REGION 4

INFORMATION BOARD GUIDELINES

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INTRODUCTION

Visitor information boards, signs and posters are often underestimated as to their influence on forest visitors. Each component contributes to the lasting impression, whether positive or negative, of each and every National Forest visitor. Over time, the design of National Forest information boards has evolved to fit the changing capabilities of each Forest, District, and manager.

To improve the appearance and consistency of National Forest information in Region 4, the Regional Office has assembled an Information Board online program modeled after a similar product in Region 8. We strove to create a package of layout and design modules that are mutually flexible, artistic, consistent, and simple to use. As you can imagine, because of the diversity of our large region, a large number of pieces are required to meet everyone's needs, so we have brought everything together on one website for ease of use and access realizing the need to be flexible to future needs.

This program was developed following the guidance provided in the Forest Service Sign Manual (EM 1700-15) Chapter 10B, the Region 4 Recreation Design Guidelines (Feb 2009), and the National Fee Sign Guidelines (Jan 2007).

Are one of these pictures from your forest?

These are pretty common occurrences in our recreation areas. We either try to put as much on a board as possible or, have next to nothing on them.

The Solution

Using this program helps you to create information boards that are professional looking and provide for consistency across a unit.

No special computer software is needed for this program. You can create them at your desk using the Microsoft Publisher program already loaded on your computer. You can print them on your local plotter or send the designs out for fabrication at local sign companies.

We hope you will find this useful, but please keep in mind that this is a work in progress. This program will be refined and fine-tuned as we use it, so please let us know how it could be made better.

For help, suggestions or input, please contact:

- **Carol Ryan** – Regional Interpretive Specialist and Fee Coordinator
  carolryan@fs.fed.us • 801.625.5171

- **Greg McNamee** – Regional Graphic Designer
 gmcnamee@fs.fed.us • 801.625.5580

GETTING ORGANIZED

Before you get started, you may be thinking that building your info board is going to be a painful, tedious task. But, nothing could be farther from the truth. Building your info board can be pain free if you take the time to get yourself organized up front.

Getting organized is simple. The first step is to look at your kiosks and decide how many panels you will need and the size for each. After you have this, make a list of the type of information your visitors need to know. Then go to our Information Board website, and following the information in this handout, find the pre-designed modules that contain the information you need. You will gather these pieces and start building your panels using the background templates provided. For the time being, the backgrounds only come in one size. If you need a different size, contact us and we can build one for you.

The modules (the individual information pieces) come in three sizes: 11x17.5, 8.5x11, and 8.5x6. These sizes were chosen because they are standard sizes and fit a variety of information. It is important to be aware of the size of the modules you download, as they will have to correspond to the blank spaces on the background template.

Once you begin working with the website, you should create a folder on your computer for all of your downloads. This folder can be on your desktop or anywhere that is easy for you to access. Having all of your downloads in one folder will make it easy to bring your files into Publisher.
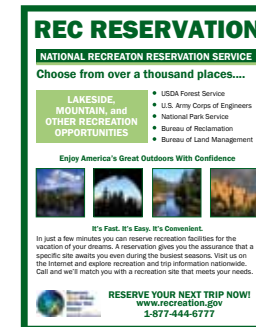
Background Templates
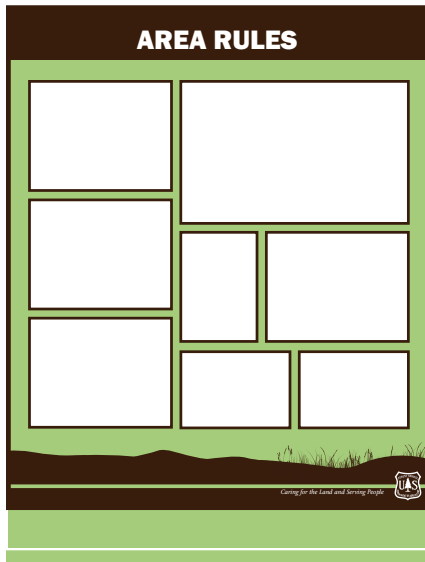
Modules

11x17.5

8.5x11

8.5x6

Another important part of staying organized during this project is knowing what programs the files are made in and how they are named. This is explained below.

File Types

This is the last two or three letters after the period on every file name.

.pub – **Editable** – Microsoft Publisher File– These files will allow you to edit information. This is the program where you will assemble your info board.

.eps – **Un-editable** – Adobe Illustrator File – This is the format for most of the modules because they do not need to be edited and can easily be put into Microsoft Publisher. They are high quality images, but you will not be able to view them using any sort of picture preview software. To view or edit them, you will need to have Adobe Illustrator.

.pdf – Adobe Acrobat/Reader File– These files are included for printing individual signs and for viewing signs you might like to use.

.zip – Compressed File – These files are grouped and com-pressed, which allows them to be smaller. The .zip extension insures that Internet Explorer will download your files correctly.

File Naming Structure

File names for the modules are something like this:

welcome8.5x11v watercolor

- The first part of the file name will tell you the module subject, whether it is welcome information, camping rules, fees, etc.

- The second part of the file name is the size and orientation of the module.

- The last part of the file name is the design element/picture used. If there is no indication of the image type used after the size information, then it means that module is not associated with any particular type.

http://fsweb.r4.fs.fed.us/unit/rhwr/interp_ed/visual_info_boards/index.shtml

The goal of this project is to create a uniform look for our forests while simultaneously making the project easy to use and assemble. The objective of the website was to make things easy to find and download. On the site, you will have the ability to look at example boards that will give you a feel for the general placement for your modules. The main content of the site however, is devoted to the various files you can download and use to assemble your own boards. The background templates are all grouped together and the modules are divided into categories based upon their message type. This will allow you to navigate quickly through the links to find and download the things you need.

Website Homepage

Instructions- Navigation to topics relating to assembling the information boards

RHWR- Navigation to other recreation related information.

Main Navigation- Links to modules and templates for constructing the information boards.

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How to deal with and download .eps files

While the .eps file is the best way for keeping files high quality for printing, Internet Explorer (IE) does not know how to handle the file extension (.eps) when it is downloaded. Because of the way IE's registry is set up, any .eps files will be changed to .ps. This is a problem we have not been able to get around.

These are the solutions we have come up with to this problem.

Solution 1 - Download the .zip file version of the module. This file type will insure that your files will be downloaded the way they were created without having to worry about IE changing the extension. The only downside to this method is that you have to extract all of the files that you want to use from the zipped folder, creating an extra step in the process.

Solution 2 - Manually change the file extension name. When you choose to download a file, IE will open a dialog box that will ask you what you would like to save the file as. You will notice that on all of the .eps files, the extension will appear as .ps. If you simply type the "e" back into the extension, then IE will download the file correctly. The downside to this method is that you have to remember to manually change every extension. If this is not done, and a .ps file is downloaded, Microsoft Publisher will not be able to find your file.

Solution 3 - If you have Firefox as a web browser, use that instead. Firefox does not have any issues handling .eps files, so all of the files on the website will download correctly. Some Forest Service computers have Firefox installed on them, but most do not. If you would like to download this browser, you will need to get technical approval.
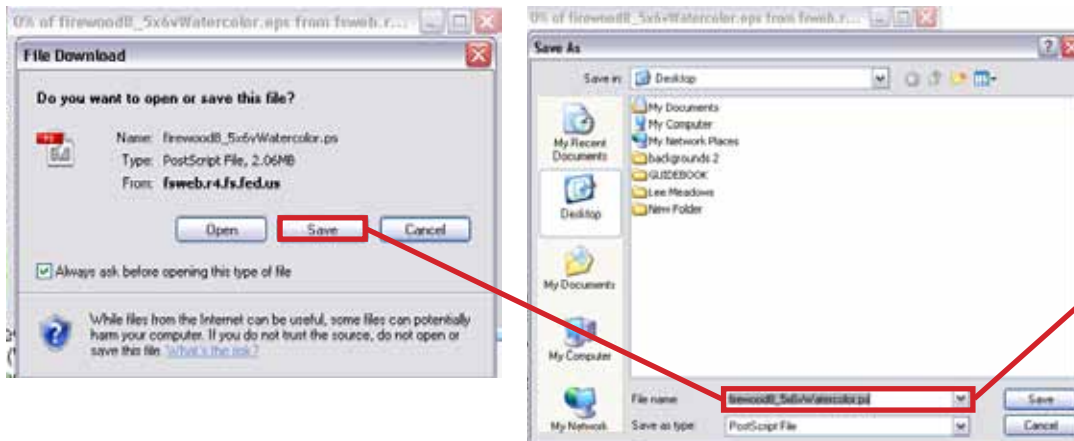
Manually change the .ps file extension to .eps and the file will download correctly so it can be used in Microsoft Publisher.

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Working in Publisher

This project is designed to be assembled in **Microsoft Publisher 2007** using pre-designed files found on our regional info board website. This program was chosen because it comes standard on every Forest Service computer allowing us to accommodate the most users possible. Although most people are more familiar with Microsoft Word, it is not conducive to creating and printing large file sizes needed for this project as it was designed for text editing. To help with the learning curve that Publisher creates, the next few pages will be devoted to a Publisher tutorial on how to assemble your information boards.

Opening Files and Publisher Workspaces

This is the view you will see when you open Publisher. The menu prompts you to open recent projects or to create a new one. You can choose to open a background template by going to **File—Open** and then finding the file you saved from the website.
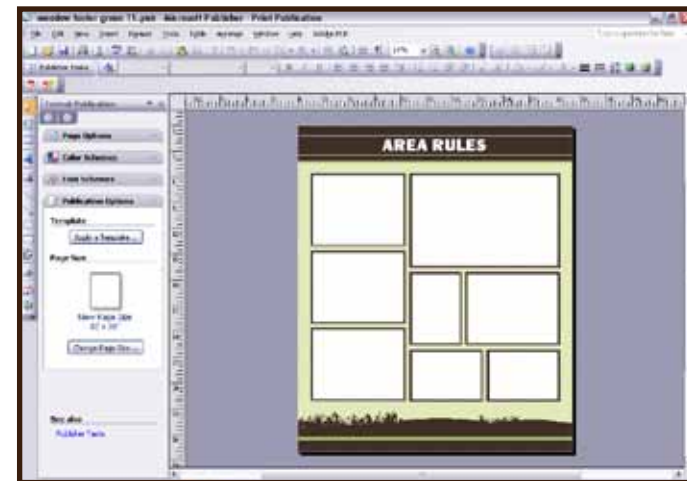
If you choose to open a file from your desktop, which in turn opens Publisher, your workspace will be similar to this. Going this route allows you to get straight to work on your info board.

To help you along, here is a brief explanation of some of Publisher's features.

This entire menu bar works very similar to Microsoft Word.
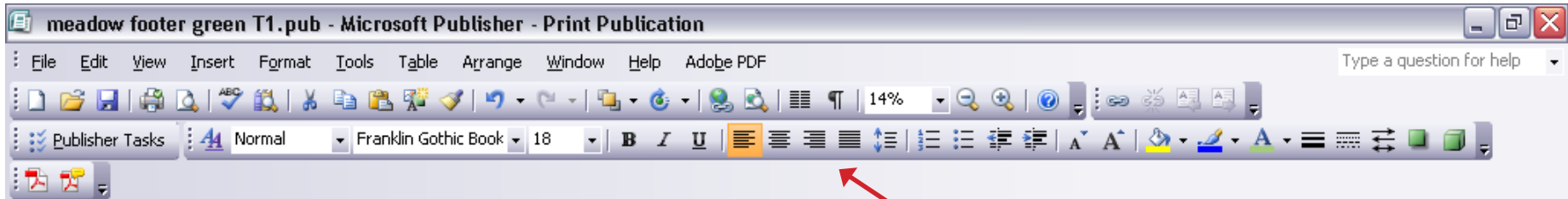
— Select Objects
— Text Box
— Insert Table
— Insert Word Art
— Picture Frame
— Line
— Arrow
— Oval
— Rectangle
— Auto Shapes
— Bookmark
— Design Gallery
— Content Library

Note: If you don't know what a tool is, simply hover over it with your mouse and a description will pop up.

You don't have much need for this menu for the info board project, so you can close it to give yourself more workspace.

These page symbols allow you to switch back and forth between the panels of your board. If you can't figure out where the rest of the document is, simply flip back and forth between these and you will be able to see the rest of it.

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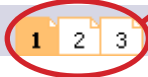
How Background Template Files are Set Up

Each file is set up is set up in Publisher with a blank template as a background. Because of this, you have the freedom to mix and match templates of the same design depending on the type of information you would like on that panel. On top of each blank square in the template are picture boxes and/or text fields. Each panel has its own title that can be edited and the farthest right panel has a space for the forest name near the Forest Service shield.

There are many styles of background templates to accommodate the needs of every forest. You can use only one, two, or all three panels as needed.

Background Style Versions
• Mountains with Elk
• Meadow with either Horses or Coyote
• Straight

Background Color Variations
• Yellow
•Green

3 Panel Background Information Types
• Fee - Left Panel Only
• Welcome and Map - Center Panel
• Area Information - Right Panel (and Left Panel if no fee)

Background Template Examples

Module Type – .pub (Editable)

Several modules are available that allow some or all of the information to be changed (edited). After you have made all of the desired changes, select the entire document and right click. Once the menu appears, select group. (You can also find the grouping function by going to Arrange—Group.) This will lock the entire module so everything will move together the way you created it. After you have grouped your module, copy and paste it onto your background template. Once it is placed, make sure it is aligned with the corresponding blank box on the template. This will insure that your modules are straight and your information board will be professional looking.
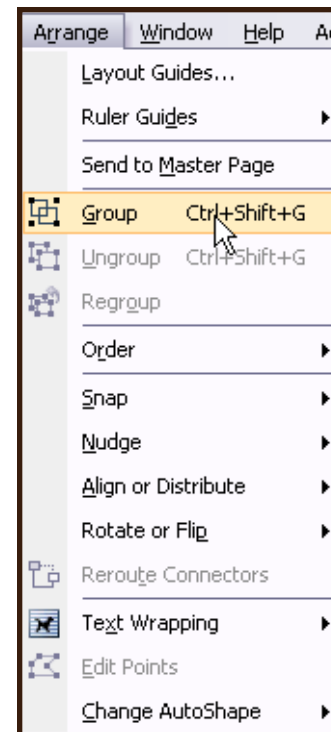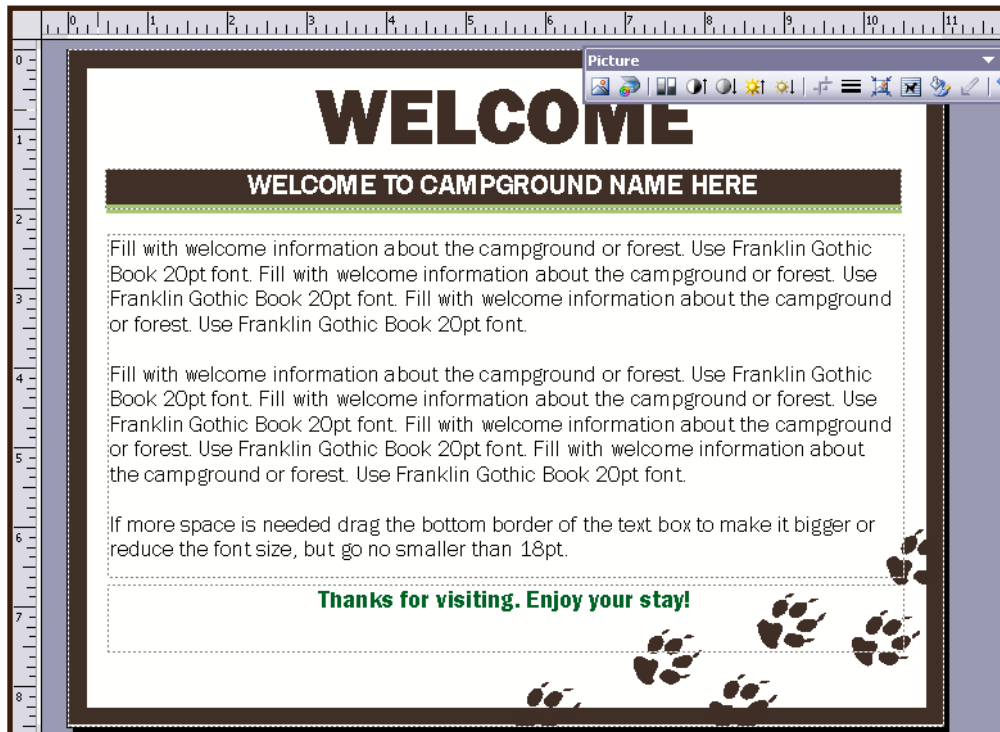
Module Type – .eps (Un-editable)

The .eps file was chosen as the file format for the majority of the modules because they are high quality printing files. The only downside of this is that you will not be able to see previews of these modules outside of Publisher unless you have Adobe Illustrator. You don't need to worry about this, as Publisher 2007 will display the modules just fine once they are inserted into the template. If you would like to preview your modules before putting them into Publisher, the .pdf files on the website are available for that purpose. The .pdf files should not be used in Publisher as the colors do not display correctly and it is very difficult to insert them onto the background template.

How to Insert .eps Files into the Template

Once you have your background open in Publisher, you will see blank boxes on the template for the modules. Once you have decided what modules you want to use, click on one of the blank boxes and a formatting menu will appear. On the menu, click the first icon (the mountain) and navigate to the module you want in that space. Once you have your module, click insert and the module will be placed on the template. After you have all of your modules inserted into your template, zoom in and make sure they are all aligned correctly before you print.

Note: Recreation posters from Unicor are also be available in .eps format so they can be added to the information board with ease. Although they are available, they should be used sparingly as they do not match the style of the information boards.
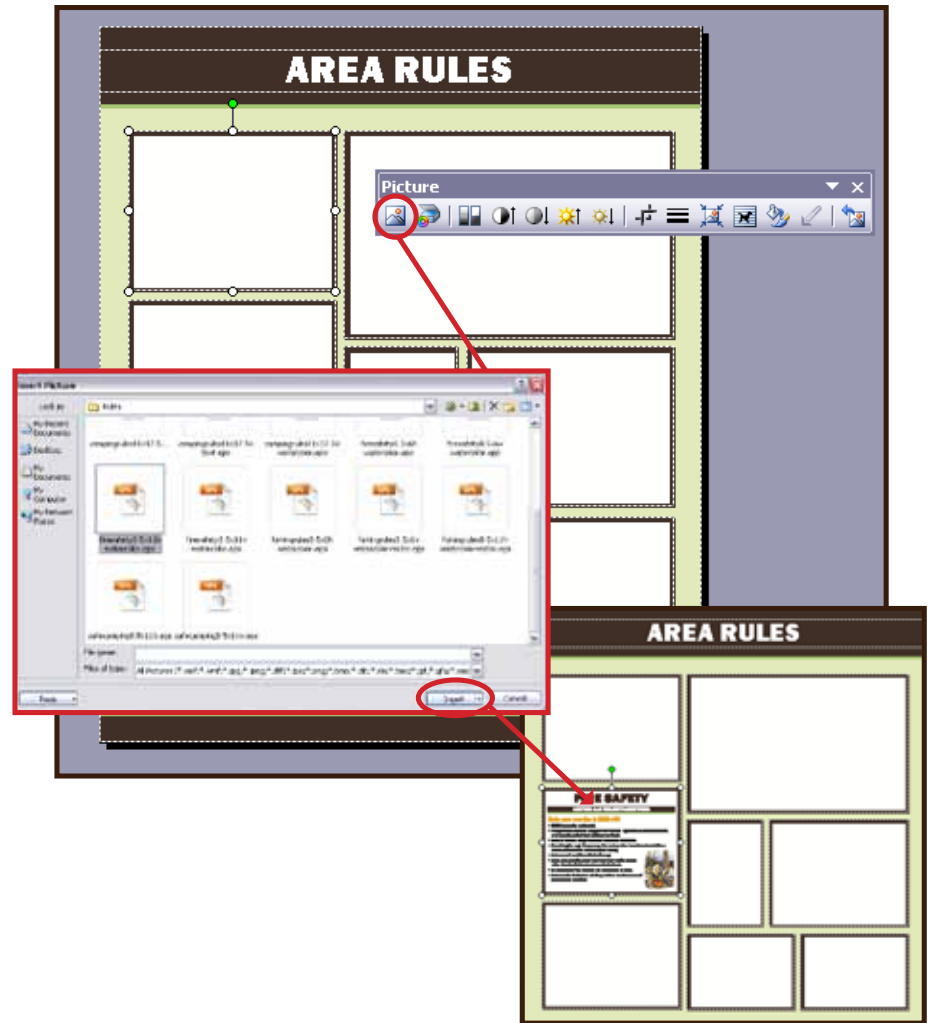
MORE TIPS FOR WORKING WITH PUBLISHER

Here are a few more tips to aid you in assembling your info boards. The information that is covered in this guide book is very basic. If you need more help figuring out the software, ask someone, or check online for tutorials or help topics. There are many sites devoted to this type of information so finding the help you need is very easy.

Adding extra text/picture boxes

Both the text and picture box tools are on the far left tool bar. Once you select the tool, you can draw your box on your document. After you have it made, you can resize it and rotate it to get it to do what you need.

Preparing your files to print

It is not recommended to print directly from Publisher because the default print tiling option (printing portions of a large document on several smaller pages or tiles) makes getting an accurate print difficult. Once you have finished designing your boards, proof them one last time to look for any mistakes that may need correcting. Once this is done, go to **File—Publish as PDF or XPS**. The dialogue box that appears will guide you through creating a high quality pdf file for printing. This pdf can be printed on your plotter or sent to a contractor worry free.

> **Publisher Word of Warning:** If you view the entire page, the elements on the page may look misaligned. To align ANYTHING, zoom in to a level of 200% or higher to make sure they are truly correct. NEVER align anything when viewing the whole page. To check to make sure things are the way they should be, do a print preview. This allows you to see how the document will look once you print it.

Make sure this says High Quality Printing so you can get a good quality print of your info board, if not it may be blurry and pixelated at its full size.

General Information Boards

Single Panel Boards, Day Use Area Boards, Welcome Section of Multiple Panel Boards, Etc.
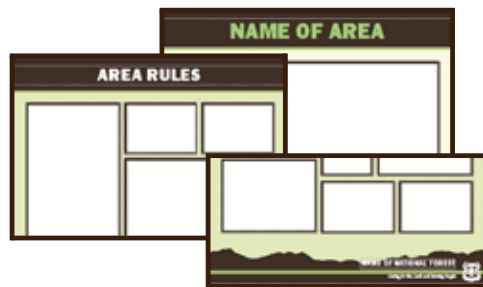
Headers/Titles and Forest or Rec Area Name

All of these items are included on the Publisher templates and can be edited.
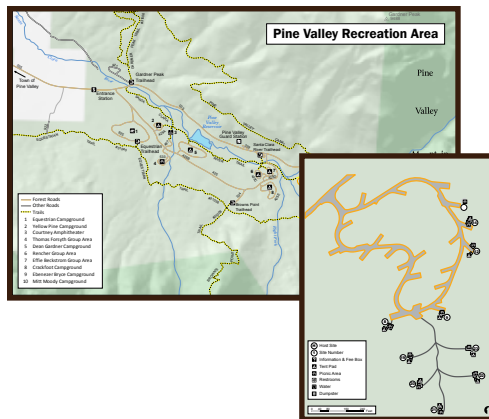
Trail or Recreation Map

Map sizes are 20x17.5 vertical or horizontal. You can have your GIS person create a map and save/export as a .jpg file, or call and we will create one for you. This will allow you to easily insert the file into Publisher. Topographical maps will also work.

Welcome

All welcome modules are editable Publisher (.pub) files. This allows you to easily enter your history, description of the area, amenities, attractions, unique features, or anything else you can think of.

Contact/Emergency Information

All contact information modules are editable Publisher (.pub) files. Each file has a suggestion for the types of phone numbers to include. You may remove or expand on the suggestions depending on your needs. The signs should be fluid enough to accommodate you either way, but you may have to adjust some of the other elements on the page.

Safety, Rules, and Regulations

We've already developed a variety of these modules as they are one of the most important signs on your panel. Most modules are general information that can be used region wide. If you need a module with specific information, you can contact us and we can design it or you can create one yourself using any of the available illustrations.

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Resource Protection

We've developed a variety of these modules and, as with the safety information, most modules are general information that can be used region wide. If you need a sign with specific information you can contact us and we can design it or you can create one yourself.

Mission and EEO Statements

The mission statement is already included on the background template near the Forest Service shield. The EEO statement on the other hand, is a module that MUST be included somewhere on the info board. This module replaces the "Statue of Liberty" placard currently in use.

Site Specific Notes/Create Your Own

These include trail closures, supervisor's orders, safety issues, etc. that are not covered under the regular national forest rules and regulations. Since this information can change constantly, you can leave a blank module to accommodate it. This allows you to print the information separately and post it over the top of that blank space. You can also purchase a clear plastic sleeve of some sort and post it over a picture, such that a closure order can be slipped in and out of the sleeve as necessary.

Fee Information Boards

Single Fee Panels, Day Use Fees, Fee Section of a Multiple Panel Board
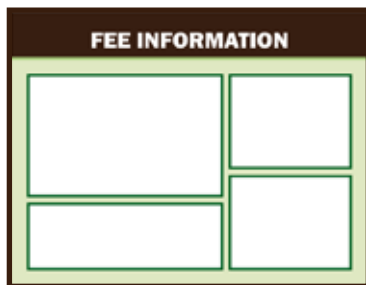
Headers/Titles and Forest or Rec Area Name

All of these items are included on the Publisher templates.

Fee and Payment Instructions

Pick the fee poster that best describes the fee payment system at your area. We've included many different configurations. If you can't find one that works, you may need to adapt an existing one. Please remember that the prices are only placeholders. You need to type in your own price. If nothing here fits your needs, let one of the contact people know and we can create one for you. Please be aware that these fee modules meet the National Guidelines for Recreation Fee Signs found on the Recreation Fee Toolbox at *http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/rhwr/recfee/index.shtml*.

Passport Program

These signs are general information only. If you need something site specific, please let us know and we can help you create whatever it is that you need.

How Fees are Used

This is a very important part of the info board project; it reassures our visitors that their fees are going to projects that improve their experience. Include a picture of the project and a short description, as sometimes it is hard to tell from a photo alone.
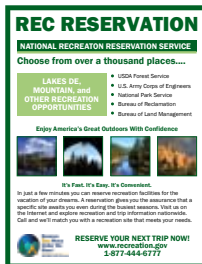
Recreation Reservation

This sign is new to our region's info board project. It lets people know that they can save themselves time and trouble by booking future trips online.

SIGN PLACEMENT

This project is set up to allow a lot of flexibility when you are designing your information boards. These examples will give you an idea of where certain elements should be placed on your boards and what they will look like when they are completed.
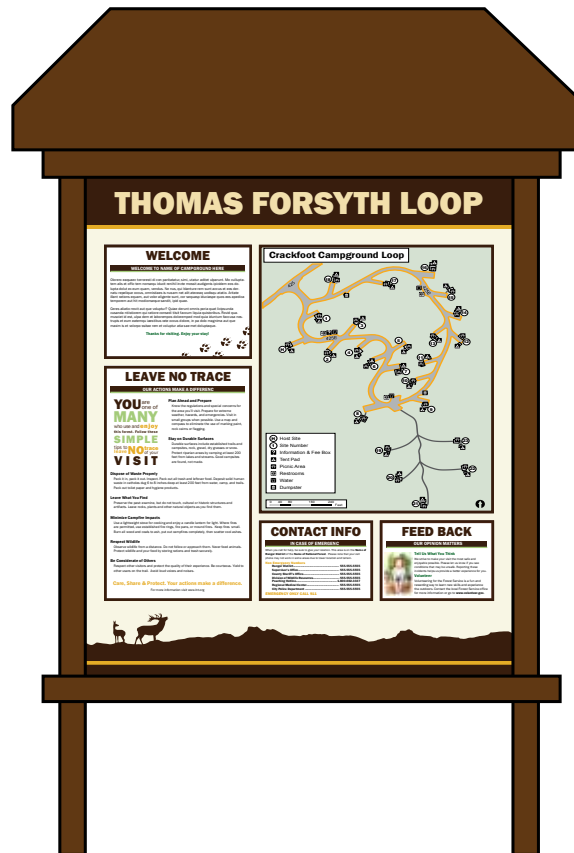
Multi-Panel Sign with Fee Information or Fee Only Sign

- If possible, keep fee information on a panel by itself. This will allow your viewers to easily distinguish this information from the rest of your signs. This is important if you want them to pay the required fees.

  If you are going to put fee information on a multi-panel sign, keep the fee information on the far left panel. Since we read from left to right, this will make sure your visitors see this information first.

- If you do not want fee information to take up an entire panel, you can choose a template that accommodates this. These templates will give you extra posting room for site specific notes or supervisors orders.

Single Panel Sign or Welcome Section of a Multi-Panel Sign

- On Welcome Panels or Single Sign Panels, make sure you have a Welcome message that is near your header. This will give your visitors a little background information about the area they are in before they begin to digest the rest of the info on the other signs.

  Another important element to have near your header is a map. Having a map in this location quickly gives your visitors a reference of where they are and where they need to go without having to search your boards to find it.

  On this panel, you should also try to include any important safety messages or rules and contact information. Basically if it is important for your visitors to know, it should go here.

Other Non-Fee Areas of a Multi-Panel Sign

- These areas are basically free areas. You can put whatever information here that you would like to tell your forest visitors, whether it is rules, resource protection, or site specific notes.

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HELPFUL DESIGN GUIDELINES

Rules to Follow

In order to achieve uniformity in our information and fee boards, it is imperative that forest staff adhere to these general rules. Conforming to these simple, yet significant, design guidelines is important to achieve a Regional identity.

1. Modify only what is allowable to make it site specific

A concerted effort has been made to design these modules so that they are simple and attractive, yet can be site specific. Much of the information and all of the graphics are intended to remain unchanged. We recognize, however, that modifications will need to be made based on differing management needs, contact information, pertinent regulations, and current events by site and location. In these instances, modules will contain editable text boxes so that upon opening the file, implementers can insert site specific information before printing. Please note that font and type size has been pre-designed and should not be changed, unless by no other choice.

2. Pay attention to text

As mentioned above, many of the modules will require that site specific information be inserted. Please pay attention to the contents of each sign. Insert information as needed. Text style should remain as pre-selected. Use black ink color only, as it will last the longest when exposed to the sun. Keep the type BIG. Keep fonts simple and easily readable (do not replace with "Word Art").

3. Don't redesign

The suite of modules was created to portray a common look and feel. By adding or substituting graphics, it will disrupt the "family" appearance. Therefore, please do not change the artwork. Please be aware that additional artwork will be available upon request. We hope to cover as many aspects of recreation as possible for future use.

4. Keep it clean and current

Keep your board neat and aligned. Be professional in appearance. Hand written signs and messages should not be used. A blank template is available for unique situations that do not fit any other sign or poster. Review all information frequently to make sure that the information is accurate and appropriate for the season.

Design Style Elements

Fonts

- Franklin Gothic Book – Body copy/text fields
- **Franklin Gothic Demi** – Subtitles
- **Franklin Gothic Heavy** – Main Title
- *Byington Italic* – Emphasis Areas (i.e. Mission Statement and Thank You)

Colors

When you create your own sign, you may need to type the RGB values of the colors in manually in Publisher to be able to follow the same color scheme.

R: 56 **G:** 29 **B:** 13
For use on sign borders, titles, and subtitles

R: 229 **G:** 172 **B:** 38
For use on background rules and subtitles

R: 0 **G:** 99 **B:** 37
For use on fee sign borders and titles and general subtitles

R: 243 **G:** 222 **B:** 169
For use on yellow background main title

R: 165 **G:** 204 **B:** 122
For use on rules, emphasis areas, and subtitles
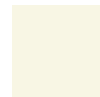
R: 248 **G:** 246 **B:** 228
For use on background

Who do I contact with questions?

Carol Ryan, Regional Interpretive Specialist and Fee Coordinator — carolryan@fs.fed.us
Greg McNamee, Regional GIS Specialist and Graphic Designer — gmcnamee@fs.fed.us

How do I get started?

The best thing to do is to make a list of the type of information you need your forest's visitors to know. This will give you a good starting place when you begin to look through the on-line files. After you have established this, read the Information Board Guide. This will help you understand how the files are organized and how to use the software to create your signs.

The advantage of using this system is it cuts out the cost of hiring a contractor. The modules you can edit fit into the template just as well as the ones you can't. If you find that you need changes made to anything, we are more than willing to help you create what you need.

I don't know how to use the software, and don't have time to learn. Is there someone that can put our info boards together for us?

You have two options when it comes to this. You could hire a contractor or a skilled volunteer and meet with them to discuss the information you want on your board, or you could have us create it for you. We are more than happy to work with you to create specialized signs that will cover everything you need.

Why doesn't that sign come in a bigger or smaller size?

In some cases, it can't be in a smaller size due to the amount of information or accessibility standards relating to type size. In other cases, we have created signs in specific sizes due to the importance of the information.

I don't see what I need in the files you've made.

If we were not aware of it, it wasn't made. Some forests have different needs relating to how passes are used, filled out, displayed, etc. Others have safety messages particular to their forest. We created the messages most LIKELY to be used, then as time permits we will make the others depending on your needs.

FAQ

Why don't all of the files come in all of the different combinations?

The length of the message determines the size of the module and the number of combinations that can be made. Some files may only have one image variation as there was were not multiple images that would correspond to the message.

Why didn't you create files in Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, Adobe InDesign, Corel Draw, or QuarkXpress?

We decided not to go with programs such as Word and PowerPoint because they were not designed for printing large publications. But in an attempt to use software that everyone would have, we used Publisher instead of programs like Corel Draw and QuarkXpress. If you would like Adobe InDesign or Illustrator files let us know and they can be emailed to you.

I can't download the file.

If the file doesn't download, it may be because the link is broken, so wait a bit and try again. Much of the time the problem is the server. If it still doesn't work, let us know so we can look into it.

Working from the website is very slow – how can I speed it up?

The files on the website range from small to large. This will alter your download times considerably. If we concentrated solely on download time, all of the files would be super small. As a trade off to this route, all the files would be low quality and pixilated once you printed them. To make your files as professional-looking as possible, we kept them large. To save time, make sure you look at the previews so you download only the files you need.

If you are still having trouble, your computer may not be up to the task and you may need to have someone look at it for you.

The .pdf format is difficult to work with since our corporate software is Microsoft, not Adobe.

The .pdf files were not intended to be incorporated into the background templates for this reason. They were included for printing individual signs or viewing the information before you download the .eps file. Publisher has no problem importing the .eps files, so download these files if you are having difficulty with the .pdf's.

I can't open the file.

Unless you have Adobe Illustrator, you will not be able to open the .eps files directly. Don't panic, Publisher handles them just fine. To see a preview of the sign you need to download, look at the .pdf file.

I don't know how to change the text.

Changing the text should be a simple matter of highlighting the current text and typing in your new text. If you keep having problems, see if someone in your office can help you. You may run into a situation where you type more than the text box can hold. In that case, enlarge your text box to fit the information or reduce the point size of the font.

Why can't I use my own fonts?

We picked these fonts for readability and consistency and to keep with the Regional Design Guidelines. It is important to keep the same fonts and their sizes to make your board look its best. If you must resize your fonts by dragging the corner of a text box, be sure to hold shift while you do to keep the proportions correct.

The fonts we chose are:

Franklin Gothic Book

Franklin Gothic Demi

Franklin Gothic Heavy

Byington Italic

If you choose to take your sign to a contractor, you have to provide them with a copy of the fonts. You can do this by going into your computer's system folder and locating the font file. We chose fonts that a contractor "should" have in case you can't locate the font file.

The file is missing the last word or two of text. It just ends mid-sentence.

This is called text reflow and often happens when files move from computer to computer. Some computers might have older versions of the font with different kerning and tracking values. To fix it, increase the width and/or depth of the text box by clicking and dragging on the corners until the rest of the text appears.

How do I get more flexibility in editing text? We need to be able to modify templates more: text, font size, text blocks, etc.

You'll need additional software to do this. To edit the individual .eps or .pdf signs you will need Adobe Illustrator. This program will allow you to change the entire module if you wish, just remember to not go below 18 point on the text and not use weird, illegible fonts.

I don't see an illustration that I need for a board. How do I find one?

Region 8 has started compiling a list of the watercolors they need the most. As new watercolor illustrations become available, we will post them to the site. If you have any suggestions please feel free to email them to us and we can add them to their list. Instead of using a watercolor illustration, you could try using photographs from your area.

I can't print the file.

Contact someone familiar with the printers/plotters in your office. You may need to be set up to use the printer/plotter.

Some districts don't have color printers to accommodate larger posters. How can I get them printed?

You can make a trip to another forest service office with a color plotter or we can print it for you here in the regional office. We have many options for paper type and size depending on your needs.

We need a quicker, better, more consistent method of reproducing panels on the forest.

With this system, you can develop and print signs as fast and as often as you need them. You can also create custom signs that can get your information out quicker than waiting for us to produce them.

FAQ

How do I post supervisor's orders?

Leave a blank space on your board for supervisor's orders, special events, temporary safety orders, and closure orders when initially creating a panel. This will give you the space to post the orders on the top of the board so you do not have to keep reprinting the entire thing. Once you have the space set aside, you can create your own signs using the blank "create your own" template.

How does interpretation fit onto our info boards?

It's very hard to design a template based on every possible situation, so the flexibility is built in so that you can create what you need. For instance, on an OHV trailhead board, the forest might use up much of their space for required rules, safety information, and a map. Interpretive information might have to be limited to what you write in the "Welcome Section."

In other areas, like a picnic area or a no-fee site, there may be very little need for rules, regulations, or safety notices, so you'd be able to devote more space to an interpretive message.

If you have an information-intensive site with lots of safety info, trail and vicinity maps, rules and regulations, plus interpretive information, you might need to consider building a separate interpretive panel.

You might have gotten the feeling that interpretive information was nudged off the boards in favor of required rules and regulations that we post to protect and inform our visitors. To include important interpretive information will required that you design your layout to include it as a priority. It may mean that the map is made a bit smaller, or two safety messages are combined into one. For instance, if you have a three-panel board at a fee site, one board could have fee information, the second one could have the standard board messages, and the third board could be the interpretive message. This would be the best alternative if your interpretive signing has its own distinct look and feel.

Putting interpretive information on this info board system should also be kept to a minimum. Interpretive signs are a completely different type of sign that should be specifically designed and placed near the resource being interpreted.

Good Luck and Have Fun!