

Introduction Letter from the Chief

The USDA Forest Service is an agency with a long history of proud traditions and values. At the root of all of our traditions are an ethic of conservation and stewardship, a close tie to the land, and an orientation of service to current and future generations. While the title of this publication, “The Built Environment Image Guide (BEIG),” may contain some terms we have not commonly used in the agency, it is firmly grounded in those traditions. Furthermore, its use in recreation and administrative sites will help carry those traditions forward and reinforce our image as an international conservation leader. Let me touch on a few key reasons why this is true:

Sustainability. We manage our natural resources for the “greatest good for the greatest number.” Yet our facilities (the built environment) consume a large amount of resources not just in construction, but also in continuing operations. When we build our facilities to respect the natural systems in which they reside, be durable, and emphasize efficiency in energy and materials consumption, we not only use less ourselves, but send a message to all about what we value and what everyone can do to conserve resources.

Fitting the Landscape. Our country is one of great diversity, both in ecosystems and cultural influences. Our decentralized organization is founded on that fact. In much the same way, our facilities should respond to and be aesthetically integrated into their natural, cultural, and experiential settings. The BEIG defines architectural character types that respond to ecological and cultural variations in eight “provinces” across the country. Utilizing these character types will help fit our facilities to the landscape and thereby reflect our desire to respond to local influences.

National Consistency. While variation in architectural character to respond to regional differences is important for sustainability and landscape fit, there are several aspects of design defined in the BEIG that reinforce our national image and identity. These are rustic character, signing, and use of the Forest Service shield. Rustic architecture has been a tradition in outdoor recreation settings for over a century. Across the eight provinces, note the use of natural (or natural appearing) materials, the touches of craftsmanship, and the reflection of the scale of the landscape. Skillful use of these qualities fulfills people’s expectations for facilities in natural settings. In much the same way, consistent and tasteful use of the Forest Service “family of signs” and the shield, in accordance with manual direction, reinforces our identity as a quality resource management agency.

We have a huge investment in our fire, administrative, and recreation facilities. Many are in poor condition or do not meet the needs of today’s uses. Use the BEIG right now as you repair, renovate, replace, and expand existing facilities or build new ones. It will not always be easy, but we should utilize the skills of professional architects, engineers, and landscape architects to do it right. Take pride in providing facilities of character, efficiency, and enduring tradition, much as you value those qualities in our agency as a whole.



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