

# Washington County 4-H Wagon Train

## Leave No Trace

4-H Wagon Train considers itself a low impact outdoor activity even though we have a significant number of participants and a dynamic group. This document is meant to prepare participants for their outdoor experience with Wagon Train. Part of Wagon Train's mission is to promote the natural world, and with that comes the responsibility to protect it as well. The following information is intended to help you understand Leave No Trace Ethics and how they apply to Wagon Train practices.

Please refer to the Washington County 4-H Wagon Train Environmental Protection Policy for additional specific information and guidance for Leadership responsibilities.

### Plan Ahead and Prepare

Most of the major planning for the trip is carried out throughout the year by Board Members to ensure that hardened campsites are secured, established trails/roads are used, sensitive natural areas are avoided, and waste-water facilities are coordinated, to name a few. You can do your part when planning by carpooling, carrying a small garbage bag in your day pack, bringing a refillable water bottle, using your mess kit and biodegradable shampoo to name a few. Items that come in excess packaging can be removed and placed in resealable baggies to minimize garbage on the trail. Follow instructions from leaders and land-owners regarding our impact in certain areas. There may be times where we travel through sensitive areas for wildlife, plant life, or historical regions. Know the directions and instructions for staging so that our traffic and parking impact is minimized.

### Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces



The image to the left is what happens over time when hikers seek out the easiest or driest section of a trail. When we are traveling on our route for the day, stay on the designated trail even when footing conditions are less than ideal. Don't cut cross country or take a shortcut through a switch back or through camp. When in camp listen to the instructions of leaders to ensure we are placing our shelters and highlines in designated areas. Always choose the already hardened areas of a site first and do not increase the size of the campsite. Brush can be cleared so long as it is dead and down. Stock should be watered out of tubs or buckets and not directly from a creek bank. When breaking camp, take time to naturalize the site by scuffing the groundcover, returning sticks/branches, removing excess hay, dispersing manure, and filling in any holes made by livestock to help the site recover and make it less obvious of a campsite.

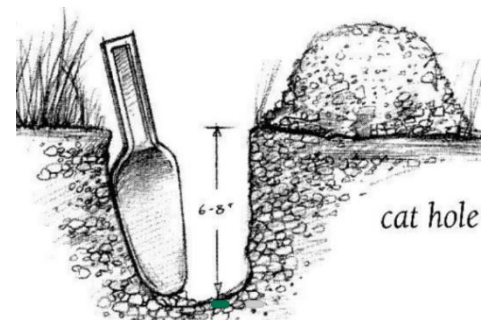
### Dispose of Waste Properly

When on the trail ensure that you are using a cat hole to dispose of human waste. When in camp use the biffies or pit toilets provided. Use buckets or solar showers to wash hair and other personal hygiene needs, but make sure to disperse the buckets and use shower at least 200' from any water source. Do not use a



water source to bath in. Make sure to use biodegradable soap to wash with. When in camp or on the trail make sure to pick up

trash/recyclables and dispose of in designated receptacles. What is packed in needs to be packed back out, that includes apple cores, banana peels and nut shells. It can take 6 months for an orange peel to decompose and up to two years for a banana peel. Putting anything in the campfire other than firewood is also not allowed.



## Leave What You Find

Our travels take us to many natural and historical destinations. In most of those locations it is not only forbidden but illegal to move or remove items that include but are not limited to arrowheads, flowers, antlers, petrified wood, and colored rocks. Natural objects of beauty add to the outdoor experience and should be left so that others can experience a sense of discovery. Occasionally we have the opportunity to experience historical sites or sensitive areas. In these areas it is especially important we are careful not to disturb plants that are rare or slow to reproduce, touch petroglyphs or other cultural objects, or create undue stress on protected wildlife. Participants are encouraged to take photos instead of souvenirs or draw in their journal as well as point out their finds to others.



## Minimize Campfire Impacts

The most important consideration when deciding to have a campfire is the potential damage to the backcountry. While decisions to have a campfire are made by leadership it is everyone's responsibility to ensure safety with and around the campfire. Having a campfire is a privilege and many safety considerations are factored into it. The best place to build a fire is in an existing fire ring. Down and dead firewood should be collected from a large area around camp. No trash whether burnable or not should be placed in the fire. Follow any conditions of the Campfire Permit or Regulated Use Guidelines and ensure that it is safely attended and properly extinguished. Out of all the topics covered in Leave No Trace, fire can be the most catastrophic of all, with the potential to destroy the entire landscape we are recreating in. Refer to the **Fire Safety** handout for specific campfire safety.

## Respect Wildlife, Livestock and Plant Life

Quick movements, loud noises, and large groups often stress wild and domestic animals. Move slowly and observe from a distance. Injury to animals and damage can occur if they are startled or pressed to run into fence lines, roads, across rivers, or for long distances. Avoid approaching, feeding, or picking up animals even if they seem abandoned. You can incur injury to yourself or acquire a disease if attempting to handle an animal. Young may be abandoned if moved or they have human scent on them. Protect food and livestock grain in secure containers and ensure garbage makes it into the proper receptacles. Observe animals from afar, give them a wide berth, move slowly and quietly and remember we are visitors to their home. To protect native plant life we need to first refrain from picking flowers and plants but also prevent the introduction of noxious weed species. This can be done by ensuring our vehicles and clothing are free of weed seeds. Weed free hay is provided on the trek but ensure your livestock is eating that prior to trek to minimize weed seed transfer in manure upon arrival. Before opening or closing a gate check with leadership as you may inadvertently close livestock out of their only water supply or let them out.

## Be Considerate of Other Visitors

One of the most important components of outdoor ethics is to maintain courtesy toward other visitors. It helps everyone enjoy their outdoor experience. Many people come to the outdoors to listen to nature. Excessive noise, uncontrolled animals and damaged surroundings take away from the natural appeal of the outdoors. When sharing the trail hikers headed downhill should step aside to allow uphill traffic to pass. Hikers should yield to equestrians, and bicyclists should yield to both hikers and equestrians on trails. Before passing others, politely announce your presence and proceed with caution. Maintain courtesy and follow leadership instructions when we encounter motorcycle use in OHV areas and automobile traffic on roads. Because we are a large group it is important to maintain this same courtesy towards other users while in camp. Keep our noise and our people within our group.

