Brand Guidelines

American Forests’ Identity Manual
About These Brand Guidelines

This document describes the basic elements of the graphic identity system and provides guidelines for their application and use. These guidelines will help to establish a visual foundation on which to build the brand, creating consistency where possible while allowing for the creative flexibility required to satisfy a variety of communications needs across a diverse range of media applications.

Compliance with these guidelines is an important part of building the American Forests visual brand. Our ability to execute communications and marketing with a consistent brand voice—both verbally and visually—will help to create a more engaging experience for all with whom we interact.
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American Forests creates healthy and resilient forests, from cities to wilderness, that deliver essential benefits for climate, people, water and wildlife.

We advance our mission through forestry innovation, place-based partnerships to plant and restore forests, and movement building.
We envision a world in which the significant environmental, societal and economic benefits of forests are fully realized and equitably available to all people.
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: We see value in all people and every community. Across the totality of our work, we strive to advance the interests of all, with special attention to people and communities who are being left behind. This also means that we embrace all perspectives, which leads us to engage others through non-partisan and open dialogue.

Moral Clarity: Our work is founded in science and directed for the best interests of people and nature—this is our moral imperative. This means we prioritize our work not by convenience or popularity, but rather by what is needed most urgently, such as action on climate change.

Servant Leadership: Our approach to mission delivery embraces the contributions of all people and organizations, not just the work we can directly touch. This leads us to emphasize empowering others in diverse ways, including building coalitions and creating resources and policies that will advance the work of our entire field.

Intergenerational Responsibility: We are driven by a belief that our forests are an intergenerational legacy that must be stewarded as such. This means that we engage in activities like planting trees and working to combat climate change where the results of our efforts might take decades to show results.
What makes American Forests stand out?

American Forests, like its peers, has a unique place in the ecosystem of organizations focused on environmental health, climate change, social equity, water and wildlife. While reviewing peers, it became clear that American Forests stands out uniquely in the following ways:

A Leader in Equity

American Forests leads the conversation on social equity and forestry where other organizations fall short, helping make connections for audiences so that they understand how equity and justice factor into the core of your work.

Bold & Dynamic

American Forests is fierce, loud and proud when it’s not easy. While other organizations repeat the same messages over time, American Forests has always evolved to embody the change it wishes to see in the world—encouraging others in the forestry field to follow its lead.

Science-based Solutions

American Forests defines the problems, pursues the science needed to address them, and works with partners (or internal programs) to implement the solutions to big problems. This science-based perspective guides and connects each of American Forests’ programs.

A Servant Leader

American Forests leads through service. Whether as a facilitator, educator, content creator or collaborator, its approach is grounded in sparking a change that’s much bigger than its own mission.
How to talk and write about American Forests.
Balance urgency with efficacy

Climate change as a topic often brings out feelings of hopelessness or fatalism. So while some degree of “crisis framing” is okay as a means of communicating urgency these messages need to be balanced with solutions—particularly specific examples of how the situation has improved in specific areas due to policy change or tree planting programs. That way, American Forests’ ideal future isn’t perceived as a fairytale.

Guide people to the difficult topics

Research has shown that framing both climate change and racial equity with facts and “hard truths” divides people into their existing ideological trenches. American Forests can avoid that reality and increase support for its work by framing communications about the environment and equity with ideas of equal opportunity for all. Rather than sanitizing the issue, this framing mechanism ensures that even more audiences will stick with you as communications moves into more difficult topics.

Encourage audiences to take systemic action

American Forests advocates for systems-change on many of the issues it exists to solve. Messages about systemic issues need to engage audiences with systemic calls-to-action—often this involves supporting policies or elected officials, or learning more deeply about the problem. So while individual-focused CTAs such as donation or membership links will be an integral part of American Forests’ website experience, they’ll need to be balanced with ways for audiences to contribute to systemic change.

Explain the roots of inequity

American Forests is very familiar with the issues it works to solve—but some of your audiences might have a less complex understanding of those same issues. When discussing social and racial equity in particular, communications need to take the time to explain the inequity. Without a detailed explanation of its causes and implications, audiences tend to fall back on subconscious biases to explain the gaps.
Humanize the problem and the solutions

The systems, structures, and policies we advocate for and against are real, and so are the people that create, perpetuate, and disrupt them. Tell the stories of those people. Use terms that conjure images of people, rather than abstract concepts or structures. This is especially useful when communicating about contentious, controversial, or complex problems like climate change. Climate change is more than just its impact on the planet and its ecosystem. It affects how people produce and consume food, how and where we work and play, and the quality of the air we breathe. Humanizing the problem is the first step to humanizing the solution.

Explain the connection between trees and climate change

While we may take for granted that most Americans understand the connection between carbon dioxide reducing trees and the slowing of climate change, research shows that when such concepts are carefully explained – through a cause-and-effect model – audiences more readily grasp necessary solutions and see their role in those solutions. This means more than just stating that trees and forests can deliver needed carbon dioxide reductions, but going a step further and stating how. This can be done in layman's terms without having to get too wonky or technical. Rather than sanitizing the issue, this framing mechanism ensures that even more audiences will stick with you as communications moves into more difficult topics.

Use data to bolster a claim, not as the claim itself

When science and research justify one's position, it can be easy to rely purely on the data to make our case for us. Research shows when facts don’t fit the frame, audiences reject the facts, not the frame. When audiences are presented with irrefutable evidence of the error in their thinking, the human reaction is to question the evidence. Data is effective in influencing mindsets when presented within an alternative frame.

Unframed data: Most of the warming occurred in the past 40 years, with the seven most recent years being the warmest. The years 2016 and 2020 are tied for the warmest year on record.

Framed data: Heat-trapping emissions from fossil fuels have already disrupted Earth's climate system. At this very moment, the resulting changes are undermining human health and harming the natural places on which people depend. The problem is getting worse as the last seven years have been the warmest in recorded history.

Frame the future, not the past

Climate advocates need to energize and mobilize people to support a big vision, without appearing to be advocating for the impossible. American Forests can do this by emphasizing how much we can achieve despite difficulty (pragmatism) and by not framing solutions with how much we need to sacrifice or remove from our lives. Balance “bold and necessary” with “feasible and possible.” Show that we have choices: we can choose to invest now in sustainable energy sources, or we can miss yet another opportunity to act boldly for our shared future. Highlight collective actions that can alleviate climate concerns.
Waterfall Frameworks

Social impact storytelling is at its best when it meets audiences where they’re at, strives to create a change beyond the words on a page. In order to establish a consistent and brand narrative for American Forests’ work on social equity and climate change, we’ve outlined a flexible “waterfall” framework that can be repeated across touchpoints and media.

**Equity**

**Exposition:** Lead with the shared value that all Americans, regardless of ZIP code, should have the opportunity to live in a healthy community.

**Inciting Incident:** Then, introduce the inequity central to American Forests’ work: that in America’s cities, this opportunity has not been equally distributed. Use asset framing to refer to the communities impacted by this inequity. Try to introduce systems as the antagonists in this story who contribute to the problem.

**Climax:** Describe this inequity and the systems involved in detail and explain why it’s a problem for individuals, communities, and societies. Use data to make the case for the urgency of this problem. American Forests’ boldness comes in here, by shining a light on details that are often left unsaid.

**Falling Action:** Introduce solutions to this inequity, describing not only how they would work but also providing examples of how this solution has been successful elsewhere.

**Resolution:** Pair solutions with concrete actions audiences can take to support this change—both individual actions such as donations, and systemic actions such as policy support/advocacy. This is an opportunity to advocate for American Forests’ science and research work and to elevate the work of your partners.

**Climate Change**

**Exposition:** Lead messages about climate change with the value of protecting the places we all depend on from being harmed. Frame this as collective action we can take to protect ourselves, each other, and future generations rather than reversing existing damage.

**Inciting Incident:** Then, introduce the specific climate-related challenge being talked about, forest loss for example, implicating the systems that perpetuate the issue.

**Climax:** Describe this challenge in greater detail, being sure to clearly explain the relationship between phenomena—in this case, the relationship between trees and climate change. Explain both the systemic nature of this problem and the peoples’ lives this problem impacts. This is where data should be incorporated, to support the case you’re already laying out.

**Falling Action:** Introduce solutions to this issue, describing not only how they would work but also providing examples of how this solution has been successful elsewhere. Data can be powerfully used here, too, to demonstrate measurable improvements.

**Resolution:** Pair solutions with concrete actions audiences can take to support this change—both individual actions such as donations, and systemic actions such as policy support/advocacy. This is a good opportunity to promote American Forests’ climate research, science and policy work—and in doing so, balance solutions that are “bold and necessary” with “feasible and possible,” as described on page 20.

“Don’t just talk, put substantive work on the table. Don’t just say the right things, do the right things.”

- Jad Daley
Design System
that connects the brand.
Brand Design Principles

Our Design Principles reflect the values with which American Forests embodies to reach our strategic goals. These principles inform all design decisions that support our goals to offer the best brand experience for our audiences.

1. Be an innovation leader in forestry.
2. Expand beyond limitations of “just planting trees.”
3. Be leading edge and credible.
4. Be bold, dynamic & proud.
5. Embody scientific certainty.
7. Collaborate with diverse stakeholders.
The Logo

The American Forests logo signifies a strong symbol fit for a movement. The tip of the tree converges to symbolize unity. It points upwards to signal growth and hope. The horizontal lines can be interpreted as tree branches and as urban pathways towards progress.

Here are a few general tips when working with the logo:

• In order to preserve the integrity of the new logo, maintain the rotation, size and color palette of the logo.

• Follow proper spacing guidelines, see page 15 for more details.

• Always use only the color backgrounds established in the guide.

Click title to access assets.
The American Forest mark refers to the icon and can be used on its own in the context of the brand. The logo is the composition of the mark and the name. The intention is that the mark will be interchangeable with the logo over time. The mark can also be used in the same application alternatives as the logo.

*Click title to access assets.*
Proper Spacing

To preserve the integrity of the logo, it is important to have clear space around the logo and have no other graphic elements intrude on its space. The clear space is calculated by taking the height of the name, which is then applied to all sides around the logomark and wordmark.
Logo Applications

Whenever possible, use the primary logo. Here are options for exceptions or specific use cases:

- **One Color Logo** should be used as an alternative to the color logo to simplify the logo's appearance.

- **Black and White Logo** should be used only when a third party partner asks for a single color logo. The logo can also be used on documents that will be printed in black and white.

- **Knockout Logo & Knockout Logo 2** can be used on an image background. If the background image is too light or too busy, apply a black 20 percent opacity tint overlay on top of the image so the logo is legible.
Logo Misaplications

To ensure the logo appears as consistently as possible, we have identified the ways we don’t want the logo to appear. Applications listed here or similar versions are not permitted in the brand guidelines because they violate the logo’s integrity.

- Do not place the the primary logo on a color background
- Do not reverse the logo placement
- Do not alter the proportions of the logo
- Do not add a stroke around the logo
- Do not stretch the logo
- Do not change the wordmark language
- Do not change the wordmark typeface
- Do not alter the colors of the logo
- Do not add a tagline
- Do not rotate the logo
- Do not add a drop shadow
The logotype uses a geometric san serif typeface to complement the mark. The typeface's strong structure helps audiences identify with the scientific-based face of the brand. While other elements of the typeface, such as the circle "i" and the lows horizontal lines of the capital "A" make it approachable and friendly.

Type plays an important role in the American Forest brand systems by creating visuals that feel consistent with the brand.

**Primary Typeface:** is GT Walsheim, this typeface is meant for headlines and short introductory paragraphs.

**Secondary Typeface:** is Miller Text, this typeface is meant for body text, it is necessary in long format texts.

If you need access to the fonts, please contact jschwartz@americanforests.org
Typeface Alternatives

When you can, you should use the brand fonts on the previous page. But when you can not use them, these are good default alternatives.

Instead of GT Walsheim
Arial Bold is the sans serif alternative typeface.

Instead of Miller Text
Georgia is the serif alternative typeface.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.
Primary Color Palette

**Forest Green**: This grounding green is considered the color of nature, and it brings out emotional harmony, stability and endurance. It is associated with refreshment and peace. It can help people feel rested and secure.

**Deep Forest Blue**: The color of empowerment, navy blue is a color that represents loyalty, peace, confidence and success. It is also associated with depth, expertise, and stability.

**America Forests Green**: Mint is a vibrant, light shade of green. Lighter shades of green, such as mint, also represent tranquility, health and good luck. They are associated with freshness and creativity.

**Forest Floor Beige**: As a softer, warmer form of white, beige represents simplicity and serenity. Beige is unpretentious and is a great supporting color. Beige, when in the presence of other hues, helps to accentuate them.
We have a broader selection of secondary colors which can support the American Forests’ brand. We want a strong contrast, so the supporting colors should compliment but not substitute the primary colors.

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Primary Color Combinations

These are the main color combinations that clearly signify the presence of American Forests' brand. The combination of colors are accessibility compliant.
Graphic Element
Zoomed In
Graphic Element
Zoomed Out

The American Forests design system also has a pattern that originates from the logo. The pattern could be used in a zoom in effect, which is more abstract and focused on the shapes contained in the logo. The zoomed out modality visually references a forest, with urban pathways and streams of water.

*Click title to access assets.*
‘What Drives Us’
Iconography

Click title to access assets.

Climate
Social Equity
Wildlife
Water
Secondary Iconography

Click title to access assets.

Urban Forestry  Forest Restoration  Gift of Trees  Sequoia Circle  Movement Building

American ReLeaf  Science/Innovation Lab  Tree Equity  Champion Trees  Action Center
Secondary Iconography

Click title to access assets.
Graphic Elements
Topography

To enrich designs with texture, there are 2 different graphic elements for the design system. The topography elements which are organic shapes symbolizing terrain in the natural world and city maps that reference urban work.

Click title to access assets.
Graphic Elements
For City Maps
Graphic Elements When Using a Set of City Maps

Five city maps can be used to reference the cities where American Forests works.

Click title to access assets.
Data Visualization that tells a story.
Data Visualization

When visualizing data we can use brand assets, such as typography and color to help tell a compelling story. As shown in the examples, the graphs can be displayed in color or off-color backgrounds. Utilizing the condensed GT Walsheim type style can help in composing within tight spaces.

We can use the primary and secondary color palette freely and as required by the data. However, there is a universal rule to use red to communicate negative or low data, green for growth and yellow to highlight.

Tree Reforestation Growth in the United States of America

Source: American Forests Org
Data Visualization

Yearly Donations Through Website

Growth Projection vs. Accomplished
Image Standards that reflect the brand.
Image Standards

American Forests is an image rich brand. Images help to convey the mission, vision and values of the brand in a simple and easily digestible way.

We have six main themes to ensure images selected communicate the diverse aspects of the brand.

Photo Credit Convention:

When crediting photos we use 3 naming options. The photographer’s name is always first, followed by the organization. This could be commissioned photographers for American Forests, stock imagery found on the internet or partner/associate images.

Examples:

- John Smith/American Forests
- John Smith/Shutterstock
- John Smith/The Nature Conservancy

Aerial Shots
Communicates the vastness of the work, in a large rural forest or urban setting.

Details Shots
Zooms into the details that evoke the feeling of being within the forest or the details of the work itself.

People In Action Shots
Captures the activities that people do, whether at work or in the forest.

Landscape Shots
Brings the classic and familiar view of forest landscapes in order to convey place and environment.

Wildlife Shots
Showcases animals within the forest and connects to the idea of the diversity of forest life.

Archive Shots
Uncovers the rich history and legacy of American Forests.
Aerial

Goal: To communicate the vastness of the work, in a large rural forest or urban setting. Aerial shots are an ideal visual vehicle to capture the magnitude of the areas positively impacted by American Forests’ work.

Tips:

• Create or find interesting images that develop patterns through repetition but have a focal point or clear area of visual interest.

• Limit place-based images to within United States.

If you need access to the image library, please contact jschwartz@americanforests.org
Goal: To offer the viewer a zoomed in view that translates specific elements of American Forests’ work or evokes the feeling of being in a forest. These details can range from images of people planting trees to convey action, to texture-based images of bark or vegetation which can complement the graphic design.

Tip:

- Create or find interesting images. Be mindful of unfocused elements when capturing details.

If you need access to the image library, please contact jschwartz@americanforests.org
People In Action

Goal: To capture people being active, whether at work or in the forest. This is an opportunity to humanize the brand.

Tips:

• Create or find interesting images which reflect people in action. These can be photos of people enjoying the forests or working in the fields.

• Look for diversity in race, age and gender.

• Make sure the person's face is always visible and avoid pictures of people's backs.

If you need access to the image library, please contact jschwartz@americanforests.org
Landscapes

Goal: To bring in a classic and familiar view of forest landscapes to convey place and environment.

Tips:

• Create or find interesting images which capture the beauty of nature and avoid cliches, such as postcard feeling images.

• Look for images that are rich in saturation, light, and visual interest.

• Avoid sunset pictures.

• Look for signs of diversity within the same shot.

If you need access to the image library, please contact jschwartz@americanforests.org
Wildlife

Goal: To showcase animals within the forest and the diversity of forest life.

Tips:
- Create or find interesting images which capture animals thriving in their natural environment.

Avoid images of:
- Restrained or caged animals.
- Violence against animals.
- Starving or distressed animals.
- By-products of animal hunting, such as fur or meat.

If you need access to the image library, please contact jschwartz@americanforests.org
Goal: To uncover the rich history and legacy of American Forests by curating images that best represent the past efforts of American Forests.

Tips:

• Avoid highly deteriorated images.
• Make sure images are scanned in high resolution.
• When possible, color correct the images digitally.

If you need access to the image library, please contact jschwartz@americanforests.org