



Forest Service News Release

Public Affairs Officer: Mary Cernicek

(307) 739-5564

mary.cernicek@usda.gov

<https://www.usda.gov/btnf>

The Bridger-Teton National Forest to Celebrate Smokey Bear's 80th Birthday

Forest is Hosting Historical Paintings by Rudolph Wendelin

Pinedale, WY, March 15, 2024 – In celebration of Smokey Bear's 80th Birthday, the Bridger-Teton National Forest will kick start the year by hosting 19 historical paintings by Rudy Wendelin. These paintings will be on display at the Sublette County Library in Pinedale, WY from April 8 through April 19, 2024. The Pinedale Ranger District will be hosting an opening night reception on Tuesday, April 9, from 5 to 7 pm. Staff and friends of Smokey Bear will be on hand and light refreshments will be served.

A 'Read with Smokey' event will be held on Tuesday, April 16, 2024 from 5 to 7 pm. Smokey Bear himself will be in attendance and fans young and old are encouraged to read selections from some of his favorite story books. Hot cocoa and s'mores will be provided.

The Bridger-Teton National Forest is one of just 14 locations across the Nation, including National Forests and Grasslands, to host the painting collection during the 2024 birthday celebration event. The artwork is on loan to the Forest from the Special Collections section of the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Library in Washington, DC. These paintings were completed from 1977 through 1995 and remain the most famous depictions of Smokey Bear. Painter Rudolph 'Rudy' Wendelin worked for the U.S. Forest Service as an illustrator beginning in 1933 and retired in 1973. Thanks to Wendelin's art, Smokey's message "Only YOU can prevent wildfires" has prevailed for decades.

"In honor of Smokey's 80th birthday, this is the perfect time to (re) introduce Smokey Bear to the next generation of land stewards," says Kate Olsen, Pinedale District Ranger. "We look forward to a whole year of events and activities throughout the Forest, highlighting Smokey Bear and his wildfire message."

Created August 9, 1944, the Smokey Bear Wildfire Prevention campaign is the longest-running public service advertising campaign in U.S. history, educating generations of Americans about their role in preventing human caused fires. Despite the campaign's success over the years, wildfire prevention remains one of the most critical issues affecting our country. Smokey's message is as relevant and urgent today as it was in 1944.

Wendelin, who died in 2000, created hundreds of Smokey Bear representations that highlighted natural resource conservation and wildfire prevention. Under Wendelin's direction, Smokey Bear grew into the beloved image and national icon that he remains to this day.

Nan Stinson, Fire Prevention Specialist for the Bridger-Teton National Forest, stated "I am very excited that we were selected to host this tour. This is a great opportunity for our local communities to see these paintings in person and be reminded of Smokey's timeless message."

Sublette County Library, Pinedale Branch, is located at 155 S. Tyler Ave. in Pinedale. Hours for viewing are Monday-Thursday, 10 am to 8 pm, Friday 10 am – 6 pm, Saturday 10 am – 5 pm. The library is closed on Sunday.

For more information about Smokey Bear visit www.smokeybear.com.

For other news, events and information please visit <https://www.fs.usda.gov/btnf> or follow the Bridger-Teton National Forest on Facebook [@BridgerTetonNF](https://www.facebook.com/BridgerTetonNF) or on Twitter [@BridgerTetonNF](https://twitter.com/BridgerTetonNF).

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