

Spotlight on Smokey Bear

For over 80 years, Smokey Bear has been one of the longest running public service advertising campaigns. Because nearly 9 out of 10 wildfires are caused by humans, Smokey Bear's message that "only you" can prevent human-caused wildfires has been an important message to share with generations of people.

The public service campaign idea started in 1944, and artist Albert Stahle created the first Smokey Bear poster during this time (**figure 1**). Rudy Wendelin became Smokey Bear's illustrator starting in 1946 (**figure 2**). Smokey Bear's catch phrase "Remember... Only YOU can prevent forest fires!" began in 1947.



Figure 1. The first Smokey Bear poster was created by artist Albert Stahle in 1944.



Figure 2. Rudy Wendelin illustrated Smokey Bear from 1946 to 1973.

In May 1950, a living symbol of Smokey Bear was introduced to the world when a bear cub was orphaned in a wildfire in the Capitan Mountains in New Mexico (**figure 3**). They named him Smokey. Smokey was injured during the fire and needed rehabilitation. The cub was transported to the National Zoo in Washington, DC, and was one of the most popular exhibits (**figure 4**).

Over the decades, Smokey Bear has taught people about fire prevention and what they can do to help prevent wildfires. Examples include how to safely have a campfire, maintain and

operate a vehicle, and take care of the area around your home. Smokey Bear also has five rules for fire prevention. They are the following:

-  **Only you can prevent wildfires.**
-  **Always be careful with fire.**
-  **Never play with matches or lighters.**
-  **Always watch your campfire.**
-  **Make sure your campfire is completely out before leaving it.**



Figure 3. The young cub, Smokey, climbing on a rock.



Figure 4. Adult Smokey at the National Zoo in Washington, DC.

To learn more about prevention of human-caused wildfires, please visit <https://smokeybear.com> for more information. Also visit the *Natural Inquirer* Smokey Bear resource page for free educational materials and resources for Smokey Bear (<https://naturalinquirer.org/smokey-bear/>).