



Conservation Corner

“Leave No Trace”

Last month, I tackled the topic of “Dispersed Camping” which I am a huge proponent of. While I skirted the theory, I never mentioned the topic of “Leave No Trace.” As you might imagine, *Leave No Trace* is just that—after you have left your campsite, there should be no evidence that you were even there. At a minimum, you should always leave your campsite cleaner than you found it.

If you did a google search for *Leave no Trace* (LNT), you would find multiple sites dedicated to conservation, an organization by the same name dedicated solely to this topic, and a movie with the same title. After searching the websites dedicated to LNT, you will find they all espouse the same 7 principles which I will share here in this issue.

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare

Proper trip planning and preparation helps hikers and campers accomplish trip goals safely and enjoyably while minimizing damage to natural and cultural resources. Campers who plan ahead can avoid unexpected situations, and minimize their impact by complying with area regulations such as observing limitations on group size. Schedule your trek to avoid times of high use. Obtain permits or permission to use the area for your trek.



2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces

Damage to land occurs when visitors trample vegetation or communities of organisms beyond recovery. The resulting barren areas develop into undesirable trails, campsites, and soil erosion.

In high-use areas, campers should concentrate their activities where vegetation is already absent. Minimize resource damage by using existing trails and selecting designated or existing campsites. Keep campsites small by arranging tents in close proximity. In more remote, less-traveled areas, campers should generally spread out. When hiking, take different paths to avoid creating new trails that cause erosion. When camping, disperse tents and cooking activities—and move camp daily to avoid creating permanent-looking campsites. Avoid places where impacts are just beginning to show. Always choose the most durable surfaces available: rock, gravel, sand, compacted soil, dry grasses, or snow.

These guidelines apply to most alpine settings and may be different for other areas, such as deserts. Learn the Leave No Trace techniques for your crew’s specific activity or destination. Check with land managers to be sure of the proper technique.

3. Dispose of Waste Properly

This principle reminds back-country visitors to take their trash home with them. It makes sense to carry out of the backcountry the extra materials taken there by your group or others. Inspect your campsite for trash or spilled foods. Accept the challenge of packing out all trash, leftover food, and litter.

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Dispose of Waste Properly (continued)

Wastewater. Help prevent contamination of natural water sources: After straining food particles, properly dispose of dishwater by dispersing at least 200 feet (about 80 to 100 strides for a youth) from springs, streams, and lakes. Use biodegradable soap 200 feet or more from any water source.

Human Waste. Proper human waste disposal helps prevent the spread of disease and exposure to others. Catholes 6 to 8 inches deep in humus and 200 feet from water, trails, and campsites are often the easiest and most practical way to dispose of feces.

4. Leave What You Find

Do not dig tent trenches or build lean-tos, tables, or chairs. Never hammer nails into trees, hack at trees with hatchets or saws, or damage bark and roots by tying horses to trees for extended periods. Replace surface rocks or twigs that you cleared from the campsite. Good campsites are found, not made. Avoid altering a site, digging trenches, or building structures.



5. Minimize Campfire Impacts

Some people would not think of camping without a campfire. Yet the naturalness of many areas has been degraded by overuse of fires and increasing demand for firewood.

True Leave No Trace fires are small. Use dead and downed wood that can be broken easily by hand. When possible, burn all wood to ash and remove all unburned trash and food from the fire ring. If a site has two or more fire rings, you may dismantle all but one and scatter the materials in the surrounding area. Be certain all wood and campfire debris is dead out.

6. Respect Wildlife

Quick movements and loud noises are stressful to animals. Considerate campers practice these safety methods: Observe wildlife from afar to avoid disturbing them. Give animals a wide berth, especially during breeding, nesting, and birthing seasons. Store food securely and keep garbage and food scraps away from animals so they will not acquire bad habits. Never feed wildlife. Help keep wildlife wild. You are too close if an animal alters its normal activities.



7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors

Thoughtful campers respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience. Travel and camp in small groups (no more than the group size prescribed by land managers). Let nature's sounds prevail. Keep the noise down and leave radios, tape players, and pets at home. Select campsites away from other groups to help preserve their solitude. Always travel and camp quietly to avoid disturbing other visitors. Make sure the colors of clothing and gear blend with the environment. Respect private property and leave gates (open or closed) as found. Be considerate of other campers and respect their privacy.

For more detailed info about these 7 principles and more about Leave No Trace, visit www.Int.org