Leave No Trace Principles

**Plan Ahead & Prepare**

Proper planning is the best way to minimize your impact, while ensuring you have a safe and enjoyable wilderness trip.

- Know the regulations and special concerns for the area, and plan your trip accordingly.
- Choose a route appropriate to your abilities and goals.
- Schedule your trip to avoid busy times and crowded areas.
- Travel in a small group to minimize congestion and impact.
- Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and remote emergencies by taking appropriate clothing and equipment.
- Leave cans and bottles at home and repack these spills.
- Rely on a map and compass to eliminate the use of rock cairns or flagging tape.
- Take some training or hire a guide.

**Travel & Camp on Durable Surfaces**

The wilderness traveler’s challenge to “leave only footprints” is changing as we realize that the accumulation of even small physical impacts leaves a lasting impression on our wild areas.

- Walk single file in the middle of trails, even when wet or muddy. Detouring breaks down the trail edge, widening the path, and increasing overall impacts.
- Travel on durable surfaces where possible. Avoid steep slope edges, fragile vegetation, wetlands, coastal dunes and other sensitive areas.
- In well traveled locations, use existing campsites where available.
- In pristine locations, camp on durable surfaces, where there are no signs of previous use, and use Leave No Trace camping techniques.
- Keep campsites small and away from water and trails. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is naturally absent.

**Leave What You Find**

People come to Wilderness Areas to enjoy them in their natural state. Allow others a sense of discovery by leaving rocks, plants, artifrices and other natural objects as you find them.

- Examine, but do not touch, cultural or historic structures and artifacts.
- Berries and plants are best left to feed resident wildlife.
- If you choose to pick berries, please keep your harvest modest and limit picking to areas of abundance.
- Minimize site alterations when setting up camp. Do not build structures, furniture, or dig trenches. Return things to their natural condition before moving on.
- Do not introduce non-native plant or animal species.

**Respect Wildlife**

One of the greatest attractions to wild areas is the variety and abundance of wildlife. As a visitor, you should be aware that your presence affects animals – even through a single encounter.

- Learn about sensitive and endangered species in the area you are visiting.
- Be aware that wildlife may be especially sensitive in winter or when mating, nesting, or raising young.
- Never feed wild animals. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviors, exposes them to predators, and may endanger you or other people.

- Store rations and trash securely.
- In bear country, hang your food at night, and separate cooking and sleeping areas. Avoid all bear encounters and seek information on safe conduct in bear country from a knowledgeable source.
- Exercise special caution around marine mammals and seabirds by observing them only from a distance, using binoculars.
- Avoid stepping on or disturbing intertidal marine life (such as mussels, barnacles, crabs and urchins).

**Be Considerate of Other Visitors**

Most travelers to Wilderness Areas are hoping to spend time in a wilderness setting, away from other people. Understand the value of wilderness for solitude and a “natural” experience.

- Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.
- Be courteous. Yield to others on the trail.
- Take rest breaks and camp away from trails and other visitors to minimize crowding.
- Let nature’s sounds prevail and avoid loud voices and noises.
- If you take a dog, ensure it is well behaved and under control at all times. Dispose of pet feces as for human waste (carry out or bury away from trails and water).

**Dispose of Waste Properly**

Garbage left in wild areas is unsightly for other travelers and may pose a risk to wild animals. Improperly disposed human waste creates an unpleasant atmosphere for recreational travelers, and poses a risk to human health and wildlife through water contamination.

- If you pack it in, pack it out – including left over food, and litter.
- Inspect your campsite and rest areas for trash or spilled foods, and clean up after others, as well as yourself.
- Resist the temptation to burn your garbage, as it seldom burns completely.
- Carry out solid human waste or dig a small hole in the ground (‘cathole’) and bury all toilet paper and feces. Cover and disguise the cathole when finished (see Standards below).
- Use toilet paper sparingly and fully bury it or pack it out. Pack out all hygiene products.
- To wash yourself or your dishes, carry water 50m away from streams or lakes and use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Scatter strained dishwater away from cooking and sleeping areas.
- Clean fish or game at least 50m from camp sites and trails.

Wilderness Area Standards

In addition to the Leave No Trace principles, special standards apply to certain activities within provincial Wilderness Areas, and are enforced under the Wilderness Areas Protection Act.

**FISHING, HUNTING & TRAPPING**

Sport fishing and traditional patterns of hunting and trapping are generally permitted. Such activities are subject to the Wildlife Act and regulations, and may be further regulated by special restrictions within individual Wilderness Areas.

**PRIVATE LANDS**

Private lands adjacent to or surrounded by a Wilderness Area are not regulated by the Act. Anyone wishing to use such lands for recreation or other purposes must obtain permission from the landowner.

**HIKING TRAIL DEVELOPMENT**

Trail development and operation requires authorization from Nova Scotia Environment.

**CONDUCTING RESEARCH**

Scientific research is generally encouraged within Wilderness Areas. All researchers require a licence specifying terms and conditions for conducting research.

Vehicles and Bicycles

Under the Wilderness Areas Protection Act, “vehicle” means a motor vehicle and includes an all-terrain vehicle, a snowmobile, a motor boat, a motor vessel, and an aircraft.

Public vehicle and bicycle use in wilderness areas is generally prohibited under the Wilderness Areas Protection Act. Vehicle use may be authorized only in limited and exceptional circumstances, on approved routes, under the terms of a licence or agreement.

For more information on vehicle and bicycle use, please contact a regional protected areas officer.

www.leavenotrace.ca
1-800-877-9343

**NOVA SCOTIA Environment**

Protected Areas Program
www.gov.ns.ca/ese/protectedareass
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Keep It Wild

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Leaving no trace, prevent the spread of disease, and enjoy the outdoors responsibly, where you can truly keep it wild.