

**Forest Service Handbook  
National Headquarters (WO)  
Washington, DC**

**Forest Service Handbook 1709.11 – Civil Rights Handbook**

**Chapter 20 - Public Notification**

**Amendment:** 1709.11-2003-2

**Effective date:** February 03, 2003

**Duration:** This amendment is effective until superseded or removed.

**Superseded Directive:** 20 through 23--4, July 1986

**Approved by:** Irving W. Thomas, Associate Deputy Chief for Business Operations

**Date approved:** January 24, 2003

**Responsible Staff:**

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

**Posting Instructions:** Amendments are numbered consecutively by Handbook number 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 Handbook was 1709.11-2003-1 to 1709.11\_contents.

Throughout the chapter, updates staff names, position titles, and terminology to use Office of Communication, Washington Office (formerly, Public Affairs Office and Office of Information); American Indian (formerly, Native American); public affairs specialist (formerly, information specialist); persons with disabilities (formerly, the handicapped); equal opportunity and program delivery (formerly, affirmative action); strategic communication plan for public notification and outreach (formerly, public notification plan); diverse (formerly, protected class members); and underserved community (formerly, nontraditional).

**22:** Changes the caption to Strategic Communication Plan for Public Notification and Outreach (formerly, Public Notification Plan) and revises this term throughout the section.

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This chapter provides direction regarding notification of the public about Forest Service programs and activities to implement requirements regarding improving access to Forest Service Federally assisted programs and activities as set out in USDA Departmental Regulation 4300-3, Equal Opportunity Public Notification Policy; Executive Order 13166 - Improving Access to Services for Persons with Disabilities; and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

### **20.3 - Policy**

1. Forest Service units and Federally assisted program recipients must notify the public and potential program beneficiaries of their right to file a program discrimination complaint by posting the USDA “And Justice for All” posters and providing other public information publications.

2. Forest Service units shall provide training to employees and information to the public regarding the program discrimination complaint program and the procedures for filing program discrimination complaints. Information to the public should be available in alternative formats for people with disabilities and in other languages for groups or individuals with limited English proficiency.

3. Forest Service units shall include the USDA nondiscrimination statement in Forest Service publications for public use and shall ensure that Federally assisted program recipients also include the nondiscrimination statements in their brochures and information for the public.

### **20.4 - Responsibility**

The primary responsibility for developing and implementing the Forest Service’s national public involvement/public notification and outreach strategy rests with the Director, Office of Communication, Washington Office, the Director, Civil Rights Staff, Washington Office, and other designated personnel in the Washington Office. Field unit officers also have the responsibility to develop and implement their own strategic communication plans for public notification and outreach (FSM 1610.41, 1610.42, and 1611.1).

## **21 - Program Activities**

1. Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) Program. This program may be used to place Forest Service employees in historically black colleges and universities and community-based organizations, in American Indian colleges and community-based organizations, and so forth to help with natural resources curriculum development and improvement and with program delivery.

2. News and Other Media. Information about Forest Service employment and programs should be provided to the media appropriate to reach intended audiences, including the general public, minorities, women, persons with disabilities, low-income and underserved persons and communities, tribal governments, and so on.

- a. Work closely with public affairs specialists to ensure that all media presentations, such as news conferences, interviews, and public service announcements, convey the Forest Service's commitment to equal employment opportunity and program delivery.
- b. Consider use of public service announcements and outreach through local minority media. When appropriate, use materials in bilingual and alternative formats.
- c. Work closely with the unit's Office of Communication or Public Affairs Office to compile unit "success stories" and program messages for dissemination to the media.

### 3. Publication and Information Materials

- a. Use skilled artists from diverse backgrounds to produce recruitment publications, such as posters and pamphlets, and ensure that these materials reflect diversity in Forest Service employees and the public served by agency programs (for example, depictions of American Indians, Alaska Natives, African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Pacific Americans, women, or persons with disabilities).
- b. Elicit the help of public affairs specialists to produce local brochures for the public that outline the unit's approach to equal opportunity in employment and program delivery and steps that the unit is taking to accomplish this. For example, it might be useful to use a graphic format to display demographic information showing the unit's progress in hiring minorities, women, and persons with disabilities in recent years or to highlight the unit's strategic public involvement and outreach activities, including the external communication strategy to underserved communities, focused public meetings, integration of special emphasis programs and interest groups, minority contracting, direct programs, and so forth.
- c. Obtain sufficient quantities of the non-discrimination poster "And Justice for All," and display it along with the notice of nondiscrimination at all Forest Service facilities, service delivery points, and public outdoor recreation areas that the Forest Service administers or otherwise assists.

### 4. Outreach Seminars and Briefings. Bring individuals, organizations, groups, and so forth, into contact with the Forest Service to provide them the opportunity to:

- a. Be informed about the full range of Forest Service employment opportunities and programs.
- b. Provide for ongoing cooperation, dialogue, and relationship-building with Forest Service program development and implementation.

After conducting a seminar or briefing, whether formal or informal, ensure there is follow-up with the publics involved and Forest Service line and staff officers.

#### 5. Community Organizations

- a. Work with the unit's Office of Communication or Public Affairs Office to develop group contacts by identifying heads of groups comprised predominantly of minorities, women, and persons with disabilities for inclusion on any Forest Service constituent contact lists. Attend and participate in conferences, workshops, and seminars of major national organizations for minorities, women, or persons with disabilities, especially when the meeting is held in the unit's administrative service area of responsibility.
- b. Establish a continuous and cordial working relationship with grassroots organizations in the community for minorities, women, and persons with disabilities. For example, support their community projects that demonstrate clear and mutual benefits, take part in open houses, and be responsive to requests for information and so on.
- c. Set up face-to-face meetings with diverse community organizations that have experience with the Forest Service, to discuss agency programs and employment and ways to improve equal opportunity and access.
- d. Ensure that outreach efforts and hiring systems and programs do not foster or support competition among groups, but rather provide effective communication and equal opportunity for minorities, women, and persons with disabilities.

### **22 - Strategic Communication Plan for Public Notification and Outreach**

Each Region and Station, the Area, and the Institute shall prepare and implement a strategic communication plan for public notification and outreach formulated with their field units' input and review and using information from their field units' respective plans. Supplement the plan annually with specific actions to encourage public participation and involvement in all Forest Service programs by minorities, women, persons with disabilities, underserved communities, and limited English proficient individuals and groups. An example of a Regional strategic communication plan for public notification and outreach is in exhibit 01.

## 22 - Exhibit 01

### Example of a Strategic Communication Plan for Public Notification and Outreach at the Regional Level

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL
The Region shall notify minorities, women, senior citizens, non-English speaking people, persons with disabilities, and underserved communities about Forest Service programs and benefits so that equal opportunity and access is provided to encourage participation in Forest Service programs and employment.	1. Prepare and implement a Regional Civil Rights (Special Emphasis) Public Notification Plan.	Regional Office - Office of Communication (Public Affairs Office) and Civil Rights Staff.
	2. Ensure that each Forest follows the Strategic Communication Plan for Public Notification and Outreach, and, if necessary, plans to address local needs.	Forest Supervisors through Office of Communication/ Public Affairs Offices.
	3. Ensure that each Forest follows the Strategic Communication Plan, and, if necessary, plans to address local needs.	Forest Supervisors through Office of Communication (Public Affairs Office).
	4. Review and, if necessary, expand media, organization, and individual mailing lists for the Region to ensure that minority media, minority and women's organizations, veterans, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, underserved communities, and other individuals receive public announcements and news releases.	Forest Supervisors through Office of Communication (Public Affairs Office).
	5. Review the Region's printed public information materials and announcements to determine which should be bilingual or multilingual or in alternative formats and advise the Office of Communication (Public Affairs Office) of that need.	Forest Supervisors through Office of Communication (Public Affairs Office).

## 22 - Exhibit 01--Continued

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL
	6. Provide news releases or announcements of program benefits (including Title VI programs) and opportunities and encourage people to become involved in Forest Service decisionmaking processes. As necessary, follow up with personal contacts to ensure that they receive information.	Forest Supervisors and Directors, Office of Communication (Public Affairs Office), Financial Management Staff, and Acquisition Management Staff.
	7. Coordinate news releases with affected recipient groups or agencies for Title VI programs. Include a statement of nondiscrimination in all releases.	Office of Communication (Public Affairs Office) and Forest Supervisors.
	8. Prominently display "And Justice for All" posters in all Forest Service offices and work centers, at facilities of recipients/permittees where there is public visibility, and at all public outdoor recreation areas, in English and additional languages as appropriate.	Regional Forester, Forest Supervisors, and District Rangers.
	9. Submit civil rights "success stories" to the Office of Communication (Public Affairs Office) for transmittal to the Office of Communication, Washington Office, for possible use as a feature article and for FS Today.	Regional Foresters, Civil Rights Directors, Forest Supervisors, and District Rangers.
	10. Submit information for use in FS Today and on the Washington Office Civil Rights website as vehicles for internal communication of civil rights news.	Office of Communication (Public Affairs Office) and Forest Supervisors.
	11. Provide production facilities and services for closed-circuit television programs about civil rights and equal employment opportunity.	Office of Communication (Public Affairs Office) and Forest Supervisors.

## 22 - Exhibit 01--Continued

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL
	12. Within existing resource and budget limitations, continue to offer conservation education to minority and underserved communities and to the educational community. Encourage participation and provide materials for these programs.	Office of Communication (Public Affairs Office) and Forest Supervisors.
	13. Encourage underserved community and minority participation in free use programs through personal contacts, public meetings, news releases, and other informational materials.	Forest Supervisors and District Rangers.