Built Environment Image Guide Receives Award From Landscape Architects

—Ramiro Villalvazo, chief landscape architect, Recreation, Heritage, and Wilderness Resources, Washington Office

The American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) will present a Communications Award of Merit to the USDA Forest Service for developing the Built Environment Image Guide for the National Forests and Grasslands (BEIG) at the society's annual meeting in Salt Lake City. The award is a tribute to the USDA Forest Service's successful collaboration among landscape architects, engineers, architects, and others that led to developing the BEIG, and to the content and scope of the document (figure 1).

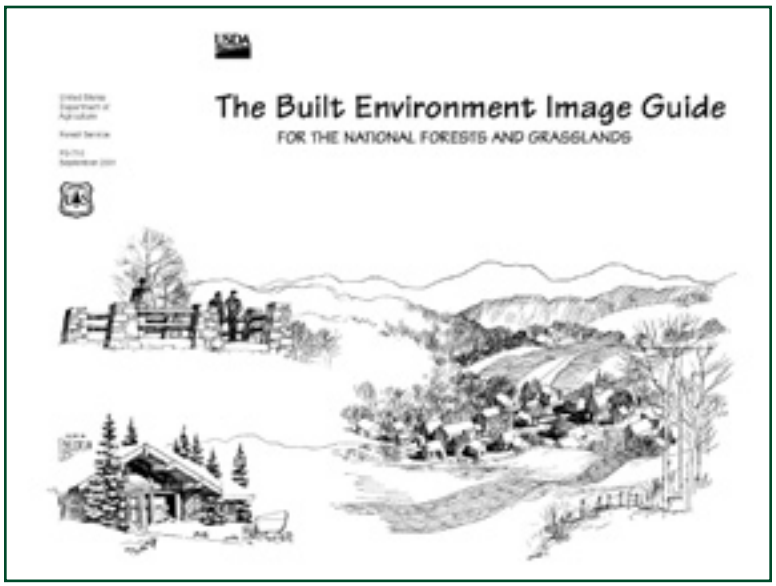

Figure 1—BEIG front cover.

The BEIG also is being recognized because the USDA Forest Service is the only Federal agency to provide facility design guidance for its entire network of public lands. Jurors called the BEIG, "a comprehensive, well-organized, beautifully illustrated guide covering a broad range of environments across the continent" and "a very valuable guide for the seasoned practitioner as well as the layperson." For more specific information about the award, see the Web site at: *http://www.asla.org/awards/2004/04winners/entry556.html*.

The well-recognized need for national facility design guidance spurred the Recreation, Heritage, and Wilderness Resources (RHWR) and the Engineering staffs from the Washington Office to begin collaborating in 1997. The partners defined clear overall objectives for ecological, cultural, and economic sustainability, embodying the rich tradition of planning and designing high-quality

USDA Forest Service facilities that are esthetically pleasing and appropriate for the agency (figures 2 and 3).

Figure 2—Round log pavillion.

Figure 3—Boardwalk in natural setting.

Another fundamental message of the BEIG is that an integrated effort is required to create and maintain quality facilities. Project proponents, decisionmakers, designers, engineers, field staff, and technicians all have an important role.

The BEIG was patiently developed over the course of several years. A Built Environment Image Team (BEIT), led by Jim Bedwell, then Chief Landscape Architect for the USDA Forest Service, directed and oversaw the guide's development. The team also included an architect, three facility engineers, a line officer, and two landscape architects. Private consultants from architecture and landscape architecture firms, an illustrator, a historian, and a writer helped design and refine the final content.

The BEIT and consultants orchestrated five design charettes (intensely focused problem-solving sessions) across the country to collect regional design and architectural character information. They sought to understand how natural landscape settings, culture, history, and climatic conditions influenced the first 100 years of USDA Forest Service design tradition and construction styles. USDA Forest Service professionals from all the design disciplines, line officers, and maintenance and operation technicians participated.

The BEIT team and consultants synthesized the data collected to develop and designate eight distinct geographic provinces, each with its own architectural vocabulary and guidelines. The extensive use of images and sketches does an exceptional job of communicating the details and nuances that distinguish each design element within its own regional application (figures 4 and 5).

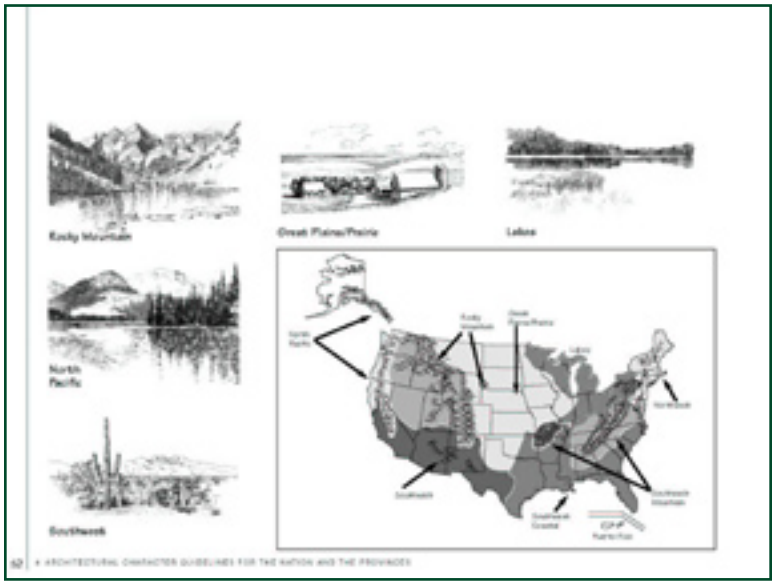

Figure 4—Province map.

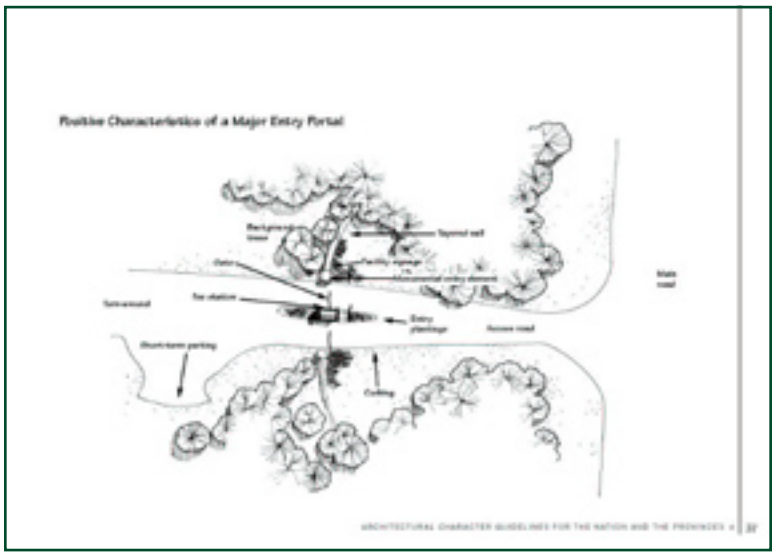

Figure 5—Plan view sketch.

The province concept classifies where each national forest and grassland is located within an architectural character as defined by climate, culture, and landscape setting. The team identified eight ecological and cultural provinces in the continental United States and Alaska. However, the team recognized that province lines are "fuzzy" and anomalies do exist within each province. Because of changes in topography, climate, and landscape across boundaries, design for even a single forest may need to consider guidelines for multiple provinces.

To encompass the many factors that influence facility planning and design on and close to national forests and grasslands, the BEIG was developed as a tool, not a design catalog or "cookbook." It encompasses more than the internal USDA Forest Service requirements. The agency routinely works with partners, collaborators, special-use permitees, adjacent landowners, and others who construct facilities on or near lands managed by the USDA Forest Service. The BEIG is a planning and design tool that provides guidelines and suggests the steps and processes necessary to ensure that each facility is constructed according to the appropriate overall USDA Forest Service image or the message that the facility will deliver.

The BEIG was produced as a three-ring binder to encourage USDA Forest Service regions and field unit personnel to add design ideas, images, and sketches to reflect local requirements or needs. The BEIG has been widely distributed across the USDA Forest Service and shared with sister Federal agencies, universities, private design firms, and international organizations.

The San Dimas Technology and Development Center (SDTDC) has developed comprehensive, high-quality BEIG training packages and programs. They have been delivered at regional training academies and at "Train-the-Trainer" sessions. The training packages are posted on the SDTDC Web site at: *http://fsweb.sdtdc.wo.fs.fed.us/beig/BEIG_Training/default.htm*

The entire BEIG can be viewed on the Internet at: *http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/beig* or downloaded from *ftp://ftp2.fs.fed.us/incoming/beig*.

To achieve the goals that inspired the development of the BEIG, the USDA Forest Service must embrace and implement the guide's messages. The agency must "walk the talk," leading the way in natural resources conservation and public land stewardship (figures 6 and 7).

The USDA Forest Service is making good progress in incorporating the BEIG into day-to-day operations. Forest and grassland units produce design standards and guidelines complementary to the BEIG that tier down (provide more specific guidance based on local conditions). Other units use design charettes to initiate projects, employing interdisciplinary approaches, establishing clear project objectives, and incorporating sustainable practices.

Figure 6—
Mendenhall Glacier.

Figure 7—
Seneca Rocks
Discovery Center,
Monongahela
National Forest,
Elkins, WV.

A letter from Chief Dale Bosworth that prefaces the BEIG encourages the agency to embrace the value and importance of providing facilities that are sustainable, fit the landscape, and provide an excellent image and national consistency. He urges the professionals who plan and design facilities for the USDA Forest Service to "do it right," and to "Take pride in providing facilities of character, efficiency, and enduring tradition, much as you value those qualities in our agency as a whole."

Questions about the BEIG and its application can be sent by e-mail to Bill Hamele, assistant manager, facilities program, at: *whamele@fs.fed.us*, or to Ramiro Villalvazo, chief landscape architect, at: *rvillalvazo@fs.fed.us*.