

## Introduction -

As an Activity Host of Wilderness Trekkers, Inc., you hold, arguably, the most important job in the organization. That job is fulfilling the mission of Wilderness Trekkers (WT) by hosting activities through which others, both members and the public, may be able to learn the skills and knowledge which will help them enjoy and appreciate the natural world that surrounds them, and by instilling in them the desire to preserve it.

Wilderness Trekkers, Inc. was founded in 1996 by a small group of hikers with a dream of sharing with others in the responsible use and enjoyment of the wilderness. Since then, the organization has grown and prospered. WT has developed goals and ideals to help define its mission, as well as the policies and standards necessary to attain these goals. It is the responsibility of the WT Activity Host, while hosting or participating in WT activities, to understand, practice, and share with others those skills and ethics consistent with the WT mission.

It is an accepted fact that first impressions are the most important. As a WT Activity Host, you have the opportunity to create a lasting, positive impression of the wilderness experience in the minds of your "first-timer" activity participants. You can build on the memorable experiences of your "regulars" by sharing new skills or exploring new places.

## 1. Activity Host

The Activities Host position is a privilege. As with all Wilderness Trekkers positions, Activity Hosts are volunteers. An Activity Host should have experience in the activity that they are hosting and should have good organizational skills. Wilderness Trekkers, Inc. and the Activity Host are in no way responsible for the people who choose to attend the event(s) that they are hosting. The sole responsibility of the Activity Host is to organize the event and share your knowledge of the activity with those who choose to join you in that activity.

### 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of selecting a Wilderness Trekker (WT) Activity Host is to insure that persons presenting WT activities follow the ideals and goals of the organization (Mission Statement), possess the organizational skills necessary to host the activity and have some knowledge of the activity.

### 1.2 Selection

A WT Activity Host can volunteer or can be selected by other experienced Activity Hosts who are familiar with the candidate's abilities. An Activities Host candidate should have mature judgment, leadership qualities, good wilderness ethics and skills, and an understanding of WT purposes and goals.

Prior to becoming an Activity Host, Wilderness Trekkers, Inc. requests that a candidate:

1. Participate as a Co-Host-In-Training in the planning and execution of at least two activities with at least two different Activity Hosts. The Co-Host-In-Training should participate in all phases of the activity, including planning, execution, and follow-up.
2. Be recommended by those two Activity Hosts. The recommendations shall be presented to the Activities Director.

3. The Activities Director shall present the recommendation to the Board within 30 days of receipt of the recommendation.

4. The recommendation must be approved by a majority vote of the Board of Directors.

### **1.3 Change of Status**

Wilderness Trekkers, Inc. has the right to revoke the Activity Host privilege of any Host at any time by a majority vote by the board of directors.

Any Activity Host who has not hosted an activity in a two-year period will be removed from the Active Host List and placed in a *non-active* status. The *non-active* host can be reinstated as active with approval from either the President or Activity Director.

### **1.4 Leadership Qualities**

An Activity Host should make every effort to be fair and impartial to all participants, to encourage them, honor their achievements, and answer their questions to the best of their ability; to know when to offer advice as well as when not to. The Activity Host should be capable of exercising good judgment in decisions concerning the safety and comfort of the entire group. It is the Activity Hosts right to say "no" to any participant who poses a threat to group safety, environmental integrity or who does not possess the proper equipment that is needed for that activity.

### **1.5 Characteristics of an Effective Host**

1. Enthusiasm
2. Care and thoughtfulness
3. Willingness to communicate promptly to attendees and officers
4. Setting a good example to others

## **2. Activity Host Duties, Responsibilities, and Considerations**

### **2.1 Trip Planning and Preparation**

Activities are not successful by accident. It takes proper planning, thorough preparation, and careful execution for an enjoyable, memorable and fulfilling outdoor experience. Although not a requirement, it is best for the reputation of the WT organization that the host have actually participated in a previous trip for the event they are hosting. Knowing the territory is an important aspect of being prepared for your event.

#### **2.1.1 Proposing an Activity**

Wilderness Trekkers activities are to consist of one or more of the following categories: hiking, backpacking, paddling or biking. An activity that involves attending a seminar, lecture or a visit to a location whereby information is exchanged regarding the previously mentioned categories or outdoor wilderness related information is also acceptable. Camping by itself is not considered an approved activity, unless it is in conjunction with a scheduled activity including one or more of the previously mentioned categories. Activity proposals must be submitted to the Activity Director for approval. All activity proposals must be submitted in writing to the Activities Director either in person, via mail or email.

#### **2.1.2 Preliminary Scheduling**

Check with park rangers, land managers, etc. for current trail conditions and any information pertinent to trip planning (water crossings, recent burns, potable water availability, campsite limits, fees, water levels, etc.) WT requests that Activity Hosts suggest only those activities for which they possess the required skills and experience. If at all possible, do the activity, or at least scout the location, on your own before the trip; it is much easier to share an activity with others in an area you are familiar with.

Be sure to check for hunting season in areas where activities are scheduled. ***Not all areas have the same seasons.*** In Florida, consult the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission or see Florida Wildlife Magazine for dates. Annual hunt schedules for each wildlife management area also available wherever hunting licenses are sold. Plan activities suitable for the time of year and location. Consider varying skill ratings of activities to attract participation by members and others from all levels of experience.

### **2.1.3 Planning the Activity**

1. Hosts should know the planned route of travel. Be knowledgeable of approximate distances and time increments between significant points along the route.
2. Obtain permits, permission for private land usage if necessary, and amounts of entry fees, take-out fees and other expenses participants may incur (in writing if possible).
4. Plan for alternate routes or activities if at the last minute you find the route is damaged or blocked or the water is too high for hiking/paddling.
5. It can make the event more interesting if you can obtain some knowledge of the historical, geological, etc., sites along the route to share with the group.
6. The proposed activity write-up should include the following: date, time, activity rating (leisure, moderate, strenuous), County that activity is to be held, brief description of the activity, fees or cost, deadlines or any other pertinent information.

The links section of the WT website can be very helpful in finding out information to assist you in planning your activities.

### **2.1.4 Initial Response to Inquires**

1. Respond quickly so that participants can prepare or select another activity if this one is not suitable.
2. If you are not acquainted with the inquirer, ask about their experience and ability. If this is a more difficult trip and they do not seem to have enough of either, suggest an easier activity.
3. Request telephone numbers and or email address for last minute changes or cancellations. For long trips or group size limits, clearly state the deadline for confirmation. List inquires in order of receipt and notify those on a waiting list where they stand.
4. It is your right, as a Host, to reject anyone that you do not feel comfortable with attending your planned activity.

### **2.1.5 Second Response to those who confirm**

1. Respond in writing and/or email, especially if the activity is logistically complex, gear-intensive, or a beginner's activity. Mail early to avoid phone expense.
2. If possible include a map with landmarks, mileage, starting and ending points.
3. Provide a list of participants, (this makes it possible for them to share equipment, car pool, etc.)
4. Inform participants of time, date and place of meeting. Include directions to the trailhead or meeting place. Remind them that the *departure time is firm* and suggest they arrive *early*.
5. Remind them of important details, such as number of meals to plan for, expected trail conditions, and any other information that will help them prepare. Suggest gear lists to help plan gear to bring.

### **2.1.6 When Participants Meet**

1. Introduce yourself and others and check off arrivals on your roster.
2. Have each participant sign the appropriate authorized sign-in form. (REQUIRED)
3. Go over the plans, regulations, distances to be traveled, rest stops, toilet rules, water sources and purification, etc. Discuss Leave No Trace practices (see section 3). Discuss safety concerns and whistle techniques (1 – for here I am, 3 for emergency, etc.)
4. You need not wait for latecomers or "no-shows." At your discretion, you may want to leave a note with time of departure and a location where someone could join the group if possible.

### **2.2 Activity Host Forms**

Completed forms are to be submitted to the Activity Director. These forms include the sign-in sheets and the trip Reports.

#### **2.2.1 Activity Sign-in Sheet** (REQUIRED).

There are separate forms for Members and Non-members. Every participant, whether a WT member or not, must sign one. Links to [Member Sign-in](#) and [Non-Member Sign-in](#)

#### **2.2.2 Trip Reports**

This report is used to share details of your trip with other members. This is an important feature of the future of our organization as these reports provide insight to our activities for those looking to join an out door event organization. Give a brief description of your trip and include anything special that may have happened (wildlife seen, things learned, etc.). You may want to include the names of the participants. Some Hosts ask one of the participants to do the trip report as a means of further encouraging more involvement from the participants. The Trip report is to be posted on the WT Message Center.

### **2.3 Activity Costs**

Hosts are encouraged to submit a statement of expenses incurred up to \$15 per event, for items such as group refreshments (s'mores or soda), wood, etc. Additional expenses will require approval by both treasurer and Activities Director.

### **2.4 HELP!**

As a new WT Activity Host feel free to contact the Activity Director, Board Members or any other Host if you need help or have any questions. We are all available to help each other in any way that we can. Being a WT Host should be a fun and enjoyable experience. There is also a lot of information available on the WT Web Page ([www.wilderness-trekkers.org](http://www.wilderness-trekkers.org)) that may help you.

### 3. Environmental Awareness and **LEAVE NO TRACE**

The Activities Host is required to be knowledgeable in the Wilderness Trekkers commitment to environmental integrity and the "Leave No Trace" creed.

#### **Wilderness Trekker Environmental Awareness and adherence to "Leave No Trace"**

##### **Introduction**

There are too many of us. The natural world is *shrinking* around us. Through knowledge and careful conservation we can gain appreciation for the natural world, help preserve what is still left, and take our place in the cycle of living things. As Activity Hosts we have a responsibility to minimize our effect upon the areas we traverse. We must teach by example. It is good to think that future generations can walk beside a great cypress swamp, through an oak forest, or along a natural stream. We want to ensure that they experience the same pristine wildness that we currently enjoy.

In 1997, Wilderness Trekkers, Inc., by unanimous vote of the Board of Directors, endorsed the Leave No Trace (LNT) skills and ethics program as taught by the National Outdoor Leadership School, and joined with the federal land-use agencies--including the US Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management and others--to advocate and teach the use of LNT principles and practices among both our members and the public. As a Wilderness Trekkers member, whether teaching a class, hosting an activity or participating in one, we set the example the Wilderness Trekkers are ultimately judged by. It's up to us to tread lightly and **Leave No Trace!**

There are no hard and fast rules for practicing Leave No Trace principles; the impact-minimizing technique applied to one area may not, in fact, be healthy for another. Leaving no trace of our travels through natural areas requires not only skills and techniques, but also the wisdom to apply those skills and techniques appropriately for the given situation. But only by understanding, and *believing in*, our ultimate goal--having a fulfilling wilderness experience without damaging that same experience for those who follow--can we *willingly* make the right decisions and use the right skills to fulfill that goal.

##### **The 7 Leave No Trace Principles**

###### **1. Plan Ahead and Prepare**

- Know the regulations and special concerns for the area you'll visit.
- Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies.
- Schedule your trip to avoid time of high use.
- Repackage food to minimize waste.
- Use a map and compass to eliminate the use of marking paint, rock cairns, or flagging.

###### **2. Travel and Camp on Durable surfaces**

- Durable surfaces include established trails and campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses or snow.
- Protect riparian areas by camping at least 200 feet from lakes and streams.
- Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary.
- In popular areas -

1. Concentrate use on existing trails and campsites.
  2. Walk single file in the middle of the trail, even when wet or muddy.
  3. Keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent.
- In pristine areas –
    1. Disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and trails.
    2. Avoid places where impacts are just beginning.

### 3. Dispose of Waste Properly

- Pack it in, pack it out. Inspect your campsite and rest areas for trash or spilled foods. Pack out all trash, leftover food, and litter.
- Deposit solid human waste in cat holes dug 6 to 8 inches deep at least 200 feet from water, camp, and trails. Cover and disguise the cat hole when finished.
- Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products.
- To wash yourself or your dishes, carry water 200 feet away from streams or lakes and use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Scatter strained dishwater.

### 4. Leave What You Find

- Preserve the past: examine, but do not touch, cultural or historic structures and artifacts.
- Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them.
- Avoid introducing or transporting non-native species.
- Do not build structures, furniture, or dig trenches.

### 5. Minimize Campfire Impacts

- Campfires can cause lasting impacts to the backcountry. Use a lightweight stove for cooking and enjoy a candle lantern for light.
- Where fires are permitted, use established fire rings, fire pans, or mound fires.
- Keep fires small. Only use sticks from the ground that can be broken by hand.
- Burn all wood and coals to ash, put out campfires completely, then scatter cool ashes.

### 6. 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 and your food by storing rations and trash securely.
- Control pets at all times, or leave them at home
- Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young, or winter

### 7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors

- Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.
- Be courteous. Yield to other users on the trail.
- Step to the downhill side of the trail when encountering pack stock.
- Take breaks and camp away from trails and other visitors.
- Let nature's sounds prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises.

Portions of this section were borrowed from the ***LEAVE NO TRACE Outdoor Skills & Ethics Training Guide*** published by the National Outdoor Leadership School, PO Box AA, Lander Wyoming 82520

For more information and materials, call Leave No Trace at 1-800-332-4100, or check their web page, [www.lnt.org](http://www.lnt.org)