



**North Carolina
Department of Environment
and Natural Resources**

P O L I C Y

Section: Information and Technology Services Number:

Subject: Guidelines and Standards for WEB Publishing

Approved By: DENR Secretary and IRMB

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Revised:

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DEFINITIONS:

Homepage: Programs, primarily at the division level, may produce or “author “ home pages. The departmental home page is the electronic point-of-entry to your Division and as such should describe major Division activities, information resources and organizational sub-divisions. This page is subject to the policy standards below and would benefit from guidelines presented in the “See Also” section.

POLICY STATEMENT:

100. Background

Temporary Division home page markers will be created for all divisions in order to create a consistent “face” for DENR upon roll-out. Once a new homepage has been authored by a division and has successfully completed the department’s standard publications review process, which has been expanded to include electronic media, the marker will be activated and the division automatically becomes the page “owner” and is responsible for the page’s update.

Ownership responsibilities of division home pages include: ensuring the consistency of a home page with DENR standards, verifying factual content, and confirming that all materials are in compliance with federal copyright law. Divisions who assume page ownership must ensure that: 1) all ownership responsibilities are fulfilled, 2) an information contact person is identified on their homepage and available by E-mail address to facilitate two-way communication with the public; the contact person for this item will need to be designated by the division director, and 3) the webpage is up-to-date and all links are active.

Guidelines

200. Characteristics of the Computer as a Communication Medium

Singularly the most important item to remember when using computers to communicate with readers is that this method affects the *way* you present content – *not* the content you present. It is also important to realize that the computer screen is physically different from the printed page. Accordingly, there are four characteristics pertaining to online communication that must be acknowledged. They are:

Online communication is image-oriented. (Graphics rich)

Online communication is interactive. (Requires reader participation)

Online communication is immediate. (Most people want it here and now)

Online communication is intimate. (One on one...)

300. For Information Architecture

Write information with the awareness that you cannot control how and when readers see it.

Design information so that it has “built-in” intelligence.

Design information so that it has obvious intelligence.

Provide meaningful interaction and do so often.

Keep your key readers in mind, avoid downloads that exceed a minute for your average readers (e.g. the average reader uses a T- 1 line or uses a 28.8K modem.)

For each page, include an E-mail link that enables readers to follow-up.

Include “This page was last updated ____ “ on the bottom of the homepage.

Present substantive information (e.g. project description, reports, data and database links, services provided by the division/section).

DENR example pages that provide accessible homepage layouts are the Marine Fisheries, Parks and Recreation, and Forestry pages. The Solid Waste pages provide a good example of accessible, intuitive page linkage.

400. For Topic Architecture

Focus topics on answering the reader’s questions.

Limit the amount of information you present to manageable units.

Consider “coaching” and guiding approaches rather than more straightforward information presentation.

500. For Communicating with Images

Present information visually rather than verbally.

Include a caption or title with your graphics.

Present verbal information in the form of lists, charts, or numbered procedures.

ISMAPS should be used sparingly, only when they provide material benefit in the presentation of information.

In general, do not include the pictures of staff members.

600. For Interaction

Determine the type of interaction users want.
Track user responses.
Provide appropriate material based on readers' responses.
Avoid rhetorical questions.

700. For Composing Words and Sentences

Write sentences as you would speak them, not as you would write them.
Be consistent in your instructions to readers.
Refer to readers as "you" or "readers".
Choose language that emphasizes the virtues of clarity and precision.

800. For Screen Design

Be consistent with your chosen interface.
Include navigational tools on every panel.
Leave 25 to 50 percent of the screen as blank space.
Limit lines to 50 characters.
Display text in *no more than* three colors on the same screen.
Make the color coding scheme for text easily understood.
Only use multimedia when it materially contributes to the presentation of information. (See Forestry "movies" as an example.)

900. To Locate Information

Consider the use of common search tools. "Excite" is widely used in the department.
As division links grow, consider search facilities only for division pages and/or the pages belonging to the division sections or areas.
As new pages are developed, approved, and brought on line, e-mail notification of the new page to major search engine organizations (e.g. YAHOO, EXCITE) and register the page.

1000. For internal maintenance

Create a log that chronicles changes to the page.
Track "hits" on the page.