



Wilderness Use Policy of the BSA

All private or publicly owned backcountry land and designated wildernesses are included in the term “wilderness areas” in this policy. The Outdoor Code of the Boy Scouts of America applies to outdoor behavior generally, but for treks into wilderness areas minimum to trace camping methods must be used. Within the outdoor program of the Boy Scouts of America, there are many different camping skill levels. Camping practices that are appropriate for day outings, long-term Scout camp or short-term unit camping may not apply to wilderness areas. Scouts and Explorers need to adopt attitudes and patterns of behavior, wherever they go, that respect the rights of others, including future generations, to enjoy the outdoors.

In wilderness areas, it is crucial to minimize our impact on particularly fragile ecosystems such as mountains, lakes and streams, deserts, and seashores. Since our impact varies from one season of the year to the next, it becomes important for us to adjust to these changing conditions as well, to avoid damaging the environment.

The Boy Scouts of America emphasizes these practices for all troops and posts planning to use wilderness areas:

- ◆ Contact the landowner or land managing agency (Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. fish and Wildlife Service, state, private, etc.) well in advance of the outing to learn the regulations for that area and to obtain required permits and current maps.
- ◆ Always obtain a tour permit, available through local council Scout service centers, meet all conditions specified, and carry it on the trip.
- ◆ Limit the size of groups generally to no more than 8 to 11 persons, including at least one adult leader. *{Note: Other policies require 2 adult leaders and we suggest you adhere to the 2 deep leadership policy.}* (maximum: 10 persons per leader.) Two leaders per group are best. Do not exceed the group size established for some wilderness areas. Organize each group (patrol or crew) to function independently by planning their won trips on different dates, serving their own food, providing their own transportation to the trailhead, securing individual permits, and camping in a separate and distinct group. When necessary to combine transportation and planning or buying, small groups should still camp and travel on the trail separately from other groups of the same unit.
- ◆ Match the ruggedness of high adventure experiences to the skills, physical ability, and maturity of those taking part. Save more rugged treks for older youth members who are more proficient and experienced in the outdoor skills.

- ◆ Participate in training for adult leaders on no-trace camping {Note: See *Leave No Trace* training materials} or be proficient and experienced in the leadership and skills required for treks into wilderness areas.
- ◆ Use backpacking stoves, particularly where the fuel supply is limited or open fires are restricted. Supervision by an adult knowledgeable in the use of the stove(s) must be provided. If a fire is necessary, keep it as small as possible and use established fire lays where available if in a safe area. After use, erase all signs.
- ◆ Emphasize the need for minimizing impact on the land through proper camping practices and preserving the solitude and quietness of remote areas. Camp at low use areas – avoid popular sites that show signs of heavy use.
- ◆ Leave dogs, radios and tape players at home.
- ◆ Use biodegradable (not metal or glass) or plastic food containers. Carry out unburnable trash of your own and any left by others.
- ◆ Dig shallow holes for latrines and locate them at least 200 feet away from the nearest water source. Cover the latrines completely before leaving.
- ◆ Wash clothes, dishes and bodies at least 200 feet away from any source of natural water.
- ◆ Where a choice is available, select equipment of muted colors, which blend with the natural surroundings.
- ◆ Look at and photograph; never pick or collect.
- ◆ Follow trail switchbacks and stay on established trails.
- ◆ Treat wildlife with respect and take precautions to avoid dangerous encounters with wildlife. Leave snakes, bears, ground squirrels and other wildlife alone.