



# 042 FW 1, Dedications and Special Events

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**1.1 What is the purpose of this chapter?** This chapter provides guidance on dedication ceremonies and other special events.

**1.2 When do the provisions of this chapter apply?** This chapter applies to all public events involving Service facilities, programs, or authorities regardless of the event's sponsor.

**1.3 What is our policy regarding special events?** We encourage appropriate recognition of special events involving Service facilities, programs, and authorities. Properly coordinate all such events and use sound judgment in planning and carrying out public ceremonies. Make sure that events involving public funding, facilities, and employees are not used for partisan purposes during periods of political election campaigns. Do not use, directly or indirectly, public events to lobby Congress for new authority or appropriations.

**1.4 What are examples of special events?** Special events for the Service include ceremonies recognizing:

- A. Establishment of refuges, hatcheries, and other Service facilities;
- B. Signature or other forms of approval of significant agreements, reports, or other documents involving Service authorities, facilities, or programs.
- C. Anniversaries, accomplishments, and other milestones involving Service authorities, facilities, or programs.
- D. Groundbreaking ceremonies for new construction.
- E. Opening of trails, observation areas, fishing piers, outdoor classroom areas, and like facilities.

**1.5 Who is responsible for approving and coordinating special events?**

**A.** The Director must approve all ceremonies and public events of national significance.

**B.** The Assistant Director - External Affairs (AEA) will:

(1) Advise the Director on the involvement of Departmental and congressional officials. The Office of Public Affairs will coordinate participation by Departmental or other Executive Branch officials in all ceremonies and special events, and will coordinate news media coverage of events of national significance.

(2) Approve the [Handbook for Dedications and Other Special Events](#). The Office of Public Affairs will maintain the Handbook.

**C. Each member of the Service Directorate will:**

(1) Ensure compliance with the provisions of this chapter.

(2) Approve and provide overall direction for ceremonies and other public events under their jurisdiction.

**D.** Based upon the subject matter, the local facility manager or the division/office chief with the appropriate programmatic expertise will:

(1) Work with their Regional or National External Affairs office to coordinate participation by nongovernmental organizations.

(2) Make all technical and physical arrangements.

### **1.6 How do I obtain approval for a special event?**

**A.** For dedications and ceremonies of national significance, the responsible member of the Service Directorate will submit a request for approval to the Director, through the Assistant Director - External Affairs. The request will designate a coordinator for the proposed event and will include the justification, proposed date, location, and organizations and public officials to be involved.

**B.** Regional Directors may approve events of less than national interest. Advise the Assistant Director - External Affairs of events that may offer good speaking opportunities for the Director, Assistant Secretary, Secretary, or other officials.

**C.** The Assistant Director - External Affairs will advise the Director of any additional recommendations concerning proposed events, particularly with respect to the involvement by other Departmental or Executive Branch officials.

**D.** If you have any doubt as to the propriety of a proposed event or of any expenditure related to an event, consult the Office of the Solicitor.

## **1.7 What procedures do I follow when sending invitations?**

**A.** In all cases of public events of national significance involving Service facilities or programs, give the Director the opportunity to participate and to invite participation by other Executive Branch officials.

**B.** Invite the Governor of the affected State and all appropriate Members of Congress to public events involving Service facilities or programs. Include both Senators and the Representative for the district in which the event will take place as well as any other Member(s) who may have an interest in the event. Promptly notify the Assistant Director - External Affairs if the Governor or any Member indicates an intention to attend.

**C.** If the event is related directly to legislative authority or appropriations, it may be appropriate for you to invite the chairperson and ranking minority member, and possibly the staff, of the committees and subcommittees involved.

**D.** Send letters of invitation to Members of Congress at least 6 to 8 weeks in advance of the event.

**(1)** Address invitations to the Members' Headquarters offices with copies to any of their associated field offices.

**(2)** Approximately 7 working days after the invitations are mailed, call the appointment secretary of each Member representing the area where the event will be held to inquire about participation. The person coordinating the event or the Regional Congressional Affairs specialist (if event is not of national significance) or the Headquarters Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs will place these calls.

**E.** Whenever possible, send invitations to special interest groups; State, county, and local officials; volunteers and friends; and others at least 2 to 4 weeks in advance of the event.

## **1.8 What is the protocol for designating speakers at the event?**

**A.** Give each elected official who wishes to speak the opportunity to address the gathering. Exercise caution in designating any elected official as the keynote speaker or the master of ceremonies, when other officials or Executive Branch officials plan to attend.

**B.** Unless circumstances clearly dictate otherwise, observe the normal rules of protocol for the order in which elected officials appear on the program. See the [Handbook](#) for further information.

**1.9 Should I send thank you letters to program participants?** After the event, send thank you letters to all speakers on the official program. The event coordinator will draft thank you letters for signature by the Regional Director or by the Director, as appropriate.

## **1.10 Can I expend appropriated funds for special events?**

**A. Appropriated Funding.** We do not have an "official reception and representation" appropriation to legally charge special event expenditures. In most cases, you may not use appropriated funding for special event purposes. This applies to expenses for entertainment, refreshments, and publicity. There are few exceptions to this general principle. Please consult your Regional Budget and Finance Officer for clarification in these cases. Exceptions occur when:

- (1) The event is specifically authorized by statute;
- (2) Construction funds are used for groundbreaking ceremonies; or
- (3) The expense is related to a traditional ceremony.

**B. Gifts and Awards.** Section 115 of Public Law 10-154 provides agencies of the Department of the Interior with permanent authority to purchase and give "nonmonetary awards of nominal value to private individuals and organizations that make contributions to Department of the Interior programs." Use the Office of Government Ethics \$20 exception ([5 CFR 2635.204](#)) to define "nominal value."

**C. Donated Funds.** You may use donated funds for special events only (46 Comp. Gen. 379 (1966) when the:

- (1) Event will further a valid function of the agency;
- (2) The function cannot be accomplished as effectively from the Government's standpoint without the expenditure; and
- (3) The expenditure does not violate any restrictions imposed by the donor on the use of the funds.

**1.11 What does the Handbook include?** The [Handbook for Dedications and Other Special Events](#) includes detailed guidance and suggestions for planning and conducting dedication ceremonies and other special events. You may obtain copies of the Handbook from the Office of Public Affairs.

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