

**Michelle Lujan Grisham**, Governor  
**Dylan Fuge**, Deputy Cabinet Secretary  
**Laura McCarthy**, Forestry Division Director

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Contact:** George Ducker  
Communications Coordinator  
[george.ducker@emnrd.nm.gov](mailto:george.ducker@emnrd.nm.gov)  
505-699-0601



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**Rudy Wendelin's Smokey Bear paintings travel to Capitan**  
***Smokey Bear Historical Park hosts exhibit April 30 - May 10***

**Capitan, NM** – In honor of Smokey Bear's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, the Smokey Bear Historical Park in Capitan will be hosting a two-week exhibit of paintings by Rudy Wendelin, April 30-May 10.

Rudy Wendelin began working for the Forest Service in 1933 as a draftsman and illustrator. After a stint as a Navy artist during World War II, Wendelin returned to the Forest Service and was given responsibility for the Smokey Bear project. He created hundreds of Smokey representations that highlighted natural resources conservation and forest fire prevention.

Under Wendelin's direction, Smokey assumed the human-like characteristics for which he is best known – wearing a solemn expression, dressed in a forest ranger's hat and jeans, and carrying a shovel.

As Smokey became the immensely popular symbol of the Forest Service's wildfire prevention campaign, Wendelin was recognized for his important contributions. His many awards included the Medal of Honor presented by the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Horace Hart Award from the graphic arts industry, and both Silver and Gold Smokey Bear Awards from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He died on August 31, 2000, at the age of 90.

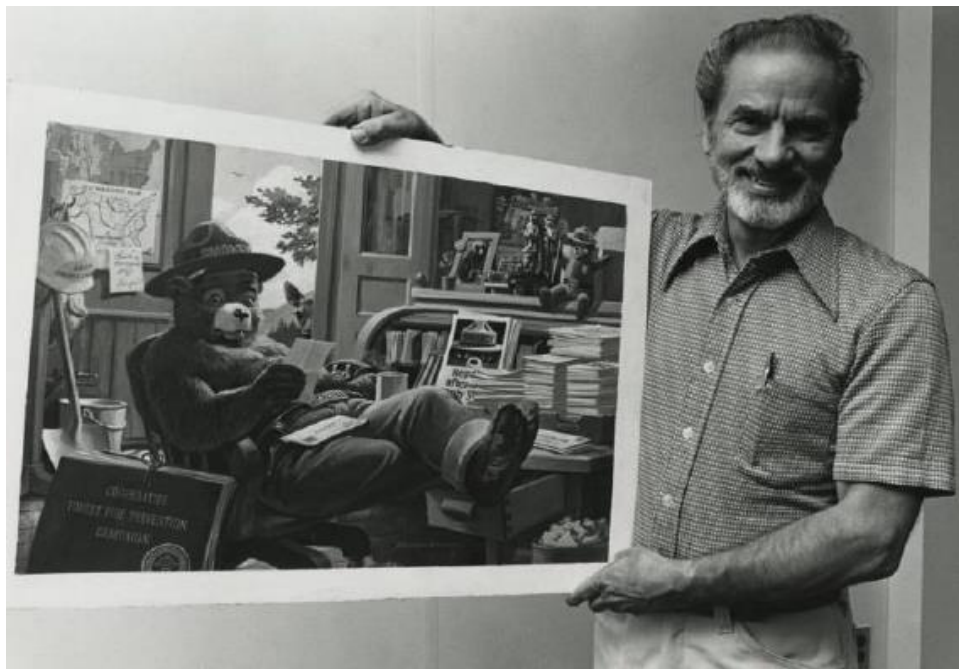
Thanks to Wendelin's art, Smokey's message, "Only YOU can prevent wildfires" has prevailed through generations. On loan from the USDA National Agricultural Library, this traveling exhibition of 19 replica paintings were completed by Wendelin from 1977-1995 and remain the most famous depictions of Smokey Bear.

Smokey Bear Historical Park admission is \$2.00 for adults, \$1.00 for kids ages 7-12, and children 6 & under are free. Park hours are 9:00am - 4:30pm, Tuesday – Sunday (last entry 4:15pm).

For more information about the park, [click here](#).



*“Smokey Says – Prevent Wildfires,” 1993, Rudy Wendelin, 22”x28”*



*Wendelin, holding one of his works. Photo by: USDA National Agricultural Library*

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