and participation of minorities, women, persons with disabilities, and underserved communities in programs, activities, benefits, and services provided by the Forest Service (FSM 1720).

### **1603.3 - Restrictions**

#### **1603.31 - Legislation**

Agency policy and restrictions on providing information on pending legislation are set forth in FSM 1510.

#### **1603.32 - Legal Proceedings**

Employees shall not make public statements bearing on current legal proceedings that could jeopardize the rights of any party to due process of law. See FSM 1572 for additional guidance on employee participation in legal proceedings.

#### **1603.33 - Lobbying**

1. Federal employees are prohibited by the Lobbying Prohibitions Act of 1948 (18 U.S.C. 1913) from using any part of an appropriation for services, messages, or publications designed to influence any member of Congress regarding legislation or appropriations.

2. Federal employees are also prohibited by the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act of 1999, section 637, from participating in the preparation, distribution, or use of any kit, pamphlet, booklet, publication, and radio, television, or film presentation designed to support or defeat legislation pending before the Congress, except at the request of Congress.

3. Forest Service employees are further prohibited by the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 1999, section 303, from using appropriated funds for

any activity, or for the publication or distribution of literature, that in any way promotes public support or opposition to any legislative proposal on which congressional action is not complete.

#### **1603.4 - Agency Logo Requirements**

1. The standard Forest Service shield is the only symbol (logo) permitted to appear on information materials as identification of the agency and all its subunits; units shall phase out use of any other symbols on existing agency informational materials. Guidelines for the use of the Forest Service logo are found at 36 CFR part 264, subpart A.
2. Use of the shield does not prohibit use of approved symbols for Woodsy Owl or Smokey Bear (FSM 1620).
3. Certain other subject matter or program symbols may be used when considered essential on information materials. Agency policy is to hold use of subject matter symbols to a minimum. Such symbols must appear in a position equal with or subordinate to the Forest Service shield.
4. Symbols to be used at the national level and those developed in the Washington Office require approval by the Deputy Chief for Business Operations. Use of any new non-national symbol at the field level requires approval by the Regional Forester, Station Director, Area Director, or Institute Director. The Director, Office of Communication, Washington Office must approve the design of new symbols.

#### **1604 - Responsibility**

##### **1604.1 - Line Officers**

All Line Officers must keep abreast of current issues and concerns related to Forest Service programs and activities and be prepared to discuss these matters with the public. (For descriptions of Line Officer positions and direction on responsibilities and authorities, see FSM 1220 and 1230.)

##### **1604.2 - Washington Office**

###### **1604.21- Chief**

The Chief retains line responsibility for national leadership, planning, coordination, and execution of Forest Service public information and public involvement policies, programs, and activities.

###### **1604.22 - Deputy Chief for Business Operations**

The Chief has assigned line responsibility for administrative support of the Washington Office, Office of Communication to the Deputy Chief for Business Operations (FSM 1235).

### **1604.23 - Director, Office of Communication, Washington Office**

The Director, Office of Communication, Washington Office, is responsible for executing day-to-day information programs and activities at the national level; providing staff advice and support to the Chief on national information policies, programs, and activities; and supporting agency leadership at the national level and the Regions, Stations, Area, and Institute in communication policy, planning, and liaison; media relations; corporate internal communications; customer service; and audiovisual, design, and printing services.

### **1604.3 - Field Units**

#### **1604.31 - Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, and Institute Director**

Regional Foresters, Station Directors, the Area Director, and the Institute Director are responsible for the public affairs programs within their respective units, including public affairs and/or strategic communication program planning and implementation and public information and public involvement policies, programs, and activities.

#### **1604.32 - Directors of Public Affairs, Regions, Stations, Area, and Institute**

Directors of Public Affairs at the Regions, Stations, Area, and Institute are responsible for day-to-day execution of information policies, programs, and activities and for providing staff advice to their respective Regional Forester, Station Director, Area Director, or Institute Director.

#### **1604.33 - Forest Supervisors**

Forest Supervisors are responsible for leadership, planning, coordination, and execution of public information and public involvement activities and programs in their Forest's zone of influence.

#### **1604.33a - National Technology & Development Program Director and Geospatial Technology & Applications Center Director**

The National Technology & Development Program (NTDP) Director and Geospatial Technology & Applications Center (GTAC) Director have the authority for and responsibility to provide leadership, planning, coordination, and execution of public information and public involvement activities and programs related to the missions of NTDP and GTAC. This is re-delegable to the Assistant Directors of NTDP and GTAC. The NTDP Director or GTAC Director shall delegate this authority as supplements to this code and delegate specific signing authorities or reservations of authority as supplements to this title, chapter, and section of the Forest Service Manual.

#### **1604.34 - National Technology & Development Program Director and Geospatial Technology & Applications Center Director**

The National Technology & Development Program (NTDP) Director and Geospatial Technology & Applications Center (GTAC) Director have the authority for and responsibility to provide leadership, planning, coordination, and execution of public information and public involvement activities and programs related to the missions of NTDP and GTAC. This is re-delegable to the Assistant Directors of NTDP and GTAC. The NTDP Director or GTAC Director shall delegate this authority as supplements to this code and delegate specific signing authorities or reservations of authority as supplements to this title, chapter, and section of the Forest Service Manual.

#### **1604.35 - District Rangers**

District Rangers are responsible for carrying out Forest, Regional, and National direction, through appropriate information and public involvement policies, programs, and activities within their District's zone of influence.

#### **1604.36 - Public Affairs Officers, Washington Office, Regions, Stations, Area, Institute, Forests, and Districts**

Public Affairs Officers have the responsibility to advise the Line Officer and staff on all aspects of public affairs. Additionally, they have the responsibility to serve as the official spokesperson for the Line Officer and unit; help inform employees of Forest Service matters; disseminate information to the public pertaining to Forest Service units; and observe and analyze trends in public opinion.

#### **1606 - Web-Based Information Services**

The Office of Communication, Washington Office, provides a variety of informational materials electronically that can be accessed by Forest Service employees through the Forest Service, Washington Office Forest Service Web/Intranet Home page at <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us> and by the general public through the Forest Service National Headquarters Home Page on the World Wide Web/Internet at <http://www.fs.fed.us>.

#### **1609 - Handbooks**

##### **1609.1 - Internal Service-Wide Handbook**

##### **1609.11 - Publications Management Handbook (FSH)**

This Handbook provides Forest Service authors and employees with direction on basic requirements of manuscript preparation prior to publication by the Forest Service.



## **1609.2 - Unit Handbook**

### **1609.21 - Photography Management Handbook (FSH)**

Units are authorized to issue unit Handbooks in this subject matter area.