



# Smokey Bear & Woodsy Owl Poster Contest HISTORY

- What is now known as the Smokey Bear & Woodsy Owl Poster Contest began as an initiative of the New Mexico State Garden Club in 1959.
- In 1960, the National Council of State Garden Clubs (today's National Garden Clubs, Inc.) decided to replicate this contest and called it the National Smokey Bear Coloring Contest.
- The winners of the first National Smokey Bear Coloring Contest were announced at the National Council of State Garden Club's 1961 convention by Mrs. N.P. Marton, Junior Gardening Chairman, and Miss Elizabeth Mason of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service.
- The name changed to the Free-Hand Smokey Bear Coloring Contest in 1971. Contest organizers asked children to draw original entries rather than color in a preexisting template. One year later, conservation took its place beside wildfire prevention in the first Woodsy Owl and/or Smokey Bear Poster Contest.
- In response to the environmental concerns in the 1970's, the contest was known as the Environmental Poster Contest. Entries to the annual competition could include either Smokey Bear or Woodsy Owl but were not required to.
- In 1994, the contest celebrated Smokey Bear's 50th birthday under the name of the Smokey Bear & Woodsy Owl Poster Contest. The contest became a national art competition in which children draw their interpretation of Smokey Bear and his wildfire prevention message or Woodsy Owl and his conservation message.
- Today, the Smokey Bear & Woodsy Owl Poster Contest is an annual tradition amongst elementary schools, scout troops, and youth groups across the Nation.

