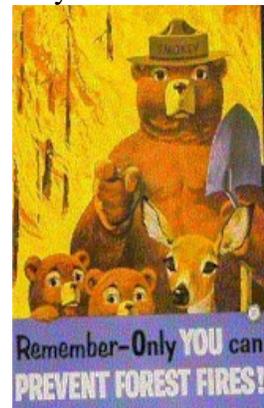
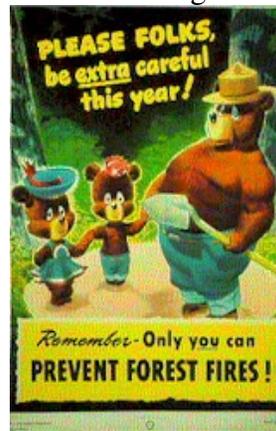
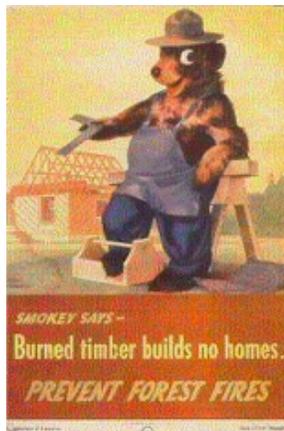




Hoosier's Favorite Bear

Smokey Bear, the American icon for wildfire prevention since 1944, has played an important role in Indiana. Smokey's message "Remember... Only you can prevent forest fires" is one of the most recognized messages in the history of advertising. Smokey, as an artistic creation, came into being in 1945. Albert Staehle, one of the best known animal artists of his time, created the loveable bear. Rudy Wendelin, with the Forest Service became Smokey's official artist the next year, and spent the rest of his long career helping Smokey evolve into the bear Indiana children now love so well.

The series below shows how Smokey's looks have changed over the years.



Smokey was only a poster bear until 1950 when a 4-month old black bear was found in New Mexico clinging to a fire-charred tree after a forest fire. Once he was nursed back to health, (right) he became a national symbol for fire prevention. By 1951, Smokey bear costumes appeared and stuffed dolls followed. By 1964, Smokey reportedly received so much mail that the Post Office awarded Smokey his own zip code.

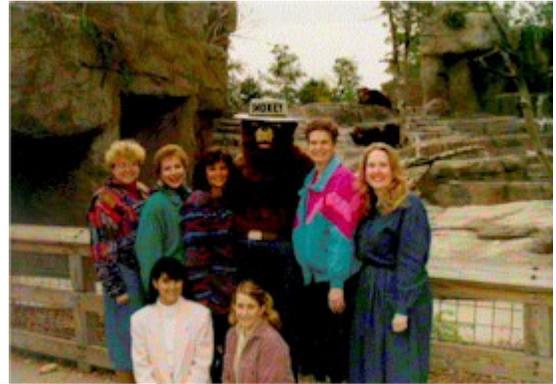
In Indiana, Smokey likely receives more fan mail than any other individual in the Department of Natural Resources. A sample of his mail follows. Most are done in bright crayons, and include interesting spellings and unusual observations by Hoosier children.



There are few employees who have served the Department for over 50 years, so Smokey's extraordinary service understandably has earned him landmark celebrations. For Smokey's 40th and 50th birthdays, IDNR held statewide celebrations which included birthday cakes, "bear-avans" to schools around the state, programs at the Children's Museum, Smokey's messages on milk cartons, and a variety of other innovative ways to promote fire prevention.

Smokey and his most staunch supporters went on a two-week blitz of the state hitting schools statewide with high energy celebrations.

For his actual 50th birthday party, Smokey went to the Indianapolis zoo, where he turned 50 with many of his animal friends and his fans from around Indiana. For his birthday that year a giant Smokey Bear hot air balloon offered rides to Hoosiers at the Indiana State Fair.



Bev Stout, Fire Prevention Specialist with the Division, shown here with Smokey and a young fan, has received an unprecedented three national awards for Fire Prevention.