

Chapter 10 Visitor Information Signing

10.1 Visitor Information Signs

Signs, especially in recreation areas, are the face of the Forest Service.

More than anything else, signing can either enhance or diminish the quality of a forest visitor's experience. Signing serves to orient, direct, educate, and answer questions. Signing affords us the opportunity to engage and communicate with the public in a very cost-effective manner. It is the most common one-on-one interaction that occurs between the Forest Service and the forest visitor. In many ways, signs, especially in recreation areas, are the face of the Forest Service.

Appropriate sign planning needs to address both information delivery needs and the physical setting before decisions about signing types, design, materials, quantity, quality, and placement are made. We must remain conscious of the fact that we are placing a fabricated, necessary element into a natural environment. For this reason, whenever possible, all sign planning decisions should be predicated on good site planning and regard for the area's setting and character. It is highly recommended that sign design and placement decisions consider the overall guidelines presented in Forest Service Handbook-710, *The Built Environment Image Guide for the National Forests and Grasslands*.

Interpretive, visitor information, and fire management signs and posters communicate specific educational, behavioral, emotional, and management objectives and messages to visitors. These signs and posters vary in content and design since they must relate to the resources and management objectives and goals of the site. In addition, resource inventory and audience research help determine the key messages and how to communicate them effectively through appropriate signs and posters.

Employ these fundamental principles to reach the intended audience:

- Provoke the attention or curiosity of the visitor/audience.
- Relate the message to the everyday life of the visitor/audiences.
- Present information and interpretation thematically, as defined professionally.
- Show the connection between the site's tangible resources and the intangible concepts these resources illustrate and embody.
- Encourage resource understanding, respect, awareness, and ethical behavior.
- Define what you want the visitor to know, understand, think about, and remember after leaving the area.
- Answer questions visitors may have about the site, area, or management practice.
- Aid in defining the site as primitive, rustic, or urban.

Chapter 10A provides information on interpretative signs. Chapter 10B addresses topics such as using posters, information boards, and fee registration. Chapter 10C contains information on specific signs for notifying the public about general wildfire danger.