

# AMC Minimum Impact Guidelines

## AMC Mission Statement:

The Appalachian Mountain Club promotes the protection, enjoyment, and wise use of the mountains, rivers, and trails of the Northeast. We believe that the mountains and rivers have an intrinsic worth and also provide recreational opportunity, spiritual renewal, and ecological and economic health for the region. We encourage people to enjoy and appreciate the natural world because we believe that successful conservation depends on this experience.

In support of the AMC mission, each of our outdoor trips will formally adhere to the principles of Leave No Trace.



**The Leave No Trace Principles of outdoor ethics form the framework of Leave No Trace's message:**

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare
2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
3. Dispose of Waste Properly
4. Leave What You Find
5. Minimize Campfire Impacts
6. Respect Wildlife
7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors

### **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 times of high use.
- Visit in small groups of 10 or less. Split larger parties into groups of 4-6.
- Repackage food to minimize waste. Ziplok bags reduce waste and provide for re-use as a trash container.

- Use a map and compass to eliminate the use of marking paint, rock cairns or flagging.

### **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.
- If you leave a trail, avoid damage to plant life and unstable ground.
- When bushwhacking, spread out, do not walk in the footprints of others.
- Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary. Do not dig ditches around tents or otherwise alter the site.
- When leaving, return the site to an apparently unused condition by sweeping the site with dead branches and covering marks from tents and other activities with brush.
- When leaving, check the site for refuse or lost items.
- In popular areas:
  - Concentrate use on existing trails and campsites.
  - Walk single file in the middle of the trail, even when wet or muddy.
  - Keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent.
- In pristine areas:
  - Disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and trails.
  - Avoid places where impacts are just beginning.

### **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 catholes dug 6 to 8 inches deep at least 200 feet from water, camp, and trails. Cover and disguise the cathole when finished. A trowel will be carried by the group if you would like to use it.
- 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 (grey water).

### **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.

## **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. Pick unburned trash from ashes.
- Burn wood from downed, dead trees. Standing dead trees have a major role in forest ecology.

## **Respect Wildlife**

- Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.
- Never feed animals—purposefully or on accident (by leaving food on the ground at campsite/not hanging a bear bag). 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. A bear bag will be hung at the campsite and each participant will be expected to include all food in the hung bear bags. A group rope will be provided.
- Control pets at all times, or leave them at home. Bury their feces. Depending on the leader's preference, pets might not be allowed on AMC hikes due to their potential impact on other wildlife as well as sound/noise issues.
- Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young, or winter.
- Do not collect plants, animals or human artifacts.

## **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.
- Downhill hikers yield to uphill hikers.