

## Discuss Leave No Trace Principles with Your Party



*LNT principles should be regularly discussed with your party before and during your expedition.*

### **Overview for the Chugach and Tongass National Forests:**

Discuss all seven Leave No Trace principles with your party/clients and what practices and gear allow you to apply the strongest outdoor ethic.

Discuss people's experience, skill-levels, physical condition, comfort-levels and expectations when you are planning your expedition.

Leave No Trace means thinking beyond your group and your trip and conducting yourselves respectful of the natural community and of future visitors.

Consider your potential impact on an area in the context of past, present and future visitor impacts.

Outdoor ethics do not spontaneously emerge or remain static: they must be regularly discussed, understood, examined and adapted.

Examine impacts you make in the field, re-naturalize the area if possible and discuss how to avoid making those impacts in the future.

Teach Leave No Trace principles to others, especially youth, to spread responsible recreation practices.

# 1. Plan Ahead and Prepare



*Kayakers prepare to camp by raising their boats above the tide and waves on a steep shore.*

## **Overview for the Chugach and Tongass National Forests:**

Before setting out, talk with local USFS staff to learn of regulations/concerns that address protecting the resource, wildlife, visitors and the visitor experience.

Challenging weather, seas, terrain, coastlines and cold water must be addressed when preparing for a trip as well as in day-to-day planning during the trip.

Your party must be well-equipped, proficient, self-reliant, flexible, and capable of enduring extended, cold, soaking conditions.

Travel in small groups to minimize your impact and avoid popular areas during peak use.

Eliminate trash before your trip, prepare snack bags to sustain energy levels and plan for extra meals in case you stay out longer than expected.

Ensure everyone in your party can navigate accurately with a map and compass and a GPS unit; do not use marking paint, rock cairns or flagging.

Leave a detailed trip plan with people in town and ensure your party knows what to do if you get lost, you get separated from the group or you are weathered-in.

## 2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces



*Beach sand makes a great durable surface.*

### **Overview for the Chugach and Tongass National Forests:**

When planning your trip, inquire with local USFS staff to determine the best durable surfaces and the most sensitive/resilient plants.

Concentrate use on durable surfaces, such as established trails and campsites, bare rock, beaches, gravel bars, dry grasses, unvegetated forest duff and snow.

Upon arrival at a new site, take time to explicitly discuss the camp layout that will best preserve the natural integrity of the area.

In Alaska, it may be acceptable to travel/camp along some river/lake corridors to take advantage of the durable surfaces of beach sand and gravel bars.

Common impacts occur when people limb trees, clear rocks/vegetation, level the ground, build benches and construct large fire rings.

Use camp stoves, sleeping pads, camp chairs and head lamps to provide comfort without site modification, and naturalize your site when you leave.

In popular areas keep campsites small, focus activity where vegetation is absent and walk single file in the middle of trails – even muddy ones -- to avoid widening them.

Visit remote or pristine areas only if you are committed to practicing Leave No Trace principles; avoid places where impacts are beginning and when breaking camp dedicate time to naturalize your campsite so others do not use the same area.

### 3. Dispose of Waste Properly



*Improper waste disposal degrades the visitor experience.*

#### **Overview for the Chugach and Tongass National Forests:**

Inquire with local USFS staff to learn the best means for securing food/trash and discuss this protocol with your party before setting out.

Trash, including biodegradables, must be secured with food to prevent conditioning of bears, rodents, birds and other animals.

Pack out any trash you find, teach others to do the same and we can restore areas that have been abused.

Report marine debris to the Marine Conservation Alliance Foundation at: [marinedebris@ak.net](mailto:marinedebris@ak.net) or [www.MCAFoundation.org](http://www.MCAFoundation.org).

Inquire with local Forest Service staff to find out whether you should dispose of human waste by packing it out, marine disposal, the cathole method, or a combination, and discuss this protocol with your party before setting out.

Toilet paper is an animal attractant and must be packed out, or a natural alternative must be used.

Urinate away from camps and trails on rock, bare ground, in the ocean or below the high tide line; avoid urinating on plants since animals are attracted to the salt.

With dishwater, food particles must be strained out and secured the same as trash.

A washcloth, water and friction can clean any human; hot water, a scrubbing pad or sand/gravel can clean any dishes; biodegradable soap/lotions are not natural and can cause algae blooms.

Fishers and hunters should contact local USFS staff to learn the best means of disposing entrails: they can serve as a strong bear attractant.

## 4. Leave What You Find



*Leave behind natural and artificial objects for others to appreciate.*

### **Overview for the Chugach and Tongass National Forests:**

Before and throughout your trip discuss how you are stewards for the present and future: emphasize the value of leaving natural and cultural objects undisturbed.

Preserve Alaska's past -- appreciate, but leave as you find: rock art; stone tools; ancient fish traps; culturally modified trees; shell middens; grave sites; totem poles; cabin remains; village sites; and industrial remains including mines, canneries, and fur farms.

If you find artifacts during your expedition, please mark the location on a map or collect a GPS waypoint, photograph them and share your discovery with your local USFS archeologists.

Respect private inholdings, permitted cabins and traditional/subsistence camps you encounter in the wild.

Address souvenir-gathering before and during your trip: teach your clients and party to load their cameras, not their packs, to fill their journals, not their pockets.

Visit a site without modifying it and destroying its natural integrity: do not build structures, furniture, or dig trenches; do not cut down trees, break branches or clear vegetation.

Minimize the spread of non-native species that alter natural ecosystems: before setting out, clean the dirt from your boots and tire treads; afterwards, empty and clean your packs, tents, boats, fishing equipment, and vehicles.

## 5. Minimize Campfire Impacts



*Stoves create fewer impacts than fires.*

### **Overview for the Chugach and Tongass National Forests:**

Ask local USFS staff about pertinent regulations and campfire management techniques.

Understand that naturally occurring fire is uncommon in the temperate rainforests of the Chugach and Tongass National Forests.

Recognize that fires are unethical without abundant dead and downed wood and without proper measures to keep them from spreading through organic soil/peat moss/root systems.

Be realistic about wind, weather, location, and wood availability when deciding if it is safe and responsible to have a fire -- never rely on a fire for light, warmth or cooking.

Be mindful that campfires can cause lasting impacts to the backcountry by encouraging additional use in pristine areas.

Foregoing fire and using a camp stove represents the lightest hand on the land.

If you choose to have a fire, use an existing grate or fire ring, or have it below the high tide line.

If there are no existing grates or fire rings, build a low-impact fire: 18-24 inches in diameter or less atop sand/gravel on a fire blanket/fire pan or in a sand/gravel pit.

Firewood must be dead, down, abundant and collected from a widespread area; places that accumulate driftwood represent the best natural sources of firewood.

Never fell a standing snag nor strip dead branches off a standing tree.

Burn firewood completely to ash including the ends; never burn foil, foil-lined packets, plastic, aluminum, metal, glass or food, and make sure your fire is out cold.

Restore the fire site to its natural appearance.

## 6. Respect Wildlife



*Equip yourself to observe wildlife without disturbing the animals.*

### **Overview for the Chugach and Tongass National Forests:**

Learn the behavior of wildlife you regularly observe and recognize signs of disturbance; contact local USFS staff to learn about local wildlife concerns.

Discuss ethical wildlife viewing with your clients/group before the trip in order to foster wonderment and to avoid frustration during wildlife encounters.

Conduct yourselves such that animals do not register your presence or alter their behavior.

Invest in telephoto lenses, high-powered binoculars or spotting scopes to allow clients/companions to experience wildlife without disturbance.

Do not press wildlife when photographing; instead, try to capture animals within the context of their environment.

Never shout or make noise to get an animal's attention.

Teach children not to approach, feed, yell at or harass wild animals.

Avoid wildlife during sensitive times such as when nesting, denning, mating, nursing, wintering, molting and feeding.

Inquire with local USFS Staff as to the best means for securing food, trash and other attractants during your trip.

Ensure that everyone in your party knows the proper outdoor ethics for recreating in bear country.

Extend respect and non-disturbance to all animals, including sea birds and intertidal life.

Control pets at all times, or leave them at home.

## 7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors



*Respect visitors you meet to create a positive experience for everybody.*

### **Overview for the Chugach and Tongass National Forests:**

Conduct yourself in a manner that respects other visitors and types of use in order to preserve the quality of the Alaskan experience for everyone.

Inquire with local USFS staff as to what kinds of use are common in order to keep your trip expectations realistic; respect regulations designed to protect visitor experiences.

Maintain a cooperative spirit in the backcountry and bond with others over our common appreciation for our public wildlands.

Choose clothes and gear that are natural-toned and blend in with the background.

Do not crowd others when deciding where to camp.

Respect subsistence users: hunting, trapping, fishing and gathering remain a vital part of Alaskans' subsistence way of life year-round.

Respect Native and private lands and cabins: there are 44 million acres of Alaskan native lands and innumerable private inholdings and permitted cabins interspersed with public lands in Alaska.

Let nature's sounds prevail: be mindful of how well sound carries over water; don't yell or blow horns; teach children to listen to nature.