

A Trip Leader's Handbook

Advice for Successful
GMC Outings

2. edition



Green Mountain Club
Waterbury Center, Vermont
2008



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Preface to Second Edition

This new edition of *A Trip Leader's Handbook: Advice for Successful GMC Outings* discusses some topics that were not included in the first. Among these are Leave No Trace outdoor ethics; the use of e-mail, not so common in 1997; GMC and section websites; and the now working statewide E-911 emergency response system. Another development is the growing popularity of kayaking which now rivals canoeing in Vermont. The Further Reading section has been updated, listing new trail guides and other books of use to hike leaders, as well as more recent maps and atlases.

The handbook was written by and for Green Mountain Club section members. The sections have experienced some major changes since the first edition came out: the venerable New York Section severed its ties to the club in 1999, while two new Vermont sections, Northern Frontier and Northeast Kingdom, were added in 2001.

Total section membership increased from 2,200 in 1997 to 3,100 in 2006, while overall GMC membership grew from 7,200 to 9,400, increasing the section share, versus at-large membership, just slightly from 31 percent to 33. Section members have a higher retention rate, and they continue to be at the core of club activities. Section outing calendars brim over with recreational activities and work hikes.

Most of the volunteers who maintain the Long Trail still come from the sections. Many section members serve on club-wide committees, some become club leaders. The vitality of the sections continues to be of utmost importance to the general health of the Green Mountain Club and to club volunteerism.

Agreeing to be a section trip leader is frequently the first step towards greater involvement with the GMC. That is but one major reason for keeping *A Trip Leader's Handbook* in print and updated. It is a way of telling section members that we appreciate your leadership, and that we want to lend you a hand.

For advice and assistance in preparing the second edition of the *Handbook*, I sincerely thank Pete Antos-Ketcham, GMC

Education Coordinator/Facilities Manager and Matt Larson, GMC Development Assistant. I and the GMC owe a special thank you to Nancy Jordan, dedicated club volunteer and long-time editor of the Montpelier Section newsletter, who did layout and oversaw production.

Reidun D. Nuquist
January 2008

Preface to First Edition

A Trip Leader's Handbook is the result of a long-felt need by members of the Green Mountain Club. It was researched and written by experienced hike leaders from several sections of the club. Sections (or chapters) traditionally act as local outing clubs for members and the public at large. In Vermont they are Bennington, Brattleboro, Bread Loaf, Burlington, Killington, Laraway, Manchester, Montpelier, Ottauquechee, and Sterling; the out-of-state sections are Connecticut, New York, and Worcester (Massachusetts).

We hope the *Handbook* will assist novice trip leaders and encourage members who have never led a trip to give it a try. There is no mystery to leading, but it requires planning and some careful thinking about what makes a good outing for participants as well as the leader. For experienced leaders, we hope the *Handbook* will serve as a useful reminder and checklist of what to do and what to pack.

For simplicity's sake, we mostly talk about hikes, although the points we discuss may apply to canoe, bicycle, cross-country ski, and snowshoe trips, all activities popular among GMC members. In Chapter 10 we talk about specific requirements for special outings, such as preparations for cold weather, boating, bicycling, and overnight trips.

As section representatives, we are clearly aware that each section of the GMC has its own history, traditions, and procedures. We have tried to incorporate as many of them as possible in the text, accepting that there is often more than one way to do things.

We hope you will find our advice useful. It is based on our own experiences as leaders of successful trips—and some trips we would frankly prefer to forget. What we share, as dedicated Green Mountain Club members, is a genuine commitment to leading safe, enjoyable hikes for those who love Vermont's mountains and that path of all footpaths, the Long Trail.

Trip Leader Guidelines Committee, 1996-1997

Reidun D. Nuquist,
Montpelier Section, Chairperson

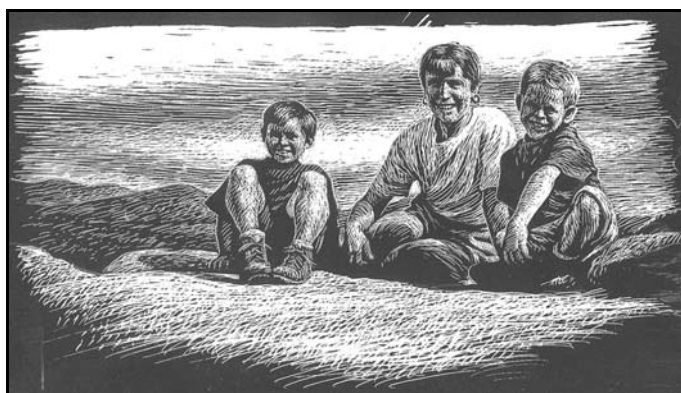
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Louise Lloyd Prescott, Bennington Section, whose earlier outline for a leader's handbook became our point of departure; Ed and Mary Williams who supplied information for the section on bicycle trips; Dennis L. Shaffer, GMC Executive Director, for his interest and support; Susan Bartlett Weber, GMC volunteer, who improved the text with her gentle and professional editing; Sylvia L. Plumb, GMC Managing Editor, who provided expert guidance and was responsible for layout and final production; Lisa Hughes, former GMC Business Manager, who reserved meeting space for the Trip Leader Guidelines Committee, supervised committee mailings, attended meetings after the end of her normal work day, hunted down facts, and gave us unstinting encouragement; and last, but not least, all section members who volunteer their time to lead trips for thousands of hikers each year.





CHAPTER 1

LEADERSHIP

Who Can Be a Trip Leader?

Green Mountain Club (GMC) trip leaders are volunteers, not professional guides. There is no formal training, and the club does not certify leaders. The only requirement is that she or he be a member of the club; in most instances this means section membership, since sections traditionally organize outings.

The most obvious learning method is to watch other leaders at work and take mental note of what contributes to a successful outing. You can volunteer to co-lead hikes if you are not ready to fly solo. Most of us learn by observing *and* doing.

To develop and improve your leadership skills, you may want to take advantage of workshops, lectures, and course offerings in subjects related to the outdoors. These include wilderness first aid, orienteering, cold weather travel skills, Leave No Trace, trail building and maintenance, meteorology, natural history, outdoor leadership, and many more. Look for training offered by the GMC, local schools, the American Red Cross, SOLO Wilderness Medicine, and other hiking clubs. Even experienced trip leaders benefit from classroom instruction now and then.

As a supplement to your formal and informal training, you may find it interesting to read what experts say on leadership. One useful book is Brian Beard's *Are We Having Fun Yet: Enjoying the Outdoors with Partners, Families and Groups* (1995); another is the *AMC Guide to Outdoor Leadership: Trip Planning, Risk Management, Group Dynamics, and Decision Making* (2003). For other recommendations, see Further Reading in the back of this handbook.

Leadership Qualities

Good leadership—and we all want to be good at what we do—requires first of all common sense and consideration for others. To be more specific, here are some of the qualities we think are important in a leader. They are traits that we all possess to some degree, but sometimes we need to be reminded of their importance.

Communication Skill. This is perhaps the single most important skill for a trip leader. She or he must brief participants about the hike, continually inform them of what is happening and why, involve them to an appropriate degree in decision making, be solicitous of their mental and physical welfare, and be willing to advise and instruct if necessary.

Acceptance of Responsibility. While many outings require little in the way of decision making, others demand that the leader take charge and make critical decisions for the group's safety. Be prepared to act when the situation demands it. Deal with small problems before they become large.

Listening and Observation Skills. Try to be a careful listener. Take seriously hiker's concerns, spoken and unexpressed. Never underestimate another's discomfort, pain, or fear.

Ability to Delegate. Be ready to delegate tasks to others. This makes participants feel accepted, increases group cohesiveness, and frees you to concentrate on major concerns and decisions.

Willingness to Instruct. Without being overbearing or preachy, be patient and willing to share your knowledge with

those less experienced or skilled. Shared information makes the group stronger and better able to make wise decisions.

Humor. Humor comes more easily to some of us than others, but is hard to beat for putting others at ease and relieving tension. We place self-depreciation in this category; carry your responsibilities earnestly, but don't take yourself too seriously. Be congenial.

Self-Awareness. None of us is perfect and skilled at everything. Don't let your ego get in the way of asking others for assistance and support when you need it. Keep an open mind and be willing to learn from others.

GMC Ambassador. As a GMC trip leader, you are automatically an ambassador for the club and the Long Trail. Take your role seriously by adhering to club policy on trail use, Leave No Trace outdoor ethics, and respect for nature. Model correct behavior and attitude.



You have probably heard the term "born leader." It usually implies charisma, authority, decisiveness, and a willingness to accept responsibility. Few of us were born to lead and if we were, we would still need to gain outdoor experience and skills before we would feel qualified to lead others.

While a "born leader" may be able to inspire with enthusiasm and eloquence, she or he may not possess the attributes that inspire trust and confidence in the back country. Nor do the strongest and most athletic hikers necessarily make the best leaders; they may be too occupied with their own agendas to pay adequate attention to those who are less rugged.

Different Leadership Styles

Just as there are no born trip leaders, there is no one correct leadership style. All personality types can become fine leaders with practice and experience.

Assertive individuals may, especially in their own eyes, seem to be more natural leaders than their more reserved counterparts. If they are not prepared, however, and show disregard for safety, their leadership role will soon be undermined.



A soft-spoken leader can guide a group as effectively by consulting participants and making them partners in decision making. This type of leader is also the final arbiter but builds group morale by showing respect for the opinions of others.

A good leader of any personality type takes charge early and leaves no doubt about who is leading. This does not mean that she or he must control the movements of every hiker every step of the way. On most outings, when participants have been properly briefed and parameters set for rest stops and decision points along the way, little actual leading may be needed for most of the hike. The leader must, of course, monitor the group's progress and well-being and be prepared to step in if need arises.

The bigger the group, the longer the outing and the less experienced the hikers, the more steering is needed by leader and co-leader(s). A leader of an ambitious hike may find herself or himself employing several leadership styles during the day. Smaller decisions, such as when to stop for lunch and for how long, may involve group consultation. Significant decisions involving physical safety, such as getting off a ridge before a storm, require a more controlling style because more is at stake. Experience teaches you when to exert authority and when to leave well enough alone.

For more information on leadership in the field, see Chapter 7: On the Trail.


Participants' Responsibilities

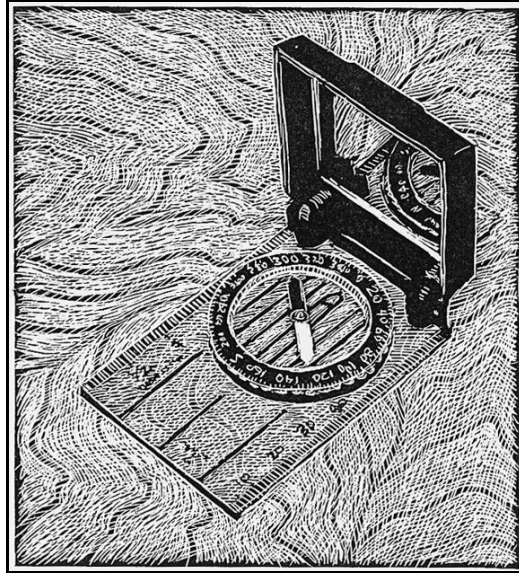
So far, we have talked about the qualities and duties of the leader. Participants also have responsibilities that are sometimes overlooked. They may be especially easy to forget for people who are used to being in charge.

By being a participant on a group hike you owe the leader respect and cooperation. She or he is the one with the knowledge—the person who planned the hike, scouted the trail, and weighed the options. Understand that on a group outing the welfare of the group supersedes your own preferences and expectations.

This does not mean that you always have to accept the leader's decision without being able to express concern or disagreement. But for the morale and protection of the group, do so in a constructive, respectful way and in private if possible. The group's safety may be endangered if undermining and splintering takes place.

Some hikers are passive bystanders and tend to shy away from expressing support or dissent of any kind. While this may be interpreted as backing of the leader, it can just as easily be viewed as indifference. Participants ought to be active and responsible group players.

Each participant should arrive with appropriate clothing and equipment for the hike, the season, and the conditions. A hiker cannot rely on the leader to bail her or him out with water, extra mittens, or sun block. A group's resources and safety are the sum total of each hiker's contributions and preparedness. 



CHAPTER 2

INITIAL PLANNING

Good leadership begins with early planning. If you are well prepared, the odds are already in your favor for a relaxed and seemingly effortless trip. Here is a rundown of what we think you need to consider.

Deciding Where to Go—and Why

Most trip leaders choose a trail they already know. Familiarity reduces the risk of surprise and enables you to better describe the hike and terrain to potential participants. If you haven't hiked the trail for a while, you may want to prepare by walking it again.

It is certainly possible to lead a hike in an unfamiliar area. Some experienced leaders do so to learn a new trail that has caught their interest. They may have talked to someone who has hiked in the area or know a person with local information. This kind of exploring should only be undertaken by seasoned

outdoors people who are skilled at following a guidebook and can use map and compass. The leader should tell participants in advance that he or she is leading a hike in foreign territory.

By the same token, anyone who wants to lead a bushwhacking trip off the beaten path should make it clear to participants exactly what they are embarking upon. Bushwhacking is not recommended, unless you are experienced at finding your way. It is one thing to get lost on your own and quite another to lead others astray.

You should also consider the season when choosing a destination. An easy summer hike may be quite difficult in the middle of winter when snow obliterates blazes and days are short. During hunting season, sections often schedule road walks or use city parks, nature centers, and recreation paths.

Know *why* you are going somewhere. If you are going on a scenic foliage hike or a bird watching trip, label it as such in the outing schedule and press releases. Hikers seek the outdoors for different reasons. Give them a chance to decide if your hike is for them.

Types of Outings

Although the GMC is first and foremost a hiking club—after all, it was founded to build and maintain the Long Trail—most sections schedule a variety of day trips. What follows is a list of the most common outing categories. (For more information on special outings, including overnight trips, see Chapter 10: Special Outings.)

Hikes. Hikes on and off the Long Trail are popular in spring, summer, and fall. Remember that the official hiking season does not start until Memorial Day when most trails are dry enough to avoid damage and erosion from hiking boots. Early spring may indeed be a good time to schedule a walk on quiet back roads with little traffic.

The opening date for individual trails may vary, depending on the amount of snow, the weather, and the elevation. The annual spring issue of the *Long Trail News* and the club website gives guidelines. You can also call the Green Mountain Club

for up-to-date information on your destination or for ideas on early season outings.

The *Long Trail Guide* provides a wealth of ideas for hikes as does its companion volume, *Day Hiker's Guide to Vermont*. The latter describes hikes away from the Long Trail. Both provide maps, information on trailheads, descriptions of trails, distances, elevations, and estimated times. Acquire both and read the introductory chapters outlining the club's policy on trail use and conservation.

A third publication, *50 Hikes in Vermont*, co-produced by the GMC and Backcountry Guides, has detailed descriptions of hikes of varying difficulty throughout the state. Newer publications include *360 Degrees: A Guide to Vermont's Fire and Observation Towers*. There are also guidebooks issued by other organizations and commercial publishers, many available from the GMC. (Members receive a discount on in-stock titles.)

Not all section hikes take place in Vermont. Some trip leaders venture into the White Mountains of New Hampshire, the Adirondacks in New York State, and even Quebec. Guidebooks for these areas are available through the GMC.

Bicycle Trips. Bicycle trips are common in the warmer months and have increased in popularity over the last few years. For ideas on routes, loops, and roads less traveled by automobiles, see specialized guidebooks, such as John S. Freidin, *Backroad Bicycling in Vermont* and Sandy Duling, *Short Bike Rides in Vermont*.

Paddling Trips. Some sections plan more paddling trips than others, depending on the proximity of rivers and lakes and how many members own canoes and kayaks. Two popular reference books are Roioli Schweiker, *Canoe Camping: Vermont & New Hampshire Rivers* and John Hayes and Alex Wilson, *Quiet Water: New Hampshire and Vermont*.

Cross-country Ski Trips. This sport has increased steadily in popularity since the 1970s. Most sections sponsor trips throughout the winter. Some groups break their own trails through the woods while others use the groomed tracks at Nordic ski centers for a fee. For ideas about where to go, check

books like David Goodman, *Backcountry Skiing Adventures*.

In 1985 three young back country skiers conceived the Catamount Trail, a winter trail to parallel the Long Trail from Massachusetts to Canada. Today this long-distance ski trail is nearly complete. The Catamount Trail Association has its own guidebook, *Catamount Trail Guidebook*, and maps with a multitude of ideas for cross-country ski trips.

Snowshoe Trips. Snowshoeing has never been out of fashion in Vermont, and the new lightweight shoes with crampons have renewed interest in the sport. Snowshoes are hard to beat for winter climbing in forested and steep terrain. The GMC's book, *Snowshoeing in Vermont*, lists many possible destinations.

Theme Outings. For variety, at any time of the year, try leading a theme hike to attract a different group of hikers and to add variety to your section's outing schedule. A theme hike has a purpose beyond reaching a mountain top or other destination. (Work hikes may fall under this category, but are not covered in this handbook, which is about recreational outings.)

Most GMC'ers are genuinely interested in nature. How about planning a trip centered on bird watching, botany, geology, or tracking? One section has an annual Mother's Day wildflower hike where parents can bring their children, or take the day off from parenting, to botanize and enjoy the spring flora in the company of others; this is usually *not* an outing for those who like to cover long distances in a hurry.

If you don't feel you are enough of an expert on a topic that intrigues you, invite someone along who is. Local colleges often have faculty members who are willing to lead a group of interested adults. Or you may get ideas for tour guides by watching the calendar of events in your local newspaper.

To try something really different, plan a silent hike. Tell participants that the trip is to be quiet—no talking allowed, except during lunch—to better hear the sounds of the forest: birds singing, wind rustling, water splashing. Such a hike may attract nature lovers as well as those self-sufficient souls who always think there is too much jabbering on a group hike.



Advance Scouting

While the Green Mountain Club does not require trip leaders to hike the trail in advance, we strongly recommend that you do so. Some leaders make a point of always surveying the trail, trailhead, and available parking, and consider advance scouting a self-imposed step in their preparations.

The reasons for surveying in advance are easy to understand. Maybe the guidebook is unclear on how to find the trailhead, or the trailhead has been moved since the book was published; it happens, especially in areas of development pressure and when land changes hands. Perhaps your highway map or road atlas is outdated. There could be a rerouting of the trail since you last hiked it. A crucial trail sign may be missing, or blazes may have toppled along with blowdowns. Better to check it all out beforehand and save yourself confusion and embarrassment on the day of the hike.

If it is impractical to scout the trail, it is still desirable to scout the trailhead or obtain confirmation from someone who has used it recently and knows its exact location. Make sure there is room for adequate, legal parking.

Permission, Fees, Parking

Permission. If you plan to cross private land—other than on the LT and other established trails where passage is already secured—it may be necessary to obtain permission from the owner. Do so well in advance, stating politely who you are, why you would like to cross the land, and the anticipated size of your party. Having obtained an OK, make sure that the hike is exactly what you outlined to the owner. Always practice Leave No Trace hiking, leaving the land better than you found it. Gates should remain shut or open, exactly as found.

Fees. Some outings involve fees; find out how much and what they cover. State parks charge a day user fee in season. Ask about discounts for groups. Overnight trips may involve a camping fee. Backpackers on the Long Trail pay a fee in season at shelters that have caretakers: Remind your participants to bring their GMC membership card.

Cross-country ski centers charge a fee for use of their groomed trails. Some centers grant a discount to club members, and others may have special group rates. Check this out in advance, so participants can come prepared.

Parking. Wherever your trailhead, make sure that you can find it without difficulty and that there is legal, safe, and adequate off-road parking for the size group you plan to lead. Unfortunately, vandalism to cars left at trailheads has become common, even in Vermont. Weigh the party's options: how few cars can you get away with, or can you get someone to drop you off, pick you up? When leaving a car, make sure it contains nothing of value.

Size of Group

Several factors should be considered when determining group size, and they vary depending on the nature of the outing.

Day Hikes. The GMC recommends that a day hike not exceed ten participants, including leader(s). A maximum is set to protect the trail bed from expansion and erosion, but there are other reasons, too. Think about how other hikers may react to the sight and sound of a large party. Many hikers hit the trail to get away from crowds and avoid group outings for just that reason. Encounters with boisterous throngs may strengthen their resolve but for the wrong reason.

To avoid unexpected numbers, you, as trip leader, can decide in advance how many participants you can responsibly and safely guide. Although mishaps can occur anytime, anywhere, remember it is simpler to lead a large group on an easy summer's stroll in the woods than on a midwinter snowshoe expedition. Remember that as a GMC trip leader you automatically set an example, and part of your responsibility is to promote safety guidelines.

If you are planning a hike in an environmentally sensitive area, you may also want to consider the size of the group. As a GMC ambassador, you are promoting respect for nature and the protection of delicate ecosystems.

Limiting the size of a day hike can, we admit, pose a problem. Most sections publish their outing schedules well in advance and in several media, so members and guests have enough time to plan ahead. If they wake up to a beautiful day, enthusiastic and rearing to go, no leader will be anxious to send them home. The best way to avoid this is to advertise your trip size and ask people to register in advance.

If the group becomes too large, divide it into two or three smaller groups, enlisting hikers you know and trust as co-leaders. When spotting cars, consider dividing the group in two, hiking in opposite directions and exchanging car keys midway. In reality, oversize groups seldom happen. (Potluck outings may be an exception: hikers are always hungry.)

Minimum Number. On some outings, you should consider setting a minimum number for participants. For instance, a paddling trip should ideally have at least three boats and winter trips should have a minimum of four participants for safety. An arduous cross-country ski trip in the back country should have a minimum of five participants: in case of an emergency, two skiers can ski out for help.

Advance Registration. If you decide to limit the size of the party, your publicity should state the acceptable number of hikers, and you must request advance registration. Some sections insist on pre-registration for *all* their trips. For especially demanding trips, all leaders should do so.

For less difficult outings, advance registration is optional. Some sections see their outing schedule as the best possible recruiting tool for attracting new club members and choose to make joining as easy as possible. In addition, advance registration may discourage hikers who like to live spontaneously. All leaders should, however, encourage participants to contact them in advance for trip information and for any last minute adjustments to the plan.

Overnight Trips. The GMC recommends that a backpacking group on the Long Trail include no more than ten people, counting leader(s). This is a *high* number, considering available trail accommodations. Four to six hikers is far better for your

group's comfort and for the tranquility of others at the overnight site.

The GMC advises backpacking groups to be self-sufficient and to carry their own accommodations in the form of tents and/or tarps, as well as lightweight stoves for cooking. This is good outdoors etiquette and shows consideration for your fellow hikers.

The size of LT shelters varies; the average structure has bunk space for six to eight. The *Long Trail Guide* gives the specific size of each.

If you are lucky—and it can happen in early summer and late fall—your party has the shelter to itself. It is far more likely that you end up sharing it with others, some of whom may have arrived before you and laid claim to floor or bunk space. Remember that there is no toll-free number to call for room reservation. It is first come, first served, while showing as much regard for others as possible. If you arrive first but carry a tent, you should offer to give up bunk space to someone who is less well equipped.

Many shelters have designated tent sites or tent platforms for overflowing traffic; occasionally these sites are found *between* shelters. The Long Trail guidebook lists designated tent locations. Use these sites only, and don't damage vegetation or water quality by pitching your tent in other areas. For more on tenting, see Chapter 9: Outdoor Ethics.

Distance, Time, Meeting Place

To continue your advance planning, you need to estimate the length of your hike, when to depart, and where the meeting place is to be.

Distance. Using your guidebook, figure the length of your hike in miles and ascent/descent in feet. In addition to guidebook maps, you may wish to consult the relevant USGS topographic quadrangle sheets, to better "read" the ups and downs of the terrain.

Time. Apply your personal knowledge of the trail and estimate how long the actual hike will take. Although you

may know your own average speed in the woods, remember that it is difficult to estimate the pace of a group. Build in extra time for walking, rest stops, photo opportunities, water stops, a lunch break, and briefings.

The *Long Trail Guide* gives a general estimate that may help: 2 miles per hour, plus ½ hour for each 1,000 feet of ascent. This formula is for day hiking, with no stops or allowance for a heavy overnight pack.

Consider how long the *whole* trip will take, including the driving, and then build in some extra time for life's little emergencies. One person may need to stop for gas, another has to replace the lunch she or he left on the kitchen table. Set a prudent starting time.

You may also try to estimate your return time: someone with another engagement is bound to ask. This is tricky, because there are so many variables on a group hike. Don't let yourself be pinned down to a specific hour. If you must answer, we suggest something along this line: "I am hoping we'll be back in town by five but I can't guarantee it, because I don't leave until every hiker is safely out of the woods." If this doesn't satisfy, perhaps the busy interrogator should stay at home.

Meeting Place. Next, you need to decide on a meeting place. Some sections make it easy for all involved by always meeting in an established location, such as a school parking lot. Wherever it is, make sure there is sufficient legal and safe parking, so you can suggest car pooling.

Out-of-town hikers may, to save themselves time, ask to meet you somewhere along the route to the trailhead. Decide in advance how you want to deal with such requests. If you assent, we suggest that *you* set the meeting place and time, while stressing that you will not wait beyond the appointed hour. You don't want to have the whole group fuming over one straggler.

For some outings it may make sense to meet in a different location, such as a boat launch or ski center. Whatever you decide, make sure that your instructions are clear.

Difficulty Rating and Skills

To be fair to your prospective hikers, you need to tell them how easy or difficult the trip will be. Then let them, at least initially, decide if they are prepared. Remember that a group is only as strong as its weakest link. While you don't want to discriminate against those in poorer physical condition, they can be a burden to others and put the whole party in danger. Better to make clear what you expect from participants.

Rating. Rating a hike is tricky. What's a piece of cake to a strong, well-trained hiker may be a physical challenge to a less conditioned person. We suggest the following guidelines for rating outings:

Difficulty Rating

Difficult: Outings where the participant needs to be fit and should be experienced and skilled in the activity. For *hikes*, generally those over 8 miles total or with more than 2,400 ft. of elevation gain. For *bike trips*, those over 35 miles or with long uphill sections. For *ski trips*, longer than 10 miles or greater than 1,000 ft. in elevation gain. For *snowshoe trips*, 6 miles or longer or more than 2,000 ft. in elevation gain. For *paddling trips*, flat water trips longer than 8 miles, white water trips Class I or II longer than 5 miles, or any Class III or higher.

Moderate: For the average participant. Some experience and skill are required, but it may be in related activities rather than the specific activity. For *hikes* generally, 5 to 8 miles in length and 1,000 ft. to 2,400 ft. in elevation gain. For *bike trips*, generally 15 to 35 miles flat or moderate hills. For *ski trips*, 6 to 10 miles with less than 1,000 ft. in elevation gain. For *snowshoe trips*, 3 to 6 miles and 800 to 2,000 ft. in elevation gain. For *paddling trips*, flat water trips of 5 to 8 miles, white water trips Class I or II less than 5 miles; note that white water Class III or higher will make even a short canoe trip difficult.

Easy: Available to almost anyone who wants to do the activity. For *hikes*, less than 5 miles and less than 1,000 ft. elevation gain. For *bike trips*, fairly flat and less than 15 miles. For *ski trips*, fairly flat and less than 6 miles. For *snowshoe trips*, shorter than 3 miles or less than 800 feet elevation gain. For *paddling trips*, flat water trips less than 5 miles.

There will always be some situations where the rating and the distance/elevation gain don't match these guidelines. For example, a hike of just 6 miles over many large boulders could be difficult. Or a flat walk of 11 miles in very easy terrain, such as a gravel path, could be moderate. *Pace* also influences the rating. If you intend a fast-paced trip (greater than 2 miles/hour for hikes), you can turn a moderate trip into difficult or an easy into moderate. If the pace is slow (less than 1.5 miles/hour), that may lower the rating of a trip. Since longer trips still require endurance, we suggest that the rating not be changed, but that the trip description discuss pace, and thus duration, of the trip.

Skills. If special skills are required, such as white water paddling or mountain biking, advertise them. The purpose is not to discriminate against those lacking the skill, but to ensure the safety and enjoyment of the party. Encourage those who are not skilled to take lessons and/or practice, so they can join you in the future.

Be sure to include the difficulty rating and skill requirements in all publicity about the outing.






CHAPTER 3

PUBLICITY

Where to Advertise

GMC sections handle publicity in different ways, involving a variety of officers and committees. Most sections, if not all, publish a newsletter, which lists upcoming events under a heading like "Outing Schedule," and most post their activities on a section website. At least one section also prints an abbreviated outing calendar in pocket format, a handy reminder of upcoming trips.

Section procedures determine how widely outings are advertised beyond the newsletter. Some sections view the outing schedule as the best way to recruit new members and send it to local daily and weekly newspapers as well as to radio and television stations. (A statewide media list is available from the GMC office.) Others limit publicity to the section newsletter and website.



All sections share their outing schedules with the GMC's quarterly *Long Trail News*, which includes as many section events as space and local deadlines allow. It is published in February, May, August, and November with editor's deadline on December 15, March 15, June 15, and September 15. The GMC website lists all section outings.

The GMC office has many other means of advertising section trips. Contact the office to learn what options are currently available.

You, as trip leader, have a say in how widely your hike is publicized. If you are leading a strenuous backpacking trip or a hike that concludes with a potluck supper in someone's home, you can request that advertising be limited to section members. The wider you broadcast the outing, the more you must be prepared to screen for ability.

Advance Registration

Some trip leaders insist on advance registration by telephone or e-mail for all hikes. This enables them to describe the outing in detail and explain what is needed for gear and equipment. At the same time participants have an opportunity to tell the leader about their expectations, conditioning, and skills. Leader and participant can then decide if this is the right outing for the hiker. Without advance registration the leader may have to screen for ability level and preparedness on the day of the hike.

Advance registration is recommended for all strenuous and overnight hikes. If the leader has to turn down an ill-prepared hiker at the last minute, it is an uncomfortable situation for both parties and the rest of the group. Advance registration is also a tool for ensuring that group size guidelines are followed.

As mentioned in Chapter 2: Initial Planning under Size of Group, advance registration is less important for an easy hike, but advance contact should always be encouraged as a means of obtaining information from the leader.

Details and Deadlines

The most detailed description of your hike will appear in the

section newsletter where you are guaranteed space and editorial cooperation. Be prepared to meet the editor's deadline: you want readers to know about the outing well in advance, so they can reserve the date. After all, you are organizing the hike for them.

Newspapers and television and radio stations have their own deadlines, which must also be followed. They usually edit press releases, which must include telephone numbers and fit the format of their calendars of events. Radio announcements should be thirty seconds or less in length. Be prepared to see your hike description drastically shortened and occasionally botched. Look for the listing in print and on television and listen on the air, so you can be prepared to deal with any errors. Many of us have had hikes listed under the wrong date or with a wrong telephone number. One GMC member will never forget several *very* early calls one Sunday morning when she planned to sleep in, inquiring about a canoe trip she was definitely not leading.

General Trip Information

Some information is common to most hikes and can be summarized at the beginning of the outing schedule to save space and avoid repetition.

These introductory paragraphs may include facts about a customary meeting place, difficulty rating (see Chapter 2 for guidelines), trip leaders' volunteer status, and participants' responsibilities. Here is an example of such common trip information:

OUTING SCHEDULE ***(Sample Introduction)***

Please note: Non-members are welcome on our outings. Advance registration is not necessary unless so stated, but is always useful to the leader and to inform participants of any last-minute changes.

Unless otherwise noted, all trips leave from James P. Taylor High School parking lot in Greentown at the time given. If you ride with someone, please offer to share transportation expenses.

The ratings for level of difficulty are **Easy**, **Moderate**, and **Difficult**, indicating distance, steepness, and footing for hikes; for other outings, different factors may influence the rating.

Our trip leaders are volunteers who are not necessarily trained in first aid, nor does the Wampahoofus Section or the GMC certify or license trip leaders. Participants should attend these events with the understanding that they are responsible for their own preparedness and safety and that all contribute to the well-being of the group.

Trip Description

Your full trip description should be as accurate and informative as possible, using terms that cannot be misinterpreted. Some sections have leaders fill out a planning form or checklist of the fundamentals (see Appendix A for example).

If you did your homework during the initial planning, you should now have all the information you need to write a good trip description. It should include:

What—type of outing, distance, level of difficulty, skills if any, what to bring, group size

Why—purpose of outing and registration information

When—meeting date and hour

Where—meeting location and trip destination

Who—leader's name, telephone number, and e-mail address (optional)

A sample trip description might read like this:


Trip Description
(Long Version)

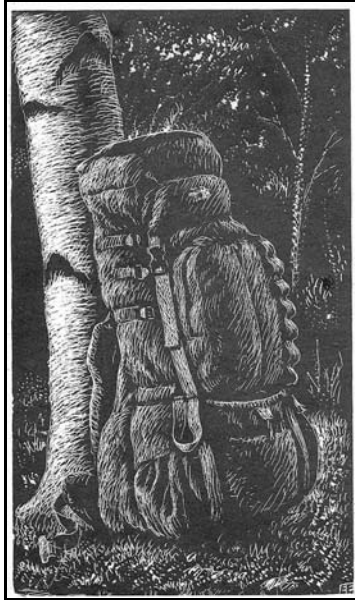
Saturday, January 13, 2008 — Green Mountain

Club snowshoe outing to Stowe Pinnacle in the Worcester Range. Excellent views of Mt. Mansfield and other peaks in the Green Mountains. About 2.8 miles round trip with 1,520 ft. ascent. **Moderate with steady pace.** Dress warmly in layers. Bring lunch, warm drink, plenty of water. Meet at James P. Taylor High School parking lot, Greentown, at 8:30 a.m. **Leader:** Willie Monroe, 123-4567.

*Trip Description
(Short Version)*

Saturday, January 13, 2008 — Green Mountain Club snowshoe outing to Stowe Pinnacle, Worcester Range. About 2.8 miles round trip with 1,520 ft. ascent. **Moderate with steady pace.** **Leader:** Willie Monroe, 123-4567.

With trip description and publicity prepared, you can now take a deserved rest until the week of the hike. While you are waiting, you may want to mull over equipment, a favorite topic for outdoors people. Remember the old scout motto: Be prepared (for almost anything). 



CHAPTER 4

CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

Clothing and equipment are tricky topics. Many trip leaders hold firm opinions on what they need to carry and about their degree of responsibility for the comfort of participants. While consensus is possible for some basic items, many of our suggestions will be evaluated by leaders based on their own experience, preferences, and the nature and difficulty of the outing. Many items that are optional on an easy summer hike become mandatory on longer, more difficult trips in late fall, winter, and early spring.

Hiker's Checklist

Below is a checklist of *suggested* items to bring on any day hike, whether you hike alone or with a group. We present it as a reminder of what you *may* need, aware that some items are occasionally redundant. In your role as trip leader, it is appropri-

ate to remind participants to bring essential articles for the particular outing, such as rain gear, extra clothing layers, and water.

Adjust clothing and gear to the season, altitude, temperature, and length of the outing. Some of the warmer items on the list may seem excessive on a balmy day but can prove useful in an emergency. When choosing clothing, remember that cotton, which dries slowly and doesn't wick moisture from the skin, leaves you cold and wet; it is useless and must be avoided for all but the warmest and driest summer days ("cotton kills"). For overnight and winter outings, additional clothing and equipment will be needed (see Chapter 10: Special Outings).

Get into the habit of checking your equipment each time you return from a hike to make sure everything is dry and in working order before you stow it. Don't postpone maintenance, repairs, and replacements until the morning of the next hike. Keep your boots waterproofed, zippers in working order, headlamp equipped with fresh batteries. Replenish depleted items, such as matches and Moleskin.

To make packing as uncomplicated as possible, try leaving your hiking gear in the pack from trip to trip: it saves last-minute searching and aggravation.

Hiker's Checklist

- Hiking boots or hiking shoes (broken in)
- Socks (wool/synthetic), sock liners, and extra change
- Pants or shorts
- Shirt
- Hat or cap
- Extra layer(s) (wool or fleece)
- Rain jacket and pants
- Gloves or mittens
- Bandanna and/or handkerchief
- Pack
- Hiking poles (optional)
- Lunch, snacks, plus some extra
- Water

- Compass
- Matches (waterproof) and/or lighter
- Pocket knife
- Headlamp or flashlight
- Watch
- First aid kit
- Safety pins
- Lip balm
- Whistle
- Toilet paper and trowel
- Notebook and pencil
- Sunglasses
- Sun block
- Insect repellent

Leader's Additional Checklist

As trip leader you need to bring additional equipment for the safety and well-being of the group. This does *not* mean that hikers are not responsible for their own welfare; mature adult participants should come equipped to take care of their own physical needs and small emergencies.


As a capable and resourceful leader, however, you can raise the odds in your favor by bringing a few extras to deal with emergencies of one kind or another: blisters, sudden changes in the weather, broken equipment—common occurrences that can delay the group if left unattended. The contents of a repair kit will vary depending on the type of outing but may include such basics as duct tape, wire, needle and thread, ripstop nylon, and pliers.

Here is our list of suggested additional equipment; remember that this is *in addition to* the items on the hiker's checklist that you are already carrying. (See also Chapter 11: Emergency and Appendix D: First Aid Kit). It is all right to ask your co-leader (s) and participants to help you carry the additional gear.

Leader's Checklist

- Trip sign-up sheet
- Map, guidebook, compass, and GPS (optional)

- First aid kit (more extensive) and booklet
- Extra clothing
- Wool socks
- Wool hat
- Water filtration kit or purification tablets/drops
- Emergency blanket or tarp
- Sleeping bag (in winter)
- Insulating pad (in winter)
- Stove (in winter)
- Repair kit
- Rope or cord
- Big plastic bag or poncho (spare rain/wind gear)
- Cell phone (optional, for emergency only)
- Calling card
- Plastic trash bag

With these items in your pack, you should be able to handle most minor emergencies. It's like carrying an umbrella: if you have it in your briefcase, it probably won't rain but you feel better knowing it is there. 



CHAPTER 5

THE WEEK BEFORE THE HIKE

Some decisions cannot be made until the week of the outing when you receive telephone calls and e-mails from interested hikers. Anticipated attendance, weather forecast, and local conditions may cause adjustments to your plans.

Handling Hiker Queries

Ideally, you should be on hand the last few evenings before the hike to answer questions and give information over the telephone or by e-mail. This is not always possible; if you have an answering machine, you can record general answers and promise to return calls to answer others. Use these exchanges to get information from prospective hikers.

Number of Hikers. The calls and e-mail messages can tell you how large the group may be. If you have decided to limit the number of hikers for safety and Leave No Trace guidelines, accept them as first come, first served, assuming they have the necessary experience and skills. Tell late registrants when the trip is full and explain why; you can leave them on a waiting list if they wish, and inform them of future outings.

Names and Telephone Numbers. Always write down the name and telephone number of any hiker who says he or she wants to come. This helps you greet hikers at the meeting place and enables you to call them if you have to cancel the trip. Always carry names and numbers with you on the trail.

Screening. The final decision about who is able and prepared for the hike is yours. Use the telephone or e-mail exchanges to explain what is required of hikers on your trip, allowing them to describe their fitness and previous experience.

If you decide they are not prepared, try to avoid hurt feelings and tell them as diplomatically as possible why you are turning them down. Try something like, "I am sorry, but from what you have told me, I think this ski trip is more than you are ready for right now. I have to be concerned about the safety of the group, and it is only as strong as the weakest skier. I hope you will consider joining the section on another trip, such as the one scheduled for next Sunday." You may suggest training or lessons when appropriate.

Using this approach, you convey that you are rejecting the person's preparedness, not the person. Remember that your handling of a delicate situation may reflect not only on the Green Mountain Club but also on your reputation as trip leader.

Weather and Last Minute Decisions

Even when you listen faithfully to the daily weather forecast, it is difficult to anticipate the weather. Sometimes you don't know until the night before or early the morning of the trip whether you should proceed with your plans. Moderately inclement weather may not affect them, beyond extra reminders to participants to bring appropriate gear and clothing.

Different types of weather affect different types of outings. While moderate wind may not inconvenience hikers in the woods, it can be a different matter on an exposed ridge or on the water. Pay extra attention to the force of the wind if you are planning a paddling trip. Consider canceling if strong winds are forecast.

If you are going skiing, check the snow conditions. Cross-country ski centers will give you up-to-date reports over the telephone. Find out if there is adequate snow cover for the trip. Icy conditions can make even an easy ski trip a challenge, if not dangerous.

A local flood warning can make traveling to the trailhead unsafe. Consider the safety of the group by looking for alternate routes. If none exists, weigh your options. Can you come up with another, safer destination, or should you cancel the trip?

Cancellation

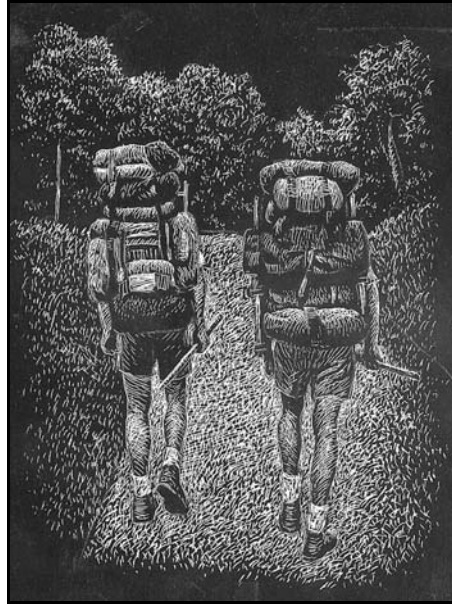
No leader enjoys canceling a long-planned trip, but sometimes it is the right decision. If a severe storm, extreme cold, or high wind is expected, ask yourself if you can safely lead a group of hikers in such adverse conditions. If the answer is a prudent "no," broadcast the cancellation via radio and community TV when there is time, and call all hikers who planned to attend. (E-mail is less reliable: you may not know if the hiker reads your message in time.)

Another reason for canceling is an inadequate number of participants. This will mostly affect backcountry ski trips and boat trips where safety may depend on people helping each other in an emergency. Let those who registered know your decision and why.

If you have to cancel a trip, *you must still show up at the meeting place if the meeting time was published*, or you can send a delegate. Some participants may be unaware of the cancellation. You don't want them sitting in the parking lot, cursing the no-show leader. This potential situation is another reason for using pre-registration for your trips.

Occasionally, personal illness or an emergency prevents a trip leader from going on a planned hike. In such cases she or he should make a reasonable effort to find a substitute leader. If that proves impossible, follow the steps for cancellation, with or without help from section members, with a spokesperson showing up at the designated meeting place.





CHAPTER 6

LET'S GO!

The sun is shining (we hope), and the morning of the hike is finally here. Your itinerary is known to members of your household or at least to officers of your GMC section. You are dressed for the weather, your rucksack is expertly packed, and you are at the designated meeting place a few minutes early. You don't want to keep the party waiting, wondering whether they have the right time and place.

Introductions and Briefing

Introduce yourself as the leader of the hike, and, using your registration list from the calls and e-mails you received, check off those who are present. Make sure everybody is introduced to each other: you are the "host."

Brief the party about the hike. Explain where you are going, distance and difficulty rating, the terrain, necessary skills and equipment, how you plan to get to the trailhead, and when you

anticipate returning. This is essentially your "trip description" but with more details. Show them the route to the trailhead and the trail on the map. Ask if anyone has questions about the outing, and answer them as frankly and completely as you can.

Experience and Equipment Review

Circulate among the group to assure yourself that everyone is adequately prepared. Sometimes it is obvious that a hiker is not properly dressed. If someone shows up for a winter hike in sneakers and blue jeans, you must ask if that is what she or he is planning to wear. If the answer is yes, tell the person as tactfully as you can that you cannot let her or him participate, because they may put themselves and others at risk.

If you can't tell by observing, ask what they are carrying. If you have serious doubts about their preparedness, it is your responsibility to turn them away. It is better to do it now than an hour later at the trailhead when you finally see their gear.

Sign-up Sheet

Next it is time to pass around the trip sign-up sheet (see Appendix B for sample), ideally attached to a clipboard with a pencil; many pens do not work in cold weather. Ask hikers for their name, address, and telephone number. This information is helpful in keeping track of a large party and can be crucial if something unforeseen should happen. Take it with you on the hike.

You may also want to ask if participants are club members. You can then use the data on the sign-up sheet for mailing membership information and the section newsletter to non-members. It shows that you value their participation and that they are welcome on club outings.

Carpooling, Caravaning, and Car Spotting

With the record keeping out of the way, ask participants to carpool to save fuel, get acquainted, and reduce the need for parking space at the trailhead. While some always prefer to drive, others are usually receptive to accepting rides.

Sections handle the expense for transportation in different ways. Some assume that repeated ridesharing will balance the cost of gasoline in the long run, while others expect passengers to pay their share on each trip.

If any driver is unfamiliar with the route, show her or him on the map where you are going. Tell drivers to keep track of the car *behind* them to avoid losing anyone along the way. A signal for "need-to-stop" (usually flashing lights) should be agreed upon. Explain where along the route you will stop and wait if anyone needs to catch up.


For hikes that are planned as one-way, cars need to be left at both ends. As few cars as possible should be left at the trailhead to speed up the homeward journey. Work out an arrangement with drivers on how this can best be handled.

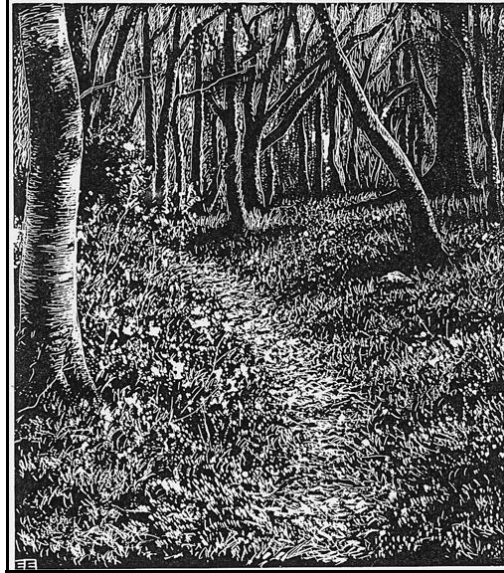
Pick-ups along the Way

If you have agreed to meet additional hikers along the way, explain to the caravan where and when you will stop. Special meeting locations should be chosen for your convenience. Always tell those who request them to *show up early*, when you expect to be there, and that you will not wait beyond the appointed hour. Avoid too many stops; they slow the party down. (There may be special circumstances where you need to extend a wait to ensure that your party is of the minimum safe size or to include someone with special knowledge that will aid the trip.)

Departure Time

With preliminaries taken care of, you are at last ready to depart. You should wait a few minutes for latecomers—how long depends on your goodwill, advance registration, and how far participants have to travel to the meeting place. Never wait long. You owe it to those who were punctual to leave as promptly as possible, especially if you have a long way to travel. As trip leader, you should always drive within the legal speed limit.

Next stop: the trailhead! 



CHAPTER 7

ON THE TRAIL

At the trailhead, drivers should park their cars legally off the road but visible, with trunk or hatch in plain view to avoid vandalism and theft. Remind hikers to leave nothing of value in the vehicles. If possible, leave the glove box empty and open; just make sure there is no light that will drain the battery.

Allow participants enough time to get organized. Let them collect their gear, adjust boots and clothing, and go to the bathroom. It is better to stage a relaxed start than have a flustered hiker forget her car keys or extra sweater.

At the Trailhead

When everybody is ready, gather the group around you for a last-minute briefing: you do not want them running up the trail without guidelines. This will also reinforce that there is a person in charge of the outing, namely you.

Briefly repeat your plan for the trip and its objective. De-

scribe the trail and trail junctions, unfolding the map again if necessary. Describe your anticipated pace and explain when and where you plan to provide rest stops and decision points, i.e. opportunities to assess progress and/or revise the plan for the outing. Ask if there are questions and deal with any concerns the group may have.

Emphasize that you want to lead a safe trip and that you intend to return with the same number of hikers you started with. (This may be stating the obvious, but it sometimes bears saying.) That means the group stays together, with every hiker showing concern for the safety and well-being of others. Remind participants that one strategy for keeping the group together is for each person to keep track of the one behind as well as the one ahead.

If someone has to step off the trail, the person should tell a fellow hiker. If no one is within hailing distance, she or he can indicate absence by leaving the daypack by the trail until returning, to avoid the possibility of being passed by the sweep, the last person in the group.



Stress that two-way communication is important. If anyone has questions or concerns along the way, you want to hear them. And *no one* may leave the group or take off on her or his own without notifying the leader.

Finally, introduce your co-leader, if any, and the person who is going to be the sweep and explain her or his duties.

Position of Leader

Some trip leaders assume that "leading" means being in front at all times. By being first—the point person—you can locate the trail, assess terrain and weather conditions ahead, and set the pace for the group.

This is not always necessary. When you stay in the lead with the fastest hikers, you are not in the best location to monitor the progress of your party. If you constantly stay with the same hikers, you are less accessible to the rest of the group, who may understandably come to see you as elitist and unapproachable. Being a trip leader sometimes requires a shift in orientation.



You can lead from *any* position within the group, even from the end. If you are able to vary your pace, change position occasionally. Give yourself a chance to visit with newcomers as well as old-timers, to see how everyone is doing. If you have only one speed (that includes many of us), use rest stops to get acquainted with group members.

So what does it matter, you may ask, where everyone is positioned half-way through the hike? Some 'what if's?' should counter any doubts about the leader's need to be observant. What if the group is short a member at lunch and nobody can account for the discrepancy? What if a person takes a wrong turn and gets lost? What if a hiker is lagging behind, can't catch up, and doesn't know the way? In any of these circumstances, your decisions and actions are vastly complicated when you don't know the whereabouts of all group members.

Use of Sweep

The second most important assignment, after the point person, is that of the sweep. We recommend that every sizeable group have a conscientious person who has volunteered, or been drafted, to stay in the last position. The sweep must at all times know that she or he is at the end and that no one is left behind.

Experienced hikers who know their pace to be slower than the majority of the group often volunteer for this position. Make sure that the sweep occasionally gets a chance to change place. A person, who is slow going uphill, may prefer a faster pace in flat terrain or downhill. Besides, it can get lonely at the end with no party member passing you and chatting.

If nobody volunteers to be the sweep, draft a hiker, and change the recruit at every rest stop. No one should feel stuck in one position for the entire hike.

Use of Co-leader

On a difficult hike or an outing with a large turnout, you might consider having a co-leader to share the responsibilities of leadership. Choose an experienced person whom you trust. If

possible, find your co-leader in advance of the hike and explain how you want to divide duties. Use your co-leader: a good leader delegates authority and makes others feel useful.

You may make your co-leader the point person, with instructions about where to go and when to stop and wait for the rest of the group. You may also use your co-leader as sweep. She or he can help you find a lunch stop, start preparations for a group meal, help hikers with map reading, look for signs of cold and fatigue—in short, any task that is helpful to you and the rest of the group.

Group Subdivisions

The larger the group and the longer the outing, the more subdividing may occur naturally as hikers of different pace break into smaller groups. As leader you should be aware of such spontaneous divisions and usually sanction them, unless there is a safety issue. You don't want to force participants to adhere to a pace that is unnatural to them. A fleet-footed walker may feel resentment at being held back, and a slower one may be physically incapable of keeping up with the lead contingent. This is natural.

Break-away Group. Sometimes a smaller group desires to change its objective during the trip. It may wish to add a side trail to the planned hike in order to visit a lookout described in the guidebook, or it may wish to increase its pace enough to separate from the main group.

In such a case, inform all participants of the subgroup's plans and make sure all members of the subgroup understand their new goal and are in the right group. Make sure the subgroup has a leader who is willing to assume responsibility and that all know who she or he is. Agree on your plans for the rest of the day.

Do both groups have adequate food, water, and equipment to be independently safe? Do they have map, compass, guidebook, and sufficient knowledge of the area? Will the main group and subgroup meet again for lunch or at the end of the day? Will they return home independently and is there trans-

portation home for everyone? Reasonable requests for division should be granted as long as everyone knows and understands the implications. If the plan is not to meet at the end of the trip, the leader should make arrangements for a phone call from the second group leader to confirm that everyone returned home safely.

Stops and Decision Points

It is important to build regular stops into your plan for an outing. If you know of good places to take breaks, such as a knoll, picnic area, or shelter, you can announce them during the trailhead briefing; if not, you can choose them as you go. Stops can also be used as decision points with everyone together. If the group is large, count members as they arrive and leave.

Rest Stops. You should stop at regular intervals to allow the group to rest. Five minutes for every hour is common. We know backpackers who stop on the hour to heave the pack off their shoulders, stretch their limbs, and take a long gulp from the water bottle. Tired hikers lose morale and become accident-prone. Don't forget to rest yourself.

How often you rest depends on the steepness of the terrain, the length of the hike, the weather, and the physical fitness of participants. It is natural to pause when you reach the end of a strenuous climb; you may also have to wait for hikers *along the way* to the top. You need more stops on a long arduous outing than on an easy ramble.

Where you stop is a matter of choice, but you should always stop at intersections to make certain that all take the correct turn. If you are paddling in a stiff head wind, you must find sheltered, calm water before you can safely stop. If possible, seek out safe, comfortable, out-of-the-wind locations for resting. It is hard to relax where the wind is howling, rain or snow is flying, and you have to shout to be heard.

Never leave a rest stop as soon as the last hikers arrive. There is nothing more discouraging for a slower person than seeing a group of refreshed walkers take off the minute she or he arrives, denying her or him the same luxury. Latecomers

need a break as much as you do, perhaps more.

Use each rest stop constructively. Drink plenty of liquids to replace the water you have lost and to avoid exhaustion; encourage others to do the same. Build up energy by snacking on your favorite complex carbohydrate treats: gorp, energy bars, rice cakes, cookies, fresh or dried fruit, etc. Adjust your body temperature by adding or removing clothing. Check the map or guidebook to measure your progress.

Rest stops allow you to survey the group for tiredness, shivering, hypothermia, limping, and other signs of physical discomfort or danger. Offer appropriate advice and assistance as needed.

There are times when circumstances require you to shorten or cancel rest stops. If you see storm clouds approaching or you become concerned about the group's ability to reach the parking lot before dark, explain why they need to keep walking. But never push people beyond their capabilities as it may lead to loss of concentration and injury.

Lunch Break. The lunch stop is usually the longest recess on a day's outing—as long as the group is safe and comfortable and you have sufficient daylight hours left to complete the trip as planned. On a beautiful summer's day you can afford to tarry longer than on a short, cold day in January.

Allow participants a well-earned chance to enjoy their lunch, admire the scenery, stretch out, take off their boots, pose for photographs, identify wildflowers, rewax skis, look at the map, make friends, and generally relax and enjoy the great Vermont outdoors.

Again, as leader, take the opportunity to look and listen and anticipate problems before they happen. Suggest an extra layer to the hiker who is shivering in a tee-shirt after the initial cooling-down period. Offer protective Moleskin from the first aid kit to the person with a beginning blister. Describe the rest of the trip to the anxious hiker who wants to be prepared. Name the distant peaks for the newcomer to the area. In short, do your best as "host" to make people feel comfortable and pleased to be out with the Green Mountain Club.

Before you take off again, make sure everybody is ready to resume hiking. You may want to summarize what you expect for the rest of the day, based on your knowledge of the trail, current weather conditions, and the group's progress to this point. Share your knowledge and experience: a well-informed group is better able to make wise decisions.



If any changes in plan have to be considered, this is a good time to discuss them. Is everyone able to complete the hike or do you need to take a shortcut? If so, should all take the shorter trail or should the group split in two? Who should lead the second group? Does the weather warrant a change in plans? If so, do you turn back now? What other trail choices are available? Review the options, consult the participants, and make an informed decision. Explain your reasons and put the revised plan into action.

The Leadership Role

How much you actually need to lead on an outing depends on many variables, one being your own personality. On one extreme is the leader who revels in being in charge and is constantly giving advice and instructions, not allowing people to see and judge for themselves. This approach can wear thin after a while. After all, hikers hike to enjoy nature, and part of that experience is tranquility and peace.

On the other extreme is the passive leader who is "just one of the gals," or guys, and does not acknowledge the leadership role. She or he may belong to a group that never "fusses" about leadership, is proud of its independence, and never, according to its members, experiences problems of any kind. This may work in a close-knit group where everybody knows each other's capabilities, but can seem confusing and even unfriendly to newcomers.

A leader does more than anyone else to set the tone for an outing. If you model responsible behavior, respect for the environment, concern for others, preparedness for most circumstances, and a positive attitude, you will do much to increase the comfort and enjoyment of others on the trip.



A positive attitude may be reflected in a remark like "Are we having fun yet?"—when spring snow is sticking to the skis or pouring rain is making the jelly-and-peanut butter sandwich into mousse at lunch time. Your outlook will do more than any action to help participants develop an upbeat and safe approach in the outdoors.

Growing into the Leadership Role

If you are new in the trip leader role, don't worry if it initially makes you feel self-conscious. It is a position that you will grow into gradually. We learn by doing, and the more experienced we become, the more natural and rewarding leadership seems.

You don't have to become a different person to be a leader. Be yourself and the person you are when you are just another participant, all the while training yourself to listen to the rest of the group and to observe what is going on around you.



You can always ask experienced hikers for advice and help. Some spontaneously offer assistance which may be graciously accepted. Many outdoors people have a practical ability to see what needs doing and a wish to do their share—nature is a great equalizer. With experience you will learn to delegate tasks.

How Much to Lead?

As you continue to lead hikes, you will discover that you can employ several leadership styles on the same outing. You should remain in control at all times, but there are periods when a group pretty much leads itself.

On a quiet day on a small lake you can let canoes and kayaks find their own way to an island, having first reminded them of safety rules and prudent behavior where motor boats are allowed. On the same beautiful day you can let your bicyclists proceed at their own speed from Point A to Point B, after warning them to stay on the shoulder in single file and use hand signals before turning.

You will need to do more leading on a difficult outing and



when you guide a large group of participants, particularly if they are inexperienced. Then you have to be an active monitor, because there are more variables. Build in enough rest/decision stops to enable you to exercise your leadership role if necessary.

In many situations you can and should consult participants. If a snowshoer has a broken binding, there may be someone better qualified than you to do the repair. If someone is physically uncomfortable or injured, ask the person to evaluate the gravity of the situation and, if action must be taken, ask participants who are more experienced in first aid to help. Collective wisdom is usually superior to that of one individual.

There may be situations—usually few if you have planned well and given clear instructions—when you have to show who is in charge and take decisive action. These include turning back in severe weather conditions, handling an equipment breakdown, and dealing with a medical emergency. In such cases, weigh your options, consult with others as time and circumstances allow, and do your very best.

Fortunately, most organized GMC activities are on the low end of the scale of risk-oriented sports. We don't offer club-sponsored bungee-jumping or dirt bike racing, and our safety record is excellent. The best way to avoid trouble is to anticipate it: if something feels wrong, it usually is.

The Problem Participant

In Chapter 1, under Leadership, we discussed the responsibilities of participants. These include coming prepared, showing the leader respect and cooperation, and perhaps abandoning personal preferences for the welfare of the group.


Among potential problems, equipment unpreparedness should be the easiest to avoid. If you adequately screen participants over the telephone or by e-mail and at the meeting place, you shouldn't find yourself in the company of a hiker with brand new, never-worn boots or with a paddler without life jacket.

Physical unpreparedness is harder to detect, because people wish to believe they are in shape and may be unable or unwill-

ing to accept that they are not qualified for a moderately difficult hike or ski trip. Again, the screening process should take care of potential problems, but doesn't always. If you find yourself with someone who cannot keep up with the group, be prepared to cut your trip short or turn the group around. (You can also divide the group and send the unprepared hiker back with a volunteer leader.)

Most experienced trip leaders have at least one story to tell about a hiker who wouldn't cooperate. Often they involve a person who went off on her or his own without telling the leader or contrary to the leader's instructions. When a hiker persists in separating from the group, the leader may choose to tell that person that she or he is on her or his own and is no longer part of the group. This is not a good solution, but the leader has to consider the welfare of the rest of the party.

Another problem participant is the person who undermines the authority of the leader by openly criticizing her or his actions or by trying to splinter the group by getting a faction to follow another plan. Dealing with such a person calls for skill and determination on your part. If she or he holds sway, make clear to all what is happening and why you are taking your stand. (This kind of undermining behavior should not be confused with constructive comments which must be dealt with in an objective fashion.)

Luckily, the majority of hikers are cooperative and indeed grateful to any leader who volunteers her or his time to guide them up a mountain or through the woods. 



CHAPTER 8

END OF THE HIKE



The trip is over. You have safely guided the group across the finish line and have accounted for everyone. You can breathe a well-earned sigh of relief.

Closure or Saying Goodbye

But don't rush off as if you are relieved to be rid of your charges. You may be and it may be justified, but don't make it appear that way.

Thank participants for joining you and, if non-members, for showing an interest in the GMC. Give them an opportunity to comment on the outing, and make note of anything you hear about the trip from *their* perspective. Was it rated correctly for difficulty? Did anyone have trouble keeping up with you? Was this particular trail a good choice for a group outing? In retrospect, we all see things we could have done differently. Use what you learned on this trip on future outings.

Hand out membership information to non-members, such as the pocket-size "Join the GMC!" cards available from the club. Give section newsletters or outing schedules to those who express an interest in coming on future trips. Always keep a



cache in your pack or car for just such a captive audience. You can get extra copies from section officers. Make participants aware of outdoor skill workshops offered by GMC's education program. Tell them about the GMC and section websites as a source for workshop and trip listings.

Follow-up

If anyone wants further information, make sure you have the name, telephone number, e-mail address or street address, and follow up with a call or mailing. You may be asked to share facts about equipment, guidebooks, or trails. Always keep any promise you make about follow-ups.

Many new members have been recruited following club outings. You should not put undue pressure on participants to become paying members, but make sure they feel welcome to join as at-large or section members.

Homeward Bound

Ascertain that all hikers have transportation home, and that all cars start. If the group is leaving together, consider a social stop on the way, for ice cream or coffee or supper if it is late and you have a distance to go. You will have plenty to talk about after sharing a day on the trail.

Occasionally we hear of a generous leader who comes prepared with a tailgate treat, such as lemonade from a cooler or hot coffee in a thermos, even homemade brownies. This, of course, is well beyond the call of duty, but a welcome surprise if you can manage it.

Trip Report


In Chapter 6: Let's Go! we talked about the trip sign-up sheet. Filled out, it is a fact sheet of the trip, its route, and participants.

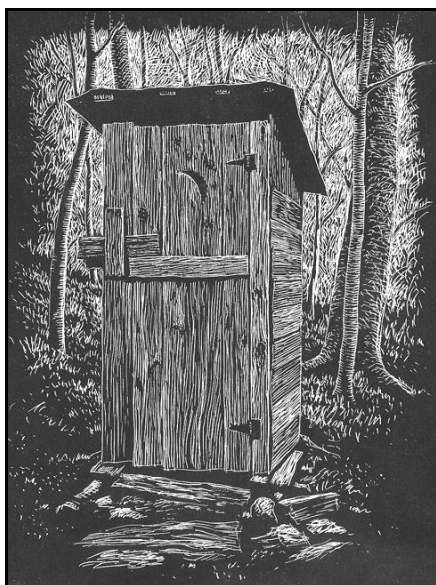
After you get home, you can attach details of the day's adventure. They may include particulars about time, distance, terrain, trail junctions, the conditions of trails and shelters, weather, and anything that made the trip memorable. This trip

report may be of assistance to future trip leaders and hikers. It may also be useful for trail and shelter maintenance, so please note any problems or issues you come across.

Initially, it may only be skimmed by the section secretary or outings chair, but eventually it may be read as a historical document by a historian of the section, the GMC, or the history of recreation in Vermont. Place the sign-up sheet and trip report in the archives of your section.

Another use for an interesting trip report is as an article in the section newsletter or on the website. The editor must, of course, have your permission to publish, a formality that can easily be handled with a check-off box on the sign-up sheet (see Appendix B).

The sign-up sheet can also be tabulated for statistics; one section uses them for finding candidates for the most-active-member-of-the-year award. In any event, all trip records should be saved and kept as an integral part of the section archives. 



CHAPTER 9

OUTDOOR ETHICS

Hikers are drawn to forests and mountains for a variety of reasons: exercise, comradeship, curiosity, stress relief, flora, fauna, peakbagging, tranquility, the Long Trail end-to-end certificate, photography, changing seasons, and, increasingly, the need to “get away from it all.” Each of us may rank our reasons for hiking in a different order, but we can understand and appreciate why others also hit the trail.

As visitors in the wilderness, our very presence has an impact. Our bright clothing and modern equipment stand in sharp contrast to the colors of rock, trees, and forest floor. Wildlife is instantly alarmed by the smell and sound of our coming. Our lug-sole boots can cause erosion. Our tents can flatten the plants and shrubs we value.

Outdoor ethics are about showing respect for other visitors and the natural world. The Green Mountain Club is a national partner in the Leave No Trace outdoor ethics program which

includes the ideas and techniques discussed in this chapter. To learn more about the seven Leave No Trace principles, see Appendix E, visit the GMC website, and check out the Center for Outdoor Ethics website at www.lnt.org.

Planning Ahead

The key to an enjoyable, safe, and low-impact hike is careful planning, discussed through most of this handbook. At best a poorly planned trip may discourage hikers from joining future outings and reflect badly on the GMC, at worst it results in injury or substantial damage to the environment.

Traveling Lightly

Leave Only the Lightest of Footprints. While it is impossible for human beings to leave no trace at all, you should make a serious effort to leave as little trace as possible. Today heavy boots are often used to make a fashion statement, even on city streets with not a tree in sight. Do you really need those large-lug Vibram soles for where you are going? If you are backpacking, consider carrying a lighter pair of shoes for use around shelters and campsites to avoid compacting the surrounding soil; they also feel wonderful on your feet at the end of a long day.

Stay on the Trail. Make every effort to walk on the rocks and steps that nature and the GMC's trail crew and volunteers have provided for you. In wet conditions avoid the natural temptation to walk *next to* the trail to keep your feet dry. This becomes a serious problem in areas with heavy traffic where trails gradually become wider and wider, until they are big gashes in the landscape.

Avoid Shortcutting Switchbacks. Any trail, albeit long-established and steeped in tradition, is an intrusion in the natural landscape: you don't want to create an unnecessary network of paths and sprawling erosion. Switchbacks, while making a trail longer, are an important tool to prevent erosion. All hikers are encouraged to stay on the designated trail and not take shortcuts.

Spring and Fall Hiking. Trail beds are especially vulnerable

to hiking boots after snow melt in the spring when the waterlogged soil is easily disturbed and eroded. Never schedule a spring hike until the trails have had time—generally from late March until the end of May—to dry out. The State of Vermont closes hiking trails on state lands (including the northern half of the Long Trail) from April 15 to Memorial Day weekend every year. Therefore the Green Mountain Club discourages hiking before this date. The GMC website and club staff can give you ideas for acceptable spring hikes and alternative recreational activities for this time of year.

Late fall hiking is discouraged for the same reason. When fall rains, snow, and sleet hit higher elevations, and the ground freezes and thaws before the real onset of winter, trails are again vulnerable to erosion from foot traffic. This period of time is generally from late October until there is a consistent snowpack on the ground.

Alpine Vegetation. The Green Mountains have three high peaks with post-Ice Age alpine vegetation. These rare plants are normally found 500 or more miles to the north in Canada. They survive in the harsh climates of Mount Mansfield, Camel's Hump, and Mount Abraham. These plants are slow-growing, fragile, and extremely vulnerable to foot traffic, and hikers should stay on marked trails and step on rocks only. Indeed, this is a good policy on any peak with high altitude vegetation.

The GMC employs seasonal summit caretakers on Mount Mansfield, Camel's Hump, Mount Abraham, and Stratton Mountain. They educate hikers about these delicate ecosystems. Make sure your group understands and adheres to all alpine zone guidelines.

Overnight Camping. If you are leading an overnight trip and the shelter is full, you may put up your tents on nearby tent platforms or in a designated area. Hikers should know that there are no facilities for tent camping at GMC shelters on state lands above 2,500 feet. If you must camp off trail in areas where this is permitted, choose a site at least 200 hundred feet (seventy-five paces) from any trail, trailhead, stream, or pond.

Do not camp where someone has camped before, unless it is a designated site: repeated flattening will eventually kill vegetation and compact soil and create a permanent scar.

As noted above, no camping is permitted above 2,500 feet on state lands, and this especially includes peaks above the treeline. In the Green Mountain National Forest camping is permitted throughout the forest, unless otherwise noted. GMC encourages hikers to adhere to Leave No Trace camping practices in the National Forest and to use designated camping facilities whenever possible. On private land camping is allowed at designated shelters and campsites *only*.

Waste Disposal


When the most recent surge of hiking started in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Green Mountain Club adopted a carry-in, carry-out policy. Hikers are expected to pack out every item they carried in. It is unacceptable to leave empty tin cans, plastic bags, tin foil, etc., on the trail or at shelters. Today, this standard is one of the principles of Leave No Trace outdoor ethics.

Never leave leftover food around a campsite—carry it out. You might think you are being generous to wildlife, but mice, raccoons, and bears are better off eating what nature provides and should not become accustomed to morsels around shelters or along the trail; if they do, they will likely not survive the winter.

Leave any trail or shelter in as good or better shape than you found it. It is recommended that you carry a spare trash bag so you will be able to pick up and carry out any trash you find. If there is more than you or your group can handle, notify the GMC or the local club section responsible for that part of the Long Trail.

If you see anyone, including members of your own party, discarding litter, please tell them not to. Explain that their trash will lessen the outdoor experience for others and may harm wildlife.

Hikers should wash themselves and their dishes at least two



hundred feet (seventy-five paces) from any water source. No soap should be allowed to contaminate water. Hikers should use only biodegradable soap and sparingly, or, even better, no soap at all as it does not rinse easily and can cause gastrointestinal suffering if ingested.

Use an outhouse for defecating where available, usually only at state parks or at shelters. Many GMC shelters and campsites have composting toilets, requiring you to add a handful of mulch after use. In winter it is prudent to tramp or shovel a path to the outhouse door *before* nature calls.

Where there is no outhouse, human waste must be buried in a “cat hole” six to eight inches deep and two hundred feet (seventy-five paces) away from trails, shelters, and water sources. For this purpose you should carry a lightweight trowel. Any toilet paper should be carried out in a plastic bag.


Above treeline, hikers are encouraged to head down below the treeline to defecate or pack out their human waste as there is insufficient soil depth for digging a “cat hole.” Leaving waste on the surface is a health risk and is negative visual impact for other hikers. Additionally, digging in the alpine zone will damage or kill endangered alpine plants. If your trip is heading above the treeline, consider carrying a Wag Bag—a self-contained bag system for packing out human waste. They are available at outdoor stores and at www.thepett.com.

Urinating in the woods is preferable to using an outhouse, where too much urine creates objectionable odors and can hinder decomposition. Urinate well away from water sources. The only exception to this rule is when using a moldering composting toilet; these systems benefit from the addition of moisture. Generally, each outhouse will have a sign indicating whether or not hikers can urinate in it.

Tampons, sanitary napkins, and their wrappers must be packed out; they should not be disposed of in outhouses or cat holes.

Leaving Nature Alone

Take only pictures leave only footprints. We must not re-



move what we came to admire: wildflowers and rocks should be left along the trail for others to enjoy. (Many Vermont wildflowers are protected by state law.) Great care must be taken if you decide to pick berries along the trail as many animals rely on them as their main food source. Berries growing above the treeline are endangered and should not be picked.

Carving into trunks and ripping off bark damage trees, and may even kill them. The defacing of shelters, built by volunteers, is vandalism and is unacceptable.

Minimizing Campfires

The *Long Trail Guide* has information on “Camping and Fires” for each section of the Long Trail. In general, wood fires are discouraged, and hikers are encouraged to carry lightweight backpacking stoves for cooking to eliminate the need for fire building. Should you feel a fire is necessary, use only designated fire rings at shelters and burn only dead, downed wood that can be broken by hand.

Be extremely careful on dry, windy days when a spark could start a wildfire. Always make sure the fire is completely extinguished before you leave it. Fires are prohibited at higher elevations (above 2,500 feet on state land) and during droughts.

You may think that camaraderie by the light of a fire is part of the outdoor experience. If you do, you can achieve some of the same effect by bringing a small candle lantern. But we encourage you to experience the natural rhythm of the day and the darkness at night, something that is increasingly difficult to find in today’s world.

Respect for Wildlife

All birds and animals should be left alone and not harassed by human beings or their dogs. Official warnings to protect endangered or rare species, such as the peregrine falcon, common loon, or osprey, should be strictly observed.

The Green Mountain Club discourages hikers from bringing dogs on the trail; still, we know that some like to take them along. As a leader, you can decide whether your trip is suitable

for dogs. Some climbs are too steep for them. In wet snow dogs' paws may bleed when built-up snowballs tear away. Be aware that some of your participants may feel frightened or intimidated by dogs, especially the bigger breeds.

If you allow dogs on the hike, they should under no circumstances be allowed to chase wildlife; in fact, dogs usually guarantee that no one on the trip sees any wildlife. Ask that any dog be leashed and/or under complete voice control at all times. Dogs should always be leashed at shelters, summits, ponds, and lakes. They must be kept away from water sources. Dog waste should be "cat holed" six to eight inches into the soil by the owner or packed out. Above the treeline, dog waste must be carried out.


Consideration for Others

None of us likes to have an outing spoiled by others, so it follows that we must also make an effort to be considerate of our fellow hikers. In short, treat people you meet on the trail the way *you* want to be treated. When you are the trip leader, set an example by being civil and attentive toward other hikers.

- Be friendly and helpful to people you meet. It's good outdoor ethics and reflects well on the Green Mountain Club.
- Step aside and allow other hikers to pass, without their having to ask for permission. Hiking etiquette gives uphill hikers the right of way over those coming down. (The opposite is correct when cross-country skiing.)
- Don't block the trail by standing or sitting in it, forcing people to detour around you.
- Don't monopolize lookouts, natural resting places, or shelters. If you are leading an overnight trip, limit the group size and carry tents.

People seek the outdoors for different reasons. Some crave the peace of the woods and use a hike to rest and rebuild their emotional strength. Other listen intently for bird song, sounds of wildlife, or just the whisper of wind and water.

Hiking groups should be especially mindful of the impression they may have on solitary hikers and smaller parties. What may be social and happy banter within a group, may sound jarring and disturbing to those on the outside. At worst, it can be upsetting enough to spoil their day. (We don't even want to discuss the negative social impacts of portable radios, disk players, and computers. Cell phones should only be carried in case of emergencies and not for needless social calls that annoy other hikers. (See Appendix E for cell phone etiquette in the backcountry.)

As a trip leader you may occasionally want to ask a participant to talk less, at least for a while. This is a delicate task, because some people are naturally friendly and effusive, and others view a group hike as a social occasion. Try something like, "I wonder which birds we can hear if we are *all* quiet for a while?" Perhaps the chatterbox will get the hint. The best procedure, however, is to talk about the group's potential impact on others during the trailhead briefing. Make all aware of their responsibility toward fellow hikers, and group members may gradually learn to monitor each other's behavior. 



CHAPTER 10

SPECIAL OUTINGS

Overnight trips, cold weather trips, and trips requiring special skills demand extra planning and attention. The longer and the more challenging the trip, the more the leader must be prepared to screen participants' fitness, athletic ability, and equipment. Finding yourself ten miles from the nearest road with an unprepared backpacker is very different from having a tired hiker slow the party on an easy Sunday ramble close to home. The consequences are potentially more serious and may place the whole party in danger.

This chapter discusses some leadership issues particular to special outings. For additional information on backpacking, bicycling, paddling, cross-country skiing, etc., check the titles listed under Further Reading in the back of this handbook, as well as your local library and bookstore.

Overnight Trips

Planning. An outing of two or more days requires more lo-

gistical planning than a one-day trip. You must consider the location and spacing of shelters or campsites and sources of drinking water. (All water sources, with perhaps the exception of springs, should be filtered or treated to remove gastrointestinal parasites.)

Although there is never a guarantee of shelter space, you will want to plan around other groups if possible. If you are hiking the Long Trail, the GMC's group outreach specialist may have information about organized groups who intend to be in the area and about their itineraries. The smaller your party, the more likely you are to find bunk or floor space. The GMC limits a backpacking group to ten, including leader(s); four to six is more realistic and gives you flexibility. Carry tents and tarps for greater self-sufficiency.

You must plan meals for overnight trips. Will each camper be independent—the simplest option—or will you share meals, which requires organization? Meal planning, including who is to cook, is often the trickiest part of any trip blueprint, especially if there are last-minute cancellations. Consider appointing a co-leader to handle this part of the work.

Registration. Overnight trips require advance registration with a deadline. The trip description should include information about any overnight fee, advance deposit, or even a cancellation fee. Decide when and how you need to collect the money. Make sure you obtain the telephone number and e-mail address of every registrant.

Decide what to do about cancellation in case of bad weather or not enough participants. Do you go "rain or shine," and what are the risks of going in bad weather? When do you need to make your final decision and notify the group? Be prepared for last-minute dropouts. An overnight trip is a major commitment for which advance registrants are not always prepared, psychologically, physically, or equipment-wise when the date approaches, or when other commitments take priority.

Organizational Meeting. Consider holding an organizational meeting for participants, especially if you are sharing meals and equipment. It is a good way to provide all with the

same background information. Participants have an opportunity to get acquainted beforehand, and it is easier to coordinate provisions and equipment. Make sure every person knows what common item she or he is responsible for (cook stove, fuel, coffee pot, powdered milk, trowel, etc.). If you are leading a novice group, prepare detailed lists of recommended clothing and equipment for each participant.

Transportation. You must coordinate transportation. Avoid leaving cars overnight at trailheads if possible. Your section or the GMC office may know of club volunteers who offer parking or drop-off and pick-up at trailheads for long-distance hikers on the Long Trail.

Setting Up Camp. Once you are on the trail much of what we discussed in Chapter 7: On the Trail also applies to overnight trips. Make sure you stop early enough in the afternoon to allow people sufficient time to rest, cook and eat dinner before nightfall. Delegate camp chores, so that *you* also get a chance to relax, or trip leading may soon feel like a 24-hour-a-day job with no time off.

Bicycle Trips

Route Selection. Choose a route with sufficient off-road parking at the start, safe roads with minimal traffic, wide shoulders, and a decent surface. If possible, plan a clockwise loop with few left turns, always a biker's hazard. Ride or at least drive the route in advance, looking for trouble spots, rest stops, lunch site, and historic or scenic sites that provide an excuse to get out of the saddle.

If you are new at leading cycling trips, you may want to choose routes suggested by guidebooks where the authors have already tested the roads for suitability. These books also contain general information on road biking.

Choose a starting time that allows you to get off the road well before dark. On hot and humid summer days you may want to use the cooler hours of early morning or late afternoon while early spring and late fall suggest mid-day rides when the temperature is most comfortable.

At the Start. Arrive at the starting point early enough to unload and check your own bicycle, tires, and gear. Allow participants enough time to do the same. As leader you should carry at least a simple repair kit for mending a flat tire.

Make sure all riders wear helmets and enclosed shoes (no sandals). Encourage them to bring bright clothing for safety, rain gear, layers of extra clothing, gloves, etc., all appropriate for the season and weather.

Provide riders with photocopies of the route map and point out intersections, turns, railroad crossings, narrow spots, and where you plan to stop along the way. It is important that riders have maps as bicyclists often get strung out over many miles.

Tell participants to obey Vermont state law by riding single file on the right side of the road. (Some law-abiding drivers need reminding that traffic laws also apply when they are on two wheels.) They must use hand signals in advance of turning and get off the road when they stop. If you have a large group, divide it into subgroups with co-leaders to allow cars safe passing.

Appoint two sweeps, so that in case of a mechanical or medical emergency one can stay with the bicyclist and the other can ride for help.

On the Road. Differing riding ability and equipment may mean that bicyclists will spread out along the route. For that reason, plan regular stops for all to catch up. Assign more experienced riders to novices for coaching and encouragement.

On cold or wet days you may wish to plan lunch under a roof or even indoors in a restaurant. Bike riding provides an unprecedented culinary opportunity for folks who are usually on a hiking trail—beyond all hope of a steaming mushroom curry or fresh apple strudel.

Paddling Trips

Skill and Safety. GMC boat trips are usually on flat water or Class I-II rivers, i.e. relatively easy paddling with few obstacles and modest ripples that can be handled without specific white-water experience. Even so a trip leader needs to ascertain that

participants possess appropriate skills, and must prepare and instruct novices. Water and wind are unforgiving masters, and careless mistakes can have serious consequences on the water.

Any boat trip should include at least three canoes or kayaks for safety. If fewer boats register or show up, consider canceling the trip.

Matching Boats and Crews. Sometimes a person without a boat wishes to go on a paddling trip, creating an extra challenge for the trip leader. The easiest solution is to take notes and wait for another call or e-mail from a canoe owner in need of a partner. (Most kayakers paddle singles.) If the message comes, leave it to the two to contact each other and work out the logistics, including who brings the paddle and life jacket. Only on rare occasions should you allow a single person to paddle alone in a two-person boat; the weather must be calm and the person experienced and skilled.



Launch Site Briefing. At the boat launch make sure that all craft have gear in waterproof bags, spare paddle, bailing bucket, and enough personal flotation devices (PFD's) or life jackets. We recommend that poor swimmers and children wear their life jackets at all times and that others don them when white caps are frequent, when the water is cold, and when paddling in whitewater.

According to Vermont law, every paddler or passenger must have a life jacket *in* the boat, but does not have to wear it. On lakes and rivers patrolled by state police or the coast guard, your boat may be inspected, and you may be fined if not in compliance with the law.

Before launching, stress the importance of staying together as a group. This is more important on water than on land.

Emphasize that you will scout any rapids before running them, and that paddlers will always have the option of portaging around rapids without passages suitable for their ability or confidence. No one should paddle in whitewater beyond her or his capability or comfort level. Heed any warning signs and never run over a dam, regardless of height.

Sun and Dehydration. The reflection of sun on water



quickly leads to sunburn, so be on the lookout for redness and offer sun block to participants. Thighs are especially vulnerable when sitting in a boat all day. Experienced paddlers keep a towel or long pants and long-sleeved shirt within reach. All should carry a brimmed hat and sunglasses.

Dehydration can occur on a hot day, even without much perspiration. As leader you should have some extra water on hand and remind people of the importance of taking liquids even when they do not feel thirsty.

Cold Weather Outings

Shorter Days. In winter you should plan shorter trips than you would in summer. The going may be slow, daylight hours are fewer, and briefer trips are generally safer. If you are adequately prepared, however, you can have wonderful experiences while cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, or sledding in the snow. There is nothing like bright sun on snow-laden trees or the stillness of slowly falling snowflakes to lift the spirit.

Dressing for the Weather. To rephrase an old adage: there is no such thing as bad weather, just inadequate clothing and layering. That means wearing and carrying enough layers of clothing, to shed or add, to keep your body comfortable at all times. Several layers act as vapor barriers and keep you warmer and drier than one or two heavy layers can.

Frequent stops for adjustments are necessary. If you get too sweaty, you will rapidly cool off when slowing down or stopping. Once lost, heat takes a long time to regain, even with added layers. A common mistake by beginning skiers and snowshoers is wearing too much when they start out. A down parka is too warm for most speeds, but may be a welcome extra layer if you have to stop for a while.

The best winter fabrics are synthetics, wool, and, to some extent, silk. Start with a wicking layer, usually a synthetic or synthetic-wool blend next to your skin. *Cotton must be avoided* as it will not keep you warm when wet and can hasten hypothermia and other cold injuries. To the base layer, add one or more layers, such as a wool shirt or sweater, fleece sweater, and insu-

lated vest. Last comes a windproof layer, worn when cold and wind warrant. It is important that this sheds rain and snow.

Carry wind pants or insulated over-pants for covering tights, fleece pants, wool pants, etc. (Blue jeans are *not* an appropriate cold weather garment.) The number of layers depends on the temperature range, but always bring more than you think you need.

Hats are essential, because more heat is lost from the head than from any other part of your body. You may want to carry two in order to always have one that is dry and the right weight. A headband can be layered with a hat. On very cold days, you should also have something to cover the lower part of your face, such as a neck gaiter, balaclava, ski mask, or scarf. When it gets really cold, pull up the hood, another essential, of your anorak or parka.

Don't forget to bring several pairs of gloves and mittens, including silk or synthetic liners. Mittens are far superior, although some find it hard to maneuver ski poles with heavy mittens. Half-gloves can be useful for waxing skis, buttoning clothing, etc. Some modern insulated ski gloves are adequate for most conditions, but for a really biting cold invest in mittens with an over-layer of windproof material. Chemical heat packs and hand warmers can be carried for emergencies.

Most feet like a liner sock of wicking fabric, topped by one or two pairs of wool socks, depending on the size and warmth of your boots. If the fit is too tight, you may get cold.

Don't forget eye protection. The sun reflecting on snow can be blinding and harmful. Goggles are best because they prevent eyes from watering and shut out stinging snowflakes; second-best are sunglasses with side guards.

Frostbite. On cold and windy days, check your fellow hikers for signs of frostbite which is the freezing of bodily tissues. Frostbite causes loss of feeling and is initially painless to the sufferer. Look for small areas of white or grayish skin in the face, especially on the nose, ears, hands, wrists, and feet. If caught in time, the sufferer can thaw the frozen area slowly and carefully by putting it next to a warm part of your body, such as

the palm of your hand, or under arm pits.

Do *not* re-warm frozen areas by massaging, soaking in hot water, exposure to open fire, or by rubbing with snow, which can cause permanent tissue damage. If the frostbite persists, get the hiker medical attention as soon as possible.

Frostbite can usually be avoided by keeping the skin dry, warm, and protected from exposure. Dehydration increases the risk of freezing; winter hikers should be reminded to drink at regular intervals even when they don't feel thirsty.

Fuel for the Body. Winter enthusiasts may have to be reminded to take time out for eating and drinking. Winter sports are not dieting activities. Fluids are as important in winter as in summer, although most of us feel less thirsty when it is cold. Advise participants to carry a thermos bottle with a hot drink. Water bottles may have to be insulated in special bottle jackets or by extra clothing, such as wool socks or mittens, to keep the contents from freezing. Encourage trip participants to fill their water bottles with warm or hot water which resists freezing and makes drinking easier; ice cold water is not tempting when it is cold out. Keep in mind that it is easier to unscrew a wide-mouth bottle than a canteen when you are wearing mittens.

Food is a source of heat, and you should schedule regular brief stops for snacking. The lunch stop should also be relatively short, unless you have a warming hut or other sheltered place to eat. The best menu is rich in carbohydrates and easy to handle with gloves or mittens; a cold winter's day is not the time to fuss with multiple ingredients and utensils. A good adage for a winter outing is: If you ate all the food and wore all the clothes you brought, you didn't bring enough.

Spares and Repairs. A ski trip leader should carry ski wax, cork, and scraper and, for repairs to equipment, a spare ski tip, extra binding screws, a screwdriver, pliers, and duct tape. A snowshoe leader should have along duct tape, bailing wire, zip ties, and nylon or neoprene for mending bindings and decking.

For other extra equipment that may be useful in a winter emergency, see Leader's Additional Checklist under Chapter 4.

Winter Weather. It is especially important to keep track of



all participants on a winter outing. Leaving a lost or injured person behind can quickly become fatal.

Don't be afraid to cancel or shorten a trip if the weather is extreme, such as bitter cold, heavy snow, or strong wind. Consider the consequences of continuing under current conditions and err on the side of caution, especially if you have inexperienced people in the group.





CHAPTER 11

EMERGENCY

This chapter does not explain procedures for treatment of medical emergencies. For such information, we suggest that you turn to one of many excellent handbooks on first aid. We think it is a good idea for trip leaders to take a first aid course, such as those offered by the GMC, the American Red Cross, SOLO, local hospitals and organizations, and to occasionally refresh that knowledge. (For suggested items to include in your first aid kit, see Appendix D: First Aid Kit.)

This chapter will, however, discuss in a general way two common emergencies that may occur on a hike. One is the person who is missing from the group, and the other is the injured person who cannot be evacuated without assistance. In both cases, remember the acronym STOP:

Stop
Think
Observe
Plan

At the end of the chapter, we will talk briefly about what to do at the approach of an electrical storm with lightning.

Missing Hiker

This problem may occur at a trail intersection where the group goes one way while the hiker who has gone on ahead or has fallen behind goes another way. We have already discussed the importance of leaving intersections together, but for now we will assume that the worst has happened.

If it is determined somewhere along the trail that a hiker is indeed missing, the group can return to the place where the person was last seen to look for clues as to her or his whereabouts. This location is called the "point last seen," or PLS, by rescue workers. Asking passing hikers about the missing person can sometimes be helpful in determining the PLS.

Once at the PLS, the group can call the name of the missing hiker or blow whistles, hoping that the person will respond. We do not recommend dividing the group to search for the missing person as this can easily lead to group fragmentation and multiple missing persons.

A small group cannot stage an adequate search for a missing person. It is best to lead the party out of the woods and call for help. The agency to call in this kind of emergency is the Vermont State Police.

If possible, provide them with the PLS indicated on a map as well as other pertinent information, such as the missing hiker's name, age, address, telephone number, clothing, equipment carried, medical condition, outdoors experience, etc.

Injured Hiker

If a hiker is injured on your trip, you must also stop, think, observe, and plan.

Stop. Remain calm. If the group is spread out along the trail, get the group back together. Remember that everyone in the group and their equipment are a resource; you will need to utilize all of them.

Think. What kind of first aid can be safely given? Who in

the group is best trained and qualified to oversee the care? Can the victim be safely moved, given the injury?

Observe. What are the present and predicted weather conditions? Does the group carry a cell phone, and does it work where you are? If not, how far is the group in distance and time from the nearest available telephone? Is there terrain nearby that is more hospitable than your current position, and can the victim be safely relocated?

Plan. If the injured person cannot walk, with or without assistance, and outside assistance is necessary for evacuation, you must send at least one person for help while leaving at least one person to care for the victim. If possible, send a group of people out and leave a group of people, including the person(s) with the best first aid skills, to care for the victim.

You must, however, be prudent about these decisions. The group that remains may be waiting for several hours or even overnight. Ensure that this group and the victim have adequate clothing, food, water, and shelter to safely remain in the woods until help arrives.

Hypothermia

Hypothermia is the lowering of internal body temperature. It is caused by cold, moisture, and wind, and can be life-threatening. Hikers have died from hypothermia in every month of the year in the New England mountains. Telling signs are confusion, stumbling, continuous shivering, and mumbling. Sweaty, wet garments will chill the victim and should be removed. Canvass the group for dry, warm clothes, including rain or wind gear to reduce the chilling effects of wind. If the victim is safely able to move all or some limbs, make her or him do so to help regain body heat. Feed the victim high-calorie food and warm beverages if she or he is fully conscious.

When the victim cannot move, she or he may get very cold, even in moderate temperatures. Try to insulate the victim from the ground: an insulating ground pad is ideal for this purpose. If the victim does not soon regain normal body temperature,

place hot water bottles next to her or him or, as a last resort, your own warm bodies next to the victim's.

Attempt to erect some kind of shelter to provide protection from wind and precipitation. Consider building a fire which, in addition to keeping the group warm, has a positive psychological effect. It can also be valuable in helping rescuers locate the group.

Monitoring the Victim. Monitor the victim. Count the pulse and respirations every five minutes. Keep a written record of the victim's chief symptoms, vital signs, and an objective assessment of the injury or medical condition, as well as any care that was administered to the victim. The record should include information about the victim's age and sex. This can be helpful once the victim reaches the ambulance and hospital.

Monitoring the Group. You must also consider the safety and well-being of the group. Does the subgroup that leaves for outside help have enough clothing, food, and water to make it safely out of the woods? Does it have headlamps or flashlights if darkness is approaching? Does the group know the exact location of the victim? This group should carry a map that clearly indicates the location of the victim as well as a written description of what happened and what first aid has been administered.

The departing group should get help as quickly as possible without jeopardizing its own safety. For example, it is appropriate for this group to stop for food, water, and rest, even though this may delay the rescue by a few minutes. Running should be strongly discouraged as the runner can get injured, making the situation twice as bad with *two* victims.

Team Work. As mentioned above, everyone in a group, including the victim is a resource. Getting input from the entire group is crucial in helping you make the best decisions possible. Remember that everyone in the group has strengths and weaknesses. Capitalize on the strengths and minimize the effect of weaknesses to utilize each person to the fullest.

If an emergency occurs on a GMC-sponsored outing, you should notify the club's executive director and local section officers in a timely fashion.

Lightning

Electrical storms happen when a cold front meets a warm front, the turbulence producing lightning and thunder. Few people die from being hit by lightning, but it happens occasionally. Here are some measures you can take to minimize the risk for yourself and your group.

Although you cannot outrun an electrical storm, you usually have some warning when you hear thunder and see lightning in the distance. You can estimate how far away the storm is by counting the seconds between lightning and the ensuing thunder clap. (In the mountains it sounds especially loud.) For every five seconds, count one mile distant.

Lightning seeks the best conductor for reaching earth: tall and single trees, rock overhangs and walls, shallow caves, moisture in stream beds and hollows, trails, gullies, metal structures and objects. Do your best to stay away from any of these.

Move down from any summit or open area where your upright body may become a conductor for lightning. Find a safe area, such as trees that are at least twice your height. Remove your pack if it contains a metal frame or other metal objects, and leave it a distance away. A soft day pack, foam pad, or blanket can be used to insulate you from the ground. Crouch and make yourself as small as possible until lightning has passed over.

Paddlers should leave the water and their boats when a thunderstorm approaches. Follow the same rules for finding a safe area to wait.



APPENDIX A

**Outing Schedule
Planning Form**

*Trip Leader's Planning Form
Wampahoofus Section
Green Mountain Club*

Date of Event: _____

Event (hike, bike, ski, paddle, etc.): _____

Destination: _____

Distance (miles round trip): _____ Difficulty Rating: ____ Pace: ____

Skills Needed (if any): _____

Description of Event: _____

What to Bring (lunch, water, equipment, PFD, etc.): _____

Minimum/Maximum Number of Participants: _____

Meeting Place: _____

Meeting Time: _____

Leader: _____

Tel.: _____ E-mail: _____

Publicity Restrictions (if any): _____

APPENDIX B

Trip Sign-up Sheet

*Trip Sign-up Sheet
Wampahoofus Section
Green Mountain Club*

Destination: _____ Leader: _____

Type of Outing (hike, bike, ski, etc.): _____ Date: _____

PARTICIPANTS:

Name (and address if not a member):	GMC Member?	E-mail Address:
1. _____		
2. _____		
3. _____		
4. _____		
5. _____		
6. _____		
7. _____		
8. _____		

Please write trip leader's report on reverse or attach sheet, and forward report to section secretary as soon as possible. Report may also be submitted online via section website.

May we print or excerpt report in section newsletter? ___ on section website? ___

APPENDIX C

**Emergency Telephone
Numbers**

E-911

This statewide emergency telephone number automatically connects you to the Vermont State Police.

Vermont State Police

Always dial 911 to reach the State Police.

Green Mountain Club

If someone becomes seriously ill or suffers injury on a GMC-sponsored outing, report the incident to the local section officers and advise them to report it to the GMC executive director.

Green Mountain Club
4711 Waterbury-Stowe Road
Waterbury Center, VT 05677
Telephone: (802) 244-7037
Toll-free: (877) 484-5053
E-mail: gmc@greenmountainclub.org

Officers of Your Local GMC Section

Fill in names and telephone numbers of your section officers:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

APPENDIX D

First Aid Kit

We encourage outdoor people in general and trip leaders in particular to receive some training in first aid. Such knowledge can help you effectively handle minor mishaps in the woods. The American Red Cross Standard First Aid course provides good basic training and information. Courses relevant to wilderness environments are taught by, among others, SOLO and Wilderness Medical Associates.

In Vermont, people who practice first aid are covered by what is commonly known as the Good Samaritan Act. In a nutshell, this means that when you give appropriate first aid in good faith and do not exceed the level of care that you are certified to perform, you are protected by the law from legal liability.

GMC & SOLO Recommended Personal First Aid Kit

2 large triangular bandages (cravats)	2 Surgipads (large gauze pad or Kotex)
4 4x4 (4"x4") gauze pads	10 1" band aids
1 1"x10 yard roll of adhesive tape	6 safety pins
2 rolls of 4" Kling	1 tube of Povidone Iodine (wound care)
1 6" Ace bandage	knife or scissors
6 alcohol or betadine wipes	SOAP Note (available from GMC)
Moleskin or Spenco Second Skin paper and pencil	4 pairs of gloves (Nitrile or Latex)
Incident Report Form (GMC)	
SAM splint	

All this can be placed into a waterproof bag in a stuff sack, except the SAM splint. Kit weighs 19 ounces.

Other useful first aid items you may wish to carry:

first aid book	Tang (w/sugar)
safety pins	space blanket
tweezers	personal medications
chemical cold pack	large garbage bags
chemical hot pack	whistle
tampons	map and compass
headlamp w/ extra batteries	metal cup

Some of the items on the Leader's Checklist in Chapter 4: Clothing and Equipment, may be useful in an emergency: water filtration kit (or tablets or drops), lighter/matches, sleeping bag, insulating pad, cell phone and coins for an emergency phone call, and headlamp or flashlight.

APPENDIX E

LEAVE NO TRACE

The Green Mountain Club encourages all hikers to follow the seven commonly accepted "Leave No Trace" principles of outdoor ethics. Each Leave No Trace principle is grounded in scientific research, which provides the basis for guidelines that minimize hiker impact in the backcountry. These principles include:

Plan Ahead and Prepare

Know local guidelines and special concerns for the trail. Consult the *Long Trail Guide*, GMC's website, or contact the GMC for area information.

Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies, especially above treeline. Purify drinking water, and know how to use a map and compass.

Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces

Protect fragile alpine vegetation by staying on the trail above treeline. Camping is not permitted above the treeline.

Always hike and camp on durable surfaces such as established trails and campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses, or snow.

Groups should use recommended group-use campsites. See *Long Trail Guide*, GMC website, or contact GMC headquarters for list of suitable campsites for groups.

Protect water quality and other hikers' experience by camping at least 200 feet (75 steps) away from trails, lakes, and streams.

Dispose of Waste Properly



Pack it in, pack it out. Inspect your campsite or shelter for trash or spilled foods. Pack out all trash, leftover food, and litter.

Use outhouses when available. If one is not nearby, use a small trowel to deposit solid human waste in a "cat hole," 6 to 8 inches deep, at least 200 feet (75 steps) from water, campsites, and trails. Do not bury or burn toilet paper. Please, dispose of toilet paper in outhouses or pack it out. Cover and disguise cat-holes when finished.

When above the treeline, please pack out all solid human waste.

Pack out all feminine hygiene products and their wrappers.

To wash yourself and dishes, use washpits when provided. If no



washpit is available, go 200 feet (75 steps) away from streams or lakes to strain and then scatter wastewater. Please pack out strained food scraps.

Leave What You Find

Preserve the past. Examine, but do not remove, cultural or historic structures and artifacts.

Rocks, plants, and other natural objects are best enjoyed in their natural states. Please do not pick plants, flowers, or berries: they may be endangered.

Minimize Campfire Impacts

Campfires cause lasting impacts. Use a lightweight stove for cooking, and use a headlamp or flashlight for light. Please, use stoves outside whenever possible, and insulate beneath them to prevent scorching.

If you must build a fire (where permitted), use established fire rings, and burn only downed and dead wood small enough to break by hand.

Respect Wildlife

Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.

Never feed animals. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviors, and exposes them to predators and other dangers.

Protect wildlife by storing food and trash securely. Hang food and trash from trees away from shelters and campsites.

Dogs should be under voice or physical control at all times. Bring a leash and clean up after your dog. To protect your dog and wildlife, consider leaving your dog at home.

Be Considerate of Other Visitors

Respect other visitors, and protect the quality of their experience. Let nature's sounds prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises.

Refrain from radio and cell phone use. If you must use your cell phone, use it well away from campsites, shelters, and summits. Keep cell phones off when not in use, or use the silent ring (vibrate) feature.



Keep group sizes small: no more than 10 on all overnight trips and trips to fragile areas (alpine summits and designated wilderness areas), and no more than 20 on other day trips. (Please, break up into two separate groups of 10).

For more information on Leave No Trace, visit www.lnt.org



FURTHER READING

Note: Many titles are available from the GMC bookstore where members receive a discount on publications.

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