

FS ePermits // Naming activity

March 1, 2018

Executive summary

As part of 18F's ongoing support of the Forest Service's ePermits program, 18F conducted a series of activities to help the Forest Service choose a new name for the ePermits platform.

We worked with stakeholders to brainstorm and explore seven candidate names and selection criteria. The goal of this work was to find a name that evokes access to the outdoors and the outdoor industry beyond the Forest Service, while also conveying permitting and the uniqueness of the Forest Service's business need

We learned that there are trade-offs associated with each of the top candidate names: Forest access meets all of the acceptance criteria, but people's associations with it were generally negative (also, one participant commented that leadership specifically did not want the word "access" to be a part of the name); Green pass, Open forest, and Explore outdoors were well received, but may not be descriptive enough of the permitting experience.

What we did

This summary is the fourth and final step in a four-part process. We took inspiration for our process from our colleagues work naming an internal 18F product. They in turn took inspiration from Karin and Michael Cronan of [Cronan](#), a design firm that named both the TiVo and Amazon's Kindle, and from the book [Designing Brand Identity](#) by Alina Wheeler.

First we convened a group of stakeholders, including end users and Forest Service and TTS staff, to participate in a [structured brainstorming activity](#). Through that activity, the group produced top candidate names and acceptance criteria for selecting the new name. Based on discussion between product sponsors, a few names were added following the initial brainstorm. We then produced [rap sheets](#) for each of the candidate names. We loosely evaluated these names against our acceptance criteria and removed a few from consideration. Next, we used a simple survey to solicit feedback on the short list of names from 15 people: 8 members of the public, 5 Forest service staff, and 2 TTS staff. We received 14 responses (Non-FS employees, n = 10; FS employees, n = 4).

Here is the short list of names and how they stacked up against the acceptance criteria (note - some of our initial assessments in rap sheets were revised based on feedback from the survey):

	Easy to spell	Easy to say in a sentence	Not confusing as a URL	Evokes simplicity	Connects online and outdoors	Evokes the breadth of permitting
Forest passport	✓	✓	✓	--	--	✓
Green pass	✓	✓	✓	✓	--	✓
Everyone outdoors	✓	--	✓	✓	--	✓
Open forest	✓	✓	✓	✓	--	✓
Forest access	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Explore outdoors	✓	✓	✓	✓	--	✓
Adventure outdoors	✓	✓	✓	✓	--	--

What we learned

In the next few sections, I summarize the feedback on each of the candidate names.

Forest passport

The most prevalent associations with this phrase were around bureaucracy, red tape, exclusivity and that the need for a passport can bar people from traveling. Several people connected the passport concept with current political controversy over immigration; this phrase evoked “fear” and “worry.” Positive associations with this phrase included access, travel, adventure, and making memories. Several people commented that Forest Passport may not be descriptive of what the ePermits platform will actually do.

Green pass

The most prevalent associations with this phrase were around conservation and environmentalism. The only possible negative associations were with Marijuana and a “hall pass” (several participants could think of no negative associations at all). Two participants pointed out a possible political association (“leftist politics”). Participants also felt that this phrase conveyed ease of access but possibly a (false) lack of restriction. Finally, several participants commented that Green pass sounds generic and not specific to permits.

Everyone outdoors*

The strongest associations with this phrase were generally positive, with equality and inclusiveness being prevalent themes. People also indicated that this phrase is reminiscent of childhood with words like “recess,” “playtime,” and “summer camp.” However, many participants commented that Everyone outdoors implies a level of inclusivity that is not aligned with the realities of getting a permit, which may set unreasonable expectations with the public. While negative associations were few, several participants commented that the phrase made them think of crowding and overuse of the resource. Several people commented that this does not sound specific to permitting.

*We had one suggestion to modify this name to “Everyone outside,” as “outside” is considered a more inclusive than “outdoors” within DEI circles.

Open forest

Associations with Open forest were largely positive and centered around access, outdoors, exploration, and inclusivity. Several people associated this phrase with doors, keys, and unlocking and it also raised questions around forest closure. The most prevalent negative associations were that the phrase implied lack of regulation and opening up of the forest to misuse. Several of the FS employee participants commented that their associations with phrase may not be aligned with the actual permitting experience. One participant connected

this phrase with the forest being open for business and customers, which is aligned with the agency's goal.

Forest access

Forest access met all of our acceptance criteria, but people's associations with it were generally negative. While participants commented that this phrase is straightforward and self explanatory, they also described it as "dull," "boring," and "bureaucratic," and it overwhelmingly evoked restriction, rules, and limiting access. Several participants felt that Forest access could be confused with other aspects of forest accessibility, such as road/trail closures, or compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Explore outdoors

People's associations with this phrase were overwhelmingly positive and they felt that it was inviting, engaging, welcoming, evoking fun and adventure. Several people commented that this phrase is too broad and may not be descriptive enough of permitting; a few felt that it was dated or quaint.

Adventure outdoors

People associated this phrase with fun but also with extreme sports, challenge, and risk—concepts that may not be relevant to many forest activities. Many people commented that this phrase may already have strong associations with existing outfitter and guiding businesses and that it sounds generic or simplistic.

Free skate!

We asked people if they had any other ideas for what we might call the platform, and this is what they came up with.

- NCompass
- Everyone Outside
- Forest e-permits
- Guide outfitter eportal
- Delta
- Carabiner
- Forest Access ePermit System
- Access the Outdoors
- Forest Pass
- Woodland Passport
- Tree Permit
- eTree
- eForest
- Access the Forest
- Forest Products ePermit program

Next steps

We have a few options going forward:

- Select one of the names that we've investigated.
- If none of these names feel right, we can conduct further brainstorming to come up with new ideas. We can also explore any of the names in the [Free skate section](#) by creating rap sheets and soliciting stakeholder feedback.

Appendices

[Here](#) are the complete survey responses.

[Here](#) is the whiteboard where we synthesized these responses.

Here are the rap sheets for the names in this summary:

Forest Passport

Acceptance criteria:

- Easy to spell
- Easy to say in a sentence
- Not confusing as a URL
- Evokes the simplicity of the application
- Connects online and outdoor experience
- Has to invoke the breadth of the permitting application

Other uses?

- No direct matches popped in the first few pages of search results. The National Park Service has a “Passport to your National Parks” where a passport stamp is a park location. I wonder if folks would assume that Forest passport is similar in that it is a portal to different forest locations?

In the interface:

- <https://www.forestpassport.fs.us.gov>
- <https://forestpassport.gov>
- Forest Passport is an online way to purchase and apply for special use and special forest product permits.
- Forest Passport: your door to the forest.
- Forest Passport is an official website of the U.S. government.

In an email:

- You can purchase your permit online using Forest Passport .
- Subject line: Forest Service Forest Passport
- Thank you for purchasing your Christmas tree permit using Forest Passport.
- Thank you for submitting your Special Use application using Forest Passport.

Green Pass

Acceptance criteria:

- Easy to spell
- Easy to say in a sentence
- Not confusing as a URL
- Evokes the simplicity of the application
- Connects online and outdoor experience
- Invokes the breadth of the permitting application

Other uses?

- Used as a product or service name by many organizations, related to a variety of industries including travel, health, education, and golf/sports.

In the interface:

- <https://www.greenpass.fs.us.gov>
- <https://greenpass.gov>
- Green Pass is an online way to purchase and apply for special use and special forest product permits.
- Green Pass: your door to the forest.
- Green Pass is an official website of the U.S. government.

In an email:

- You can purchase your permit online using Green Pass.
- Subject line: Forest Service Green Pass
- Thank you for purchasing your Christmas tree permit using Green Pass.
- Thank you for submitting your Special Use application using Green Pass.

Everyone outdoors

Acceptance criteria:

- Easy to spell
- Easy to say in a sentence
- Not confusing as a URL
- Evokes the simplicity of the application
- Connects online and outdoor experience
- Has to invoke the breadth of the permitting application

Other uses?

- [Everyone outdoors](#) is a blog about accessible outdoor activities for people with all ranges of ability. Not very active lately. The last post was in December of 2016. I found a few other links that suggest the phrase is associated with accessible nature tourism.
- [Everyone outdoors](#) is a small FB group whose members post pictures of their outdoor activities.

In the interface:

- <https://www.everyoneoutdoors.fs.us.gov>
- <https://everyoneoutdoors.gov>
- Everyone outdoors is an online way to purchase and apply for special use and special forest product permits.
- Everyone outdoors: your door to the forest.
- Everyone outdoors is an official website of the U.S. government.

In an email:

- You can purchase your permit online using Everyone outdoors.
 - Subject line: Forest service Everyone outdoors.
 - Thank you for purchasing your Christmas tree permit using Everyone outdoors.
 - Thank you for submitting your Special Use application using Everyone outdoors.
-

Open forest

Acceptance criteria:

- Easy to spell
- Easy to say in a sentence
- Not confusing as a URL
- Evokes the simplicity of the application
- Connects online and outdoor experience
- Has to invoke the breadth of the permitting application

Other uses?

- [Openforest.net](#) is a self help site.
- [Open forests](#) is a sustainable forestry consulting company.
- [Open forestry](#) is also a sustainable forestry resource.

In the interface:

- <https://www.openforest.fs.us.gov>
- <https://openforest.gov>
- Open forest is an online way to purchase and apply for special use and special forest product permits.
- Open forest: your door to the forest.
- Open forest is an official website of the U.S. government.

In an email:

- You can purchase your permit online using Open forest.
 - Subject line: Forest service Open forest.
 - Thank you for purchasing your Christmas tree permit using Open forest.
 - Thank you for submitting your Special Use application using Open forest.
-

Forest Access

Acceptance criteria:

- Easy to spell
- Easy to say in a sentence
- Not confusing as a URL
- Evokes the simplicity of the application
- Connects online and outdoor experience
- Has to invoke the breadth of the permitting application

Other uses?

- It may have a bit of a paternalistic connotation. The term appears to be associated with regulations that permit or restrict people from being on National Forest land, like in this [briefing paper](#). I also found a number of search results referring to forest access in the context of legal cases where members of the public are disputing access to Forest land.
- [Forest Access for All](#) (FAFA) is an org dedicated to maintaining access to parts of the Wallowa Whitman national forest and is actively disputing an approved Travel Management Plan (TMP) that will restrict access.
- It may also be associated with accessibility for people with disabilities and Forest Service's "[access for all](#)" page.

In the interface:

- <https://www.forestaccess.fs.us.gov>

- <https://forestaccess.gov>
- Forest Access is an online way to purchase and apply for special use and special forest product permits.
- Forest Access: your door to the forest.
- Forest Access is an official website of the U.S. government.

In an email:

- You can purchase your permit online using Forest Access.
 - Subject line: Forest service Forest Access.
 - Thank you for purchasing your Christmas tree permit using Forest Access.
 - Thank you for submitting your Special Use application using Forest Access.
-

Explore Outdoors

Acceptance criteria:

- Easy to spell
- Easy to say in a sentence
- Not confusing as a URL
- Evokes the simplicity of the application
- Connects online and outdoor experience
- Has to invoke the breadth of the permitting application

Other uses?

- [Explore Outdoors](#) is a Seattle-based nature and science education company that provides fun and educational outdoor experiences tailored for families, children, and adult groups.
- [Explore Outdoors](#) is the name of a series of regional guidebooks.
- Explore Outdoor is an outdoor tour company in GA.
- [Explore Outdoors](#) is a UK outdoor gear retailer.

In the interface:

- <https://www.exploreoutdoors.fs.us.gov>
- <https://exploreoutdoors.gov>
- Explore Outdoors is an online way to purchase and apply for special use and special forest product permits.
- Explore Outdoors: your door to the forest.
- Explore Outdoors is an official website of the U.S. government.

In an email:

- You can purchase your permit online using Explore Outdoors.

- Subject line: Forest service Explore Outdoors.
 - Thank you for purchasing your Christmas tree permit using Explore Outdoors.
 - Thank you for submitting your Special Use application using Explore Outdoors.
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Adventure Outdoors

Acceptance criteria:

- Easy to spell
- Easy to say in a sentence
- Not confusing as a URL
- Evokes the simplicity of the application
- Connects online and outdoor experience
- Has to invoke the breadth of the permitting application

Other uses?

- [Adventure outdoors](#) is the name of a national hunting/outdoor retail chain featuring firearms.
- [Go adventure outdoors](#) is the name of a site where members can list their adventure business (outdoor guiding or recreation services) or vacation rentals, and people can search for them.
- [Adventure Outdoors](#) is also a magazine about outdoor recreation.

In the interface:

- <https://www.adventureoutdoors.fs.us.gov>
- <https://adventureoutdoors.gov>
- Adventure Outdoors is an online way to purchase and apply for special use and special forest product permits.
- Adventure Outdoors: your door to the forest.
- Adventure Outdoors is an official website of the U.S. government.

In an email:

- You can purchase your permit online using Adventure Outdoors.
- Subject line: Forest service Adventure Outdoors.
- Thank you for purchasing your Christmas tree permit using Adventure Outdoors.
- Thank you for submitting your Special Use application using Adventure Outdoors.