

Policies and Guidelines Governing the College of Forestry's Web Works Aimed at External Audiences

The rapid development of the World Wide Web (WWW) and associated means of electronic communication (e.g., Internet, e-mail) have revolutionized how we do business in the College of Forestry (CoF). The evolution and expansion of these dynamic technologies are expected to continue well into the future.

The WWW is particularly crucial to our enterprise because of the role it plays in external communication. It also has important applications internal to the CoF, too. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the CoF to ensure that our "web works" (i.e., web pages, web sites, web servers, and related aspects) is of high quality and meets established standards for acceptable use, fulfills our objectives, and is able to be financed and managed efficiently. Such precautions are basically no different than those taken with other forms of official CoF communication such as printed publications, videos and slide-tapes, and posters and brochures.

This document provides guidance for appropriate development, management, and use of the CoF's web works. Although the document is focused on use of the Web for external audiences (i.e., outside the CoF), many of the same policies and principles are applicable to uses for internal audiences as well (i.e., faculty, staff, and students).

Vision:

The CoF has a cost-effective WWW presence that accurately reflects the College. Specifically, our vision is that our web sites particularly those aimed at external audiences do the following:

- Display information about CoF functions, programs, and activities that is current, helpful, easily accessed, and user-friendly
- Help people learn more about the CoF and who we are, what we do, where we're going, and how they might interact with us
- Enhance and support our programs of instruction, research, extended education, and public service
- Establish a "web presence" for the CoF, thereby linking us to the WWW at large

Goals:

The CoF web works is hierarchical, operating at the individual, unit, and college levels within a framework established by the College. Responsibility for implementing web works is delegated to the respective operating level, within the overall policy framework established by the College.

The CoF web works is designed for use by both internal and external audiences. Policies and guidelines in this document are primarily concerned with external audiences who access our web pages via the Internet. To that end, the following goals have been established to inform and involve people, primarily outside the CoF, with respect to our programs of instruction, research, extended education, and public service:

- Provide a secure electronic entree to the CoF and an efficient referral mechanism and pathway
- Raise our profile with and increase our accessibility to various publics
- Illustrate the depth, diversity, and excellence of the CoF and thereby enhance our image
- Facilitate recruitment of prospective students and foster retention of those already here
- Foster communication and interaction with others
- Strengthen and enrich our programs of instruction, research, and extended education for faculty, staff, and students--both on and off campus
- Advertise and market our programs of instruction, research, and extended education to external audiences and stimulate their interest and interaction with us
- Provide timely information about CoF activities to alumni, clients, cooperators, professionals, and other external audiences
- Foster donations of scholarships, fellowships, endowments, and other philanthropic gifts
- Demonstrate and facilitate our connection to the broader community involved in natural resources
- Provide an efficient and cost-effective alternative to other media and forms of communication and interaction
- Foster all goals above while providing a secure computing environment for all CoF users

Statement of Principles:

Construction and use of the CoF web works will comply with appropriate laws and policies regarding:

- Legitimate use of the WWW within a public institution
- Compliance with state and federal laws, including use of copyrighted material, trademarks, and images
- Acceptable use of OSU Computing Facilities policy (as adopted January 25, 1991 and periodically updated)
- OSU recommendations and standards for web page construction and maintenance (as established by OSU's Web Advisory Group and periodically updated)
- Academic freedom
- Professional ethics, obligations, and behavior
- Appropriate levels of autonomy for individuals and units
- Designation of responsibility at the appropriate level for individuals and units and the CoF as a whole, including proceeding by mutual agreement where changes in infrastructure may affect other units
- Provisions for protection of personal privacy and sensitive or restricted information
- Other applicable policies, protocols, and considerations

Designation of Roles and Responsibilities:

For a medium as complex as the WWW, it is crucial that roles and responsibilities be clearly specified. Various CoF entities are designated to perform the functions designated below:

- Overall policy, decision-making, review, approval, quality control, and cost control
Dean and CoF Administrative Committee
- Overall design, management, and coordination of CoF web works (including web pages, web sites, and web servers) CoF Computer Committee. The CoF Computer Committee will periodically update the Dean and CoF Administrative Committee on these items.
- Design, construction, and maintenance of CoF main web page Authorized CoF Web Coordinator in consultation with the Dean and CoF Administrative Committee
- Design, construction, and maintenance of unit web pages respective units in consultation with the CoF Web Coordinator and authorized unit web coordinators, using guidelines established by the CoF Computer Committee

-Design, construction, and maintenance of individual web pages individual faculty, staff, and students in accordance with established policies, principles, and standards

-Installation, maintenance, updating, deleting, and quality control authorized CoF and unit web coordinators

Structure and Architecture of CoF Web Works:

CoF web pages are designed to flow from the general to the specific. The design of the overall framework is the responsibility of the CoF Computer Committee, working in concert with appropriate units and individuals. A premium will be placed on the following features:

-Hierarchical framework that facilitates access and movement to the desired place in the CoF web works

-User-friendliness and attractiveness

-Security of CoF information and resources

-Consolidation and cross-links to minimize redundancy and confusion

-Efficient navigational linkages to other web sites and institutions (both internal and external)

Content of CoF Web Works:

The WWW is able to accommodate a seemingly infinite array of material. From a practical standpoint, however, it is prudent to limit the kinds of information that will be conveyed on the CoF web works--particularly for external consumption. The CoF Computer Committee, with the concurrence of the Dean and CoF Administrative Committee, will develop guidelines that address the following parameters:

-Overall structure and format for the CoF web works, including architecture, software, and hardware

-Array of topics, units, and functions included (i.e., web page content)

-Level of detail and degree of "branching" included

-Access to restricted material (e.g., research datasets, proprietary and confidential information)

-Inclusion of or access to potentially sensitive information (e.g., salaries, pictures, phone numbers, other personal information)

-Business use and transactions (e.g., advertising, course registration, user fees, book sales and purchasing)

-Provisions governing development of "personal pages" and use thereof

-Hot links and navigational aids to other WWW sites and organizations

-Procedures for communicating information about the above to interested or affected parties

Provisions for Quality Control:

The public nature of the WWW dictates that considerable attention be given to ensuring high quality of the information we present and convey via this medium. Those involved in developing and displaying material on the CoF web pages will take into consideration the following items:

-Legitimate and appropriate content of web pages

-Accuracy and appeal of information displayed on web pages

-A reasonable degree of uniformity in web page design and appearance

-Security from tampering and unauthorized access or use

-Periodic updating and revision of web pages

-Appropriate use of disclaimers on web pages

-Procedures for dealing with queries, referrals, and other situations where a response is needed

-Linkages to CoF cooperator's web sites (e.g., BLM, EPA, ODF, ODF&W, USFS, USGS) where desired, permitted, and negotiated with the agency representative

-Accountability for overall quality, functionality, and utility of information presented on web pages

Provisions for Management and Cost Control:

Development and maintenance of WWW material can be an expensive proposition. Therefore, a management plan for the CoF web works and CoF main web page is needed to ensure that our web works remain functional and affordable. The plan will be developed and periodically updated by the CoF Computer Committee. It will be reviewed and approved by the Dean and CoF Administrative Committee. It will include cost-effective provisions for:

- Design, construction, editing, and installation of web material
- Maintenance, updating, and deletion of web material
- Obtaining and maintaining equipment and software needed
- Staffing
- Fund-raising, cost-cutting, and cost-allocation schemes
- Management and oversight, including collection and disposition of allocated funds in an effective and equitable manner
- Implementation of relevant items specified in this Administrative Memo or requested by the Dean and CoF Administrative Committee