

# **Activity Leader's Guide**

**Alabama Hiking  
Trail Society, Inc.**

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*The Alabama Hiking Trail Society is Alabama's foremost volunteer non-profit organization dedicated to planning, building, and maintaining hiking trails, and to the education for careful usage and enjoyment of Alabama's great outdoors.*

## INTRODUCTION

As an Activity Leader of the Alabama Hiking Trail Society, you hold, arguably, the most important job in the Society. That job is fulfilling the mission of the AHTS by leading activities through which others, both members and public, will be able to learn the skills and knowledge which will help them enjoy and appreciate the natural world that surrounds them, and by instilling in them the desire to preserve it.

The Alabama Hiking Trail Society was founded on July 21st, 2001 by a small group of hikers with a very large dream of building a continuous footpath connecting the Florida National Scenic Trail to the Pinhoti Trail in Talladega National Forest, so that there is a continuous trail from Key West to Cap Gaspé, Quebec Province, Canada and to build a connected state-wide hiking trail system to be called The Alabama Trail System, throughout Alabama, and to educate the public in the careful use of this precious natural resource. The Society has developed goals and ideals to help define its mission, as well as the policies and standards necessary to attain these goals. It is the responsibility of the AHTS Activity Leader, while leading or participating in AHTS activities, to understand, practice, and teach those skills and ethics consistent with AHTS standards, and to discourage those practices which are contrary to AHTS standards.

It is an accepted fact that first impressions are the most important. As an Alabama Hiking Trail Society Activity Leader, you have the opportunity to create a lasting, positive impression of wilderness experience in the minds of your “first-timer” activity participants. You can build on the memorable experiences of your “regulars” by teaching new skills or exploring new places. Be sure to keep in mind the ingredients necessary to ensure a fulfilling experience—proper planning and preparation, with special attention to safety and comfort—and your activity will be a success every time.

## 1. ACTIVITY LEADER SELECTION AND TRAINING

*ALL SANCTIONED ALABAMA HIKING TRAIL SOCIETY ACTIVITIES  
MUST BE LEAD BY CERTIFIED ACTIVITY LEADERS.*

### 1.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of certifying Alabama Hiking Trail Society (AHTS) Activity Leaders is to insure that persons presenting AHTS activities uphold the ideals and goals of the Society, possess the leadership and outdoor skills necessary to lead others, and, satisfy the requirements of AHTS liability insurance.

### 1.2 SELECTION AND CERTIFICATION

An AHTS Activity Leader is selected by other experienced Activity Leaders who are familiar with the candidate's abilities. Two certified Activity Leaders may recommend those persons participating in AHTS activities who exhibit mature judgment, leadership qualities, good wildlands ethics and skills, and an understanding of AHTS purposes and goals.

Prior to certification as an Activity Leader, the Society requests that a candidate:

1. Regularly take part in leadership workshops which include Alabama Trail policies, practices and skills.
2. Participate as a Co-Leader-in-Training in the planning and execution of at least two activities led by at least two different Activity Leaders.
3. Be recommended by those two Activity Leaders.

After the candidate has accepted the nomination, the two nominating Activity Leaders shall submit a letter of recommendation to the State Activities Coordinator. The letter of recommendation should include the following information:

1. Candidate's name, address, telephone number, and chapter affiliation
2. Recent leadership/skills workshops attended
3. Details of activities that candidate assisted in as Co-Leader-in-Training
4. Reason(s) for recommendation
5. Names, addresses, telephone numbers, and signatures of nominating Activity Leaders

The State Activities Coordinator and/or the State Vice-President of Membership shall review the candidate's letter of recommendation and make the decision either to certify or not certify the candidate as an AHTS Activity Leader. This decision will be transmitted to the State Activities Coordinator within 30 days of receipt of the letter of recommendation. The State Activities Coordinator will also send the candidate a written acknowledgment of certification.

### **1.2.1 EXCEPTIONS**

State and Chapter Officers are considered Activity Leaders *only* for the purposes of conducting chapter meetings. They must be certified per the procedure described above to lead all other AHTS activities.

Trail Section Leaders are Activity Leaders by virtue of their acceptance to that position by the AHTS President (see AHTS Bylaws).

Trailmasters who intend to lead others on trail maintenance activities should first be certified as Activity Leaders.

### **1.3 TRAINING OF ACTIVITY LEADERS**

Prior to an Activity Leader candidate's nomination, the candidate must co-lead at least two activities with two different certified Activity Leaders. These Activity Leaders should allow the candidate to participate in all phases of the activity, including planning, execution, and follow-up.

Once certified, new Activity Leaders are asked to conduct their first two activities with an experienced Activity Leader acting as co-leader.

All Activity Leaders should keep their training current through regular participation in AHTS Activity Leaders' workshops, leadership and outdoor skills workshops, and by regularly leading activities. Basic first-aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training through accredited agencies, such as the Red Cross, is also highly encouraged.

### **1.4 ACTIVITY LEADER CERTIFICATION EXPIRATION, REMOVAL**

The State Activities Coordinator will maintain a master listing of certified Activity Leaders.

By January 31<sup>st</sup> of each year the State Activities Coordinator will poll Activity Leaders to determine if they wish to continue in this capacity. By January 31<sup>st</sup> of each year, the State Activity Chair will submit an updated list of Activity Leaders to the State Board of Directors.

#### **1.4.1 EXPIRATION**

Any certified Activity Leader whose name has not been resubmitted annually for three (3) consecutive years will be removed from the master listing. To be recertified, the former Activity Leader should submit a letter to the State Activities Coordinator requesting recertification. The State Activities Coordinator will verify that the applicant had prior Activity Leader experience and was not previously suspended or removed (see section 1.4.2 below). If the applicant's record is in good standing, the State Activities Coordinator will recertify the Activity Leader. If the applicant's record is not in good standing, the request will be referred to the Vice President of Membership for disposition. The decision of the State Activities Coordinator or VP-Membership must be delivered in writing to the applicant, within 30 days of the applicant's request.

To maintain certification, an Activity Leader must lead or assist at least one activity per year and/or participate in an Activity Leader workshop.

### 1.4.2 REMOVAL

If an Activity Leader evidences neglect of safety or skills, a lack of caring for the environment, or engages in activities contrary to the goals and purposes of the AHTS, the following steps should be taken:

1. The State Activities Coordinator meets with the Activity Leader and tries to resolve the difficulty.
2. If the State Activities Leader is unable to resolve the problem, the State Activities Leader shall detail the problem in writing and submit it to the State Board of Directors for review. At this time, the State Activities Coordinator will notify the Activity Leader that the problem is under state review and that the Activity Leader may not lead activities pending resolution. The State Activities Coordinator will review the problem with the AHTS Vice President of Membership. Depending on the nature of the problem, the VP-Membership may act to suspend the certification of the Activity Leader or may choose to take the matter to the Board for action. *Problems requiring public statements or mitigation by the Society **must** be brought before the Board.*
3. ***All care must be made for due process and privacy.***

The State Activities Coordinator will inform the State Board of Directors of any expirations or removals of Activity Leaders.

## 1.5 LEADERSHIP QUALITIES AND DEVELOPMENT

Leaders are best when people barely know that they exist,  
Not so good when people obey and acclaim them,  
Worst when they despise them,  
Fail to honor people, they fail to honor you.  
But if good leaders talk little,  
When their work is done, their aim fulfilled,  
The people will all say...“We did this ourselves.”  
*from Lao-Tse, 550 BC*

An Activity Leader should make every effort to be fair and impartial to all participants, to encourage them, honor their achievements, and answer their questions; to know when to offer advice as well as when not to. The Activity Leader should be capable of exercising good judgment in decisions concerning the safety and comfort of the entire group. The Activity Leader should not be afraid to say “no” to any participant who poses a threat to group safety or environmental integrity.

**1.6 CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE LEADER**

1. Enthusiastic
2. Careful and thoughtful planner
3. Good communicator
4. Effective teacher
5. Evaluates people and situations accurately
6. Exercises good judgment
7. Represents the group
8. Comfortable with sharing leadership
9. Understands the importance of participation
10. Maintains group cohesion
11. Can handle controversy
12. Can lead through a crisis
13. Sets an example for others



## 2. ACTIVITY LEADER DUTIES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND CONSIDERATIONS

### 2.1 TRIP PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Activities are not successful by accident. It takes proper planning, thorough preparation, and careful execution to provide for others an enjoyable, memorable and fulfilling outdoor experience.

The planning and preparation steps outlined in sections 2.1.1 through 2.1.8 below have been compiled from suggestions provided by "veteran" Activity Leaders who consistently use them to ensure the success of their activities.

#### 2.1.1 PROPOSING AN ACTIVITY

Activity Leaders may submit unsolicited activity proposals to the State Activities Coordinator who can also solicit activities from various leaders. An Activity Leaders' meeting to plan together often leads to more varied activities. Annual, traditional activities are usually successful and well attended.

Activity proposals must be submitted to the State Activities Coordinator on the proper form and must be complete and clearly written.

The State Activities Coordinator should review each proposed activity to make sure that all information is complete, forms are legible, and listed Activity Leaders are currently certified. If all the information is not present or it is not clearly written, the forms should be returned to the Activity Leader for correction and resubmission.

Activity Leaders should send completed proposals to the State Activities Coordinator by the bi-monthly state *newsletter* deadline so that activities from all around the state can be prepared for publication in the *State Newsletter*. Activity submittal deadlines are published in each edition of the *State Newsletter*. At this writing the dates are the 5<sup>th</sup> of every even numbered month. The State Activities Coordinator verifies that the listed Activity Leader is certified; **only** activities led by Activity Leaders certified on or before the *Newsletter* publication date will be listed.

#### 2.1.2 BEFORE SCHEDULING

Check with Section Leaders, park rangers, land managers, etc. for current trail conditions and any information pertinent to trip planning (water crossings, recent burns, potable water availability, campsite limits, fees, etc...). The AHTS requests that Activity Leaders lead only those activities for which they possess the required skills and experience. If at all possible, do the activity, or at least scout the location, on your own before the trip; it is much easier to lead others on an activity in an area you are familiar with.

Be sure to check for hunting season in areas where activities are scheduled. **Not all areas have the same seasons.** In Alabama, consult the Alabama Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission or see Alabama Wildlife Magazine for dates. Annual hunt schedules for each wildlife management area are also available wherever hunting licenses are sold.

Plan activities suitable for location and time of year. Consider varying skill ratings of activities to attract participation by members and others from all levels of experience.

### 2.1.3 PLANNING THE ACTIVITY

1. Leaders should know well the planned route of travel. Be knowledgeable of approximate distances and time increments between significant points along the route. U.S. Geological Survey topographic maps and information may be obtained from:  
Map Distribution  
Geological Survey  
Box 25286, Federal Center  
Denver, CO 80225  
Phone (303) 236-7477  
  
Attn: Map Sales, R-109  
Alabama Dept. of Transportation  
1409 Coliseum Blvd.  
Montgomery, AL 36130  
Phone (334) 242-6071
2. Obtain permits, permission for private land usage if necessary, and amounts of entry fees, take-out fees and other expenses of participants (in writing if possible).
3. Locate campsites for people arriving the night before the trip, parking spaces for vehicles, water sources.
4. Plan for alternate routes or activities if at the last minute you find the route is damaged or blocked or the water is too high for hiking/canoeing.
5. In case of emergency, be prepared for an emergency takeout point, perhaps with a vehicle parked there.
6. Try to gain some knowledge of the historical, geological, etc., sites along the route.
7. If the activity is scheduled during hunting season, be sure the route is safe.

### 2.1.4 INITIAL RESPONSE TO INQUIRIES (sample letter on next page)

1. Respond quickly so that participants can prepare or select another activity if this one is not suitable.
2. Describe the activity, difficulty, restrictions (such as no dogs or adults only), terrain, limits of size of the group, equipment needed.
3. If you are not acquainted with the inquirer, ask about the experience and ability of persons wanting to go. If this is a more difficult trip and they do not seem to have enough of either, suggest an easier activity.
4. Request telephone numbers for last minute changes or cancellations. For long trips or group size limits, clearly state the deadline for confirmation. List inquiries in order of receipt and notify those on a waiting list where they stand.
5. Ask that those with any kind of limiting physical condition to inform you of this.

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INQUIRY LETTER (Response to an Inquiry)

Sample Letter

From: AL Mary Hiker, 14 Split Trail Lane, Hikersville, AL 00000 Phone (H) 334-321-8976 Email [mhiker@aol.com](mailto:mhiker@aol.com)

CoAL Jim Backpacker, 76 Turkey Trot Circle, Campin, AL 00001 Phone (B) 251-783-0619 Email [backpackerj@yahoo.com](mailto:backpackerj@yahoo.com)

To: Nat R. Indoor, 23 Fear Snakes St., Big City, AL 10000  
Phone (H) 785-254-0012 Email [iamsmith@att.net](mailto:iamsmith@att.net)

Subj.: BACKPACK TRIP, November 10, 11 and 12, 2003. Rated Moderate

This is a fall trip to see the subtle changing colors in Conecuh NF. We'll walk 20 miles in three days over rolling hills. You should be in good physical condition and capable of carrying a loaded backpack.

The trip is limited to eight people who will walk and camp as a group. If you have a medical condition, please inform the A.L.'s of your condition and any medication you may be required to take.

If you are interested in participating in this Activity you must send a letter with a stamped self-addressed envelope or an email letter which must be received by October 26<sup>th</sup>. A Confirmation Letter will be mailed or emailed to you if space is available. If space is not available you will be put on a waiting list.

You will need the usual backpacking gear which includes a backpack, tent and sleeping bag. Most A.L.'s have access to extra gear so please let them know if you need any of these items.

Thank you for your inquiry,

(Sign letter)

**2.1.5 SECOND RESPONSE TO THOSE WHO CONFIRM** (sample letter on next page)

1. Respond in writing, especially if the activity is logistically complex, gear-intensive, or a beginner's activity. Mail early to avoid phone expense.
2. Include a map with landmarks, mileage, starting and ending points.
3. List participants with addresses and phone numbers. This makes it possible for them to share equipment, carpool, etc.
4. Inform participants of time, date and place of meeting. Include directions to the trailhead or meeting place. Remind them that departure time is firm and suggest they try to arrive early.
5. Remind them of important details, such as type of gear to bring, number of meals to plan for, expected trail conditions, and any other information which will help them prepare.

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CONFIRMATION LETTER

Sample Letter

From: AL Mary Hiker, 14 Split Trail Lane, Hikersville, AL 00000 Phone (H) 334-321-8976  
Email [mhiker@aol.com](mailto:mhiker@aol.com)

CoAL Jim Backpacker, 76 Turkey Trot Circle, Campin, AL 00001 Phone (B) 251-783-0619 Email [backpackerj@yahoo.com](mailto:backpackerj@yahoo.com)

To: Nat R. Indoor, 23 Fear Snakes St., Big City, AL 10000 Phone (H) 785-254-0012 Email [iamsmith@att.net](mailto:iamsmith@att.net)

Subj. BACKPACK TRIP, November 10, 11 and 12, 2003. Rated Moderate

You have been confirmed for 1 space on the November backpack trip to Conecuh NF.

We'll meet at 8:45 am at the Trailhead on the North Loop of the Conecuh Trail 1 mile north of Blue Lake Grocery on Highway 137 on Friday, November 10<sup>th</sup>. We'll exit at Open Pond Campground on the South Loop of the Conecuh Trail at 1 p.m. on Sunday, November 12<sup>th</sup>. We'll hike 7 miles on Friday, 8 miles on Saturday and 5 miles on Sunday. A map to the trailhead is enclosed. A map of the trail will be provided to each participant at the Trailhead.

Bring backpack, tent, sleeping bag, stove, rain gear, warm clothing, a hat, hiking boots and insect repellent. You'll need two breakfasts, three lunches and two dinners. There will be water at each campsite which must be filtered or treated before drinking. The weather this time of year can vary from warm to very cold. Plan for either extreme.

If you need to borrow a backpack, sleeping bag or tent ask the AL. Most AL's have access to extra gear.

Each participant should have in their backpack: a whistle, compass, matches, raingear, multi-tool or knife, flashlight with extra batteries and mylar space blanket.

This is a group Activity and the success and fun in large part comes from each individual interacting with the group. There is one AL and one CoAL and they have planned this trip for your enjoyment. This is not an Activity for those who have a personal agenda. Either leave your personal agenda at home or give your space to another. DO NOT BRING firearms, radio or a dog.

Participant Name

Town

Ph #/Email

(end of letter)

### 2.1.6 WHEN PARTICIPANTS MEET

1. Introduce yourself and others and check off arrivals on your roster.
2. ***Have each participant sign a release form.***
3. Go over the plans, regulations, distances to be traveled, rest stops, location of first aid kit, toilet rules, water sources and purification, etc.
4. Look over equipment and be sure packs are not too heavy or put together poorly, each has sufficient water, food and appropriate gear. For canoe trips, be sure each canoe has an extra paddle, and each person has an approved flotation device. You may want to ask an experienced person to look out for a newcomer. *If a person is obviously unprepared for the trip and may pose a danger to him/her or others, the Activity Leader may make a judgment decision to refuse to allow that person to participate.*
5. Warn smokers about fires and littering, novices about foot care, and everyone about staying together. Discuss Leave No Trace practices (see section 4).
6. You do not need to wait for latecomers or “no-shows.” You may want to leave a note with time of departure and a location where someone could join the group.
7. Appoint a “lead” and “sweep” to remain first and last and be sure all participants stay between them.

### 2.1.7 DURING THE TRIP

1. Maintain an acceptable speed for all. Don't allow fast hikers or paddlers to turn a moderate activity into a strenuous one. If activity is for beginners be sure those in need get assistance.
2. Take rest breaks when needed. Allow time for observing interesting features, socializing, getting acquainted.
3. Keep the group together, and make a count regularly.
4. Be alert for limps, sore feet or hands, poorly adjusted packs, a need to switch a sternman who can't steer. Offer assistance if needed.
5. Make notes of any problems encountered on the trip, such as damaged structures or pumps, any first aid services given, etc., to use when completing a Post-Activity Report.
6. Practice and promote Leave No Trace skills and ethics. Use gates or stiles at fence crossings, or go through or under fences. Do not climb. Leave gates as found, either open or closed. Stay on established trails. “Naturalize” campsites after use. Put out fires completely and clean out fire rings. Pack out *all* trash, including food leftovers. Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints.

### 2.1.8 AT THE END OF THE ACTIVITY

Before leaving the activity site, be sure all participants are accounted for, all cars will operate, everyone has a ride home, and all equipment (and litter) goes home with them.

Complete a Post-Activity Report and submit it to the State Activities Coordinator with recommendations.

## 2.2 EQUIPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Activity Leaders are advised to carry the equipment and supplies listed below when leading outdoor activities. The following items are recommended, but should not be considered all-inclusive:

### 1. MAP AND COMPASS

Maps of the trail and surrounding area are informative and useful. They help explain the route and points of interest as well as the progress made. Although most trails are adequately marked and maintained, there are times when a cross-country hike may be necessary or planned. Then a topographic map or county map and compass are mandatory. Prior training in map and compass use, and/or experience in orienteering is strongly advised.

### 2. FIRE AND CAMPING PERMITS

In some areas fire or camping permits are required. Obtaining these permits is the responsibility of the Activity Leader.

### 3. SURVIVAL ITEMS

A small "survival kit" should be a standard item in your pack. All participants should be encouraged to carry one. In addition to the map, compass, and first aid items, the kit should include—as a minimum—a combination/utility tool (such as a Swiss army knife or leatherman tool), lighter and/or waterproof matches, whistle and signal mirror, flashlight and extra batteries, a length of light line, mylar "space" blanket, iodine tablets for water treatment. A few plastic bags of various sizes have many uses, such as waterproofing gear, storing leftovers, and collecting trail trash.

### 4. REPAIR KITS

For short trips a good utility pocket knife, such as a Swiss army knife, is usually sufficient. For extended trips carry a simple repair kit for equipment failure. Include items appropriate for the trip, such as a utility knife, pliers, screwdriver, duct tape, nylon line, length of wire, piece of taffeta nylon "repair" tape, extra clevis pins and rings, canoe repair kit, etc.

5. GROUP FIRST AID KIT

Carry a first aid kit of sufficient size and stocked for the activity. Requirements will vary with group size, medical qualifications, trip length, location and remoteness. Recommended items include:

- Bandaging Material
  - sterile gauze pads, various sizes
  - gauze roller bandaging
  - adhesive bandages, various sizes
  - butterfly closures or steri-strips
- Blisters and athletic injuries
  - 1½" athletic tape
  - 3" elastic roll bandage
  - moleskin
  - molefoam
  - Second Skin<sup>®</sup>
- Miscellaneous
  - bandage scissors
  - povidone/iodine antiseptic
  - topical antibiotic cream
  - thermometer (sub-normal for cold climate activities)
  - tweezers
  - irrigation syringe
  - cortizone cream
  - latex gloves
  - Sawyer Extractor<sup>®</sup>
  - Non prescription pain medication (aspirin, acetaminophen, ibuprofen)

**2.3 ACTIVITY LEADER FORMS**

*All forms described below can be found in Appendix A. Completed forms are to be submitted to the State Activities Coordinator who will forward them to the AHTS Office.*



**2.3.1 ACTIVITY PROPOSAL FORM (required)**

This form is used by the Activity Leader to propose an official AHTS activity for publication at the state level. Upon completion, submit to the State Activities Coordinator who will check to ensure that all information is provided and that the listed leaders are certified. The State Activities Coordinator then submits it to the proper person(s) for publication.

(NOTE: Refer to the *Newsletter* for activity submittal deadlines. Activities received after deadline will not be published.)

The following information must be included:

- a) DATE OF ACTIVITY: be sure to include start and end dates for multi-day activities.
- b) TYPE OF ACTIVITY: hike (day, overnight, extended), out-of-state, canoe, nature walk, maintenance, bike, chapter meeting, etc.
- c) LOCATION: the site, including county or nearest city, where the activity will take place. Include trail section name and number, if applicable.
- d) ACTIVITY REGION: refer to map to determine in which region the activity will take place.
- e) SPONSORING CHAPTER: the name of the chapter hosting the activity.
- f) ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: be brief but specific. Include details such as trail mileage, type of terrain, what participants might see, whether reservations are required, etc.
- g) PUBLIC ACTIVITY: Indicate those activities in which you will include the public by checking "yes" on the form. Public activity MUST be on public land.
- h) LIMIT: indicate the maximum number of participants, canoes, or tents allowed for this activity. Use good Leave-No-Trace judgment when setting limits.
- i) RATING: this helps potential participants decide which activities best match their experience and skill level.
  - MODERATE* - based on ideal conditions in Alabama, overnight hike of 8-10 miles per day (clear trail with few obstacles); day hike of 10-miles per day; overnight canoe trip of 12-15 miles per day, water level, few lift-overs; day canoe trip of 14-16 miles per day same conditions.
  - STRENUOUS* - more difficult than above
  - LEISURE* - less difficult than above
- j) LEADER/CO-LEADER: include the names, addresses and telephones numbers of the activity leader and co-leader. The Activity Leader must be certified. The Co-Leader may be a leader-in-training.

### 2.3.2 ASSUMPTION OF RISK / ACTIVITY SIGN-IN SHEET (REQUIRED)

These are now combined into one form. Every participant, whether an AHTS member or not, must READ and sign one. Parents or guardians must sign for minors.

### 2.3.3 POST-ACTIVITY REPORT (RECOMMENDED)

A brief report of the completed activity, to include the number of participants, success of the activity, trail conditions, etc., is to be completed for each activity. In the case of extraordinary events (e.g., injuries, misplaced participants, altercations, etc.), this report is required.

## 2.4 ACTIVITY COSTS

Many Activity Leaders consider the costs associated with activities as donations. Please keep an accounting of this type of donation and submit these records periodically to the AHTS Office (in many cases, the Society can use these donations to satisfy the "in-kind" requirements that come with some types of grants). Mileage and certain other un-reimbursed expenses are also Federal Income Tax deductible as charitable contributions (see IRS rules).

To help defray costs, ask inquirers to send you a self-addressed, stamped envelope for trail information. Significant expenses, such as reservation fees, food/water cache, rental fees, etc. should be borne by all participants equally. Be sure to inform participants well in advance of the activity of any fees that may be required.

*AHTS Activity Leaders may **not**, under any circumstances, charge a fee for their services.*

### 3. **ACTIVITIES**

The following section provides descriptions of some of the different types of activities that the Alabama Hiking Trail Society sponsors through its Activity Leaders and Chapters. The list is by no means exclusive; Activity Leaders and their Chapters are free to be creative when planning and leading AHTS activities. When designing your activity, think about what would:

- provide a positive outdoor experience for newcomers and “regulars” alike
- teach an appreciation for the natural world
- challenge participants to test themselves or learn new skills
- assure good times and fellowship among participants
- entice non-members to join AHTS
- entice members to do more with, and for, AHTS
- give something back to the community or the land

### 3.1 DAY HIKES

Day hiking is probably the most popular AHTS activity. This activity attracts the newcomers—those who want to find out what hiking is all about without having to make the investment in either backpacking equipment or time. Day hikes are typically led close to home, within an hour or so's drive from most participants, and therefore attract those who are looking for something to do for the day.

As stated in the Introduction to this guidebook, the AHTS Activity Leader has the opportunity to create a lasting, positive impression of wilderness experience in the minds of “first-timer” activity participants. Therefore, it is most essential that proper planning and preparation, with special attention to safety, comfort and enjoyment, are foremost priorities for the day hike Activity Leader.

Plan and advertise your day hike for a particular experience level. Hikes for newcomers, seniors, or children should be no longer than 5 miles. More experienced hikers can comfortably walk up to ten miles. Challenge hikes can go 15 miles or more. Terrain type and trail conditions for your chosen hike are also important. Plan for shorter than recommended mileage if trail conditions are poor or shade or water is limited. Keep your day hikes limited to daylight hours. Remember to factor in drive to-and-from times in your hike planning. Schedule hot weather hikes early in the morning to avoid afternoon heat and thunderstorms.

Make your hike interesting. Try to have some “experts” in the flora, fauna and/or history along the route. Introduce each member of the group to each other, and recommend that they buddy-up. Make newcomers feel a special part of the outing. Attend promptly to participants' requests and complaints.

Be sure your participants are prepared. First-timers will need to be told exactly what to bring as well as what not to bring. Make sure each participant is properly dressed, especially shoes and hat, and has a day pack containing:

- Water, minimum 2 quarts
- Lunch and/or snacks (no heat perishable stuff like mayonnaise)
- Protection from sun, rain, and cold
- Safety gear: compass, whistle, flashlight, waterproof matches or lighter, pocketknife, large garbage bag (good for rain, wind and-- if stuffed with leaves or moss-- cold protection)

After the activity, solicit feedback from the group. How did they enjoy it? What could have been done better? Use this information when planning your next, even better, activity.

### **3.2 NATURE FIELD TRIPS**

Specialized field trips led by an experienced individual are the most useful method for enhancing and expanding people's interest in their natural surroundings. A birding or wildflower hike does not need to be led by a professional biologist or naturalist, though it would certainly help. Anyone who loves the outdoors, is alert to nature, and has some knowledge of it can lead such a trip. If you do not have specialized training but knows of a naturalist who might be willing to go, invite him or her as a guest who would share such knowledge. If one is not available, go anyway! Frankly tell the group that you are not a naturalist and that you will all learn together. Ask if anyone in the group has special training and would be willing to share.

Ask everyone to be alert for any plants and flowers not observed before or if they see anything unusual. Call everyone's attention to it and share knowledge. This will create interest and enthusiasm, even if the leader does not know it all. Encourage new hikers, seniors, young children, and the physically challenged to try these trips first. Discuss hiking trips and techniques, safety, and low-impact skills.

### **3.3 HIKING WITH CHILDREN**

The AHTS encourages children to participate in activities, and urges Activity Leaders to plan some activities suitable for them. With the understanding that not all Activity Leaders are either willing or able to lead children, the decision is left to the Activity Leader whether or not to include children in the activity.

Children must be accompanied by a parent or sponsor. If the adult is someone other than the child's legal guardian, this adult must have a power of attorney paper with him or her in case medical treatment is necessary. The release form must be signed by the child's legal guardian before the trip starts.

If problems arise, the Activity Leader has the right to dismiss the child and adult from the activity. The child should be experienced if the outing is moderate or strenuous. Those without experience should take easy trips to gain experience before going on an extended trip. Children **MUST** stay with the group. The leader should plan for trail diversions, such as rest and snack breaks or side trips to interesting sites. Discuss trail etiquette, and teach outdoor skills along the way.

### **3.4 EXTENDED HIKES (BACKPACKING)**

The extended hike creates particular problems: increased weight of additional food, water, and clothing, arrangement of a car shuttle over greater distances, and the question of eligibility.

If on the trail section chosen, there is a water problem, it may be cached in advance in gallon jugs or delivered by a reliable non-participant to campsites or road crossings. Water from non-potable sources needs to be treated.

Use care when caching food and water to ensure containers are animal and insect proof. All containers must be either packed out or re-cached for retrieval immediately after the activity.

To avoid carrying several days' food and clothing supply, it too may be cached in advance, mailed to post offices near the trail, or purchased at stores near the trail. Daily portions of food should be re-packed in plastic bags to eliminate excess weight and litter potential. Many items of gear may be shared: tent, stove, pots, fuel, etc... A camera may be shared and the pictures later duplicated. Nylon clothing makes washing and fast drying possible. Socks may be dried on the pack while hiking if secured by pins. Double purpose items should be taken as much as possible.

Hikers may use public transportation to reach the activity if feasible. Try to leave vehicles at safe locations, even if there is a fee. A vehicle left at a safe place along the route could be used to cache water and food and in case of emergency.

To apply for an extended hike, a participant should have—as a minimum—at least some day hiking or overnight backpacking experience. Children should participate only if they are accompanied by a responsible adult and have sufficient hiking experience. Those who start are expected to finish, except in the case of an illness or injury. If hikers leave an activity at their own discretion, they do so entirely on their own.

### 3.5 OUT-OF-STATE HIKES

Since selection of an area for an out-of-state trip represents a big investment in time and money for participants, the trip planner/leader should pick a location that will give people their "money's worth" in terms of both the hike and other attractions. A hike that offers a sharp contrast to Alabama scenery is appealing to most AHTS members. Mountains of any type are an excellent choice. Snow has a special appeal but can be dangerous for the novice. Areas of historical interest or scenic beauty are popular. Since vacations may be combined with the hike, the leader should locate nearby scenic attractions and include information or free brochures on them with the trip bulletin. Include attractions outside the area of the hike that are on a direct route from Alabama. They break the monotony of driving.

While the hike itself is important and should dictate the choice of an area, little extras before and after the hike can add much enjoyment. The area chosen may be the Appalachian Trail in nearby Georgia, North Carolina, or Tennessee. The Bartram Trails and Pine Mountain Trail in Georgia are possibilities. The Ozark Mountains have fabulous hiking. The mountains of North Alabama are opening trails and the Rockies have unlimited possibilities. The farther away the hike, the more special attractions to be noted and the longer in advance it must be announced so that people can make long-range plans. Most out-of-state trips should be announced at least six months in advance.

The length of the hike should justify the travel time, with three or four days being minimum. Hikes may consume two weeks counting travel. Remember to allow travel time to and from Alabama as well as time for the hike. Since most trails are less crowded on weekdays, you may want to allow Saturday and/or Sunday for travel from Alabama. Begin hiking Sunday or Monday. Allow the end of the week or weekend for travel back to Alabama. People seem better able to get away during a single week than during parts of two successive weeks.

Be realistic. How long does it actually take to drive 750 miles? Some will drive distances up to 1,000 miles one way, but other will prefer flying or other public transportation. A list of participants' names, addresses, and telephone numbers should be provided several weeks in advance with the trip bulletin to allow for carpooling as well as sharing of equipment. When hundreds of miles are involved, it reduces the cost and saves energy. If public transportation is used, the leader must specify nearby airports and bus stations, and should either meet the hikers or provide detailed information on local transportation to the assembly point. Those arriving by public transportation should do so at about the same time. This information too should be covered in the trip bulletins.

Selecting hikers for a long-distance hike requires careful screening of participants. Insist on a brief resume of experience and refuse "questionable" applicants. If the hike is strenuous, recommend a conditioning routine that can toughen feet and legs and help get rid of "pack muscle" soreness. People who follow this simple conditioning adapt better to a long hike. Query people for special talents. Any group may include a harmonica player, singer, poetry reciter, identifier of wild edibles, wildflowers, trees, birds, or animal tracks. Some are good with campfires, topographic maps, or first aid. Knowing these talents in advance, you

can encourage them during the hike to add to everyone's enjoyment. The ideal on a long hike is a cohesive, all-for-one, one-for-all group spirit. Each participant should feel a responsibility for the safety and well-being of each other member of the group. Under difficult conditions, every talent is needed to provide enjoyment and to spread your responsibility as leader. No one can "lead" a long hike alone, so pick your group to add to its strengths.

If a trail guide is available that covers your hike, make copies so that several participants can carry them. If using topo maps, hold a briefing each morning to cover the day's route, reviewing terrain, water holes, scenic outlooks, etc.

Little extras help commemorate the hike in the minds of the participants and are worth the effort. If you have a photographer in the group, get group pictures. Anyone who wants a copy can pay the photographer. Patches to sew on packs or jackets really keep the memory of the hike alive and are inexpensive.

Special equipment and conditions are required for some hikes, such as snow (ice crampons.) Even for a summer walk you'll want to give expected temperature ranges so people can equip properly. Insist that people bring pack covers and good rain gear. Let people know if the trail is clear enough for shorts. A sleeping pad is a must. Enclose a list of what you think people should carry.

Trip bulletins should be far more detailed than for an overnighter. Try to anticipate questions. People often want to know if food and cooking are to be shared, if cooking is on a stove or over a fire, the number of miles to be covered each day, the equipment needed, carpooling, sharing of equipment, and names of the group members.

The assembly point should be near the trail head at a good motel and restaurant. After a day or two of driving, people need a good night's rest and time to recheck their gear. Make reservations for the necessary number of rooms in advance and notify participants of the arrangements and approximate cost. The motel may provide free space for the final briefing, or one of the rooms may be used, or if weather permits, it may be outside.

The last supper in civilization is fun the night before the hike and permits the leader to begin sizing up the hikers. Everyone has a chance to begin to form the cohesiveness necessary for a long walk together. Mountains are still full of family-style restaurants which serve big meals reasonably priced. It's worth the effort to find a good one. All details should be in the trip bulletins.

Leading the hike is basically no different from leading any other hike but there are a few special precautions. In the mountains it takes at least two days of conditioning for the climbs and descents. Make the first day short—five to seven miles—if the group is in good shape and experienced. (Hikes over 7-8,000 feet should be even shorter. Know the symptoms and treatment of altitude sickness. It can be a real problem for sea-level Alabamians.) The second day should also be short. The third day should cover "normal" distances—eight to ten miles. Shoes broken in on flat land may cause blisters and someone always turns up in new boots despite warning. Adopt a policy of prevention of blisters. Encourage the removal of shoes at rest breaks on the first two days. Set an example by doing it yourself.



Offer foot care when needed. Let people know you care and watch for limping hikers. Diarrhea is also disastrous and may occur when the blister crisis is over. Hikers may be embarrassed about reporting it, but carry a good medicine like Lomotil and be sure everyone knows it is available. Try to prevent anything which could cause a hiker to drop out. Be sure questionable water is purified. Twisted knees or strained muscles are common. Carry two sizes of slip-on elastic knee bandages (better than the roll type) and get them on the knee or ankle when trouble first starts. A hiking staff is recommended. It will aid a limping hiker, prop up a pack, serve as a tent pole, aid in crossing streams, and is a big help on steep ascents and descents. Offer help to anyone having trouble keeping up and assign a strong hiker to help, if necessary. A lost or strayed hiker is really serious on an out-of-state hike. Insist that people hike with a partner. Be sure everyone catches up and is accounted for several times a day.

Emergencies and injuries when hundreds of miles from home can be a real problem. While scouting, locate hospitals and clinics. Learn how to reach emergency take-out points. Most trails cross roads regularly. Explore these crossings and note houses, telephones, and distances to nearby towns. Experience shows that even without serious accidents, people drop out of a long hike during the first three days from lack of conditioning, blisters, etc. Anticipate this in planning and locate escape routes. If someone must leave, the leader must see that a satisfactory ride is arranged to a place where the hiker can wait for a ride home, or catch a bus. Someone reliable must accompany a sick hiker to the doctor or hospital. Prevent emergencies by carrying a well-equipped first aid kit. Let each member of the group share in carrying it and keep a sharp eye on hikers to catch problems in early stages.

Caches of food and fresh clothing are recommended to lighten pack weights and to provide emergency dry clothes, boots, fuel, etc. It also provides a convenient way to drop off excess equipment and dirty clothing. A good location may be a country store at or near a road crossing. These stores should be noted on scouting trips. Plan to stop there even if there is no cache as it is a great morale booster. Another cache may be a car left at a home near the trail. It is also an emergency "escape" vehicle if someone needs to leave the hike. There are reliable individuals who will deliver a cache to a pre-determined trail-road crossing for a modest charge. In case of the latter, the walk must be paced to arrive at the rendezvous on time. Caches should be considered if a hike is more than five days. Individual hikers' caches are placed in one large watertight and animal-proof container. This same container can receive dirty clothes, garbage and excess gear to be picked up at the end of the hike. Caches should be delivered to selected points shortly before the hike to avoid complicating the shuttle.

For parking and shuttling, consider vandalism a big problem since out-of-state vehicles are prime targets. Make advance arrangements for safe parking places, usually at houses near road crossings. The charge is usually small (ALWAYS offer to pay) and split all parking costs equally among the hikers, whether riders or drivers. Whatever arrangements are made, the assembly point is apt to be some distance from the trailhead. Cover the route in a briefing the night before and drive in a slow, safe convoy. Good planning will get you to the finish point by

ACTIVITY LEADER'S GUIDE

3:00 p.m. of the last day with time to run the reverse shuttle before dark and start people on their way home.

### 3.6 WINTER MOUNTAIN HIKES

Much of the equipment used and techniques applied at other seasons are also suitable for winter camping; however, an additional set of skills is required to meet the challenges added by the weather and altitude. Low temperatures, snow, ice, and windy weather that occur in winter require a special set of skills. Above all, because of the harsh conditions and heavy loads, physical stamina and a positive mental outlook are necessary if the experience is to be enjoyable. Physical conditioning is of the utmost importance and must begin many months prior to a winter adventure. The leader should know the capabilities of each participant and reject anyone not prepared. Hypothermia, frostbite and acute mountain sickness are always ready to kill or injure. Publications such as those below should be studied carefully.

Don't Die on the Mountain, Dan H. Allen, New London, NH 0325

Frost Bite, Bradford Washburn, Museum of Science, Boston, MA

Hypothermia-Killer of the Unknown, T.G. Lathrop, Mazamas, 909 N.W. 19 Ave., Portland, OR 97209

Mountain Sickness, Prevention, Recognition and Treatment, Peter H. Hackett, M.D., the American Alpine Club Inc., 113 East 90th St., New York, NY 10028

### 3.7 OUT-OF COUNTRY HIKES

Very few Alabama Hiking Trail Society activity leaders have hiked out of the country. Fewer still have led activities out of the country. Since experience for such hikes is limited, it is helpful if the leader speaks the language of the country and there is a person in the country available to help plan the activity and join it.

Much of the planning and preparation activities required for out-of-state hikes (section 3.4) also apply here, with the added tasks associated with international travel: passport/visa applications, immunizations, foreign customs, laws and regulations, and dealing with planning in different languages and time zones.

There are a number of excellent travel guides available for most international destinations. Check the book section of your favorite outdoor store, or the travel section at your local bookstore or library.

### 3.8 CANOE TRIPS

Canoe trips aren't covered by our general liability insurance. Please refrain from scheduling canoe trips. Leaders may gather with friends at an insured outfitter to enjoy canoeing.

To lead a canoe trip, whether for a day or a week, the first essential quality of the leader is the ability to control the canoe. The leader should be able to steer, backwater, sidle up to other canoes, paddle upstream, and catch up with the person in the lead. He or she must have enough skill and stamina to take care of him- or herself and help others. Basic knowledge of the J-stroke, sweep, draw, pushover, scull, and backwater will enable the leader to instruct others who paddle back and forth even though they paddle hard and steady.

The leader should know how to transfer people and gear from one canoe to another safely in midstream, how to tow a canoe, and when to leave the water in case of emergency. He or she should pace the group to slower paddlers but still achieve the desired campsite well before nightfall. The leader should push slow paddlers a little without upsetting them. The leader must be realistic about the distance to be covered. Early starts help and frequently offer better vistas, more animal and bird sightings, and provide that lovely early morning misty look of a river. Getting into camp early allows the group time to get acquainted, rest, swim, play and get camp chores done before dark.

Before starting, designate a "lead" and a "sweep" (the leader should be free to roam). The group should understand that they must stay between the "lead" and the "sweep" canoes. The lead must know where to stop for rests, lunch, camp, and not get too far ahead. The sweep should be able to assist someone in an emergency. These positions can be alternated as dictated by the skills and desires of the canoeists. Let participants "do their own thing" as much as possible within these constraints. The leader should assess the abilities of the group members and, if necessary, change paddling partners around.

The leader should have recent knowledge of water level, hazards, current speed, emergency takeout points, safe places to leave vehicles, and good campsites. He or she should know of alternate sites, takeout points "just in case," and carry good maps of the entire route. If campsites or parking places are private, the leader must get advance permission. It is a good idea to let local law enforcement people know that the vehicles are there and why. The leader should have a spare paddle or two as well as recommended gear (section 2.2).

When shuttling or deadheading vehicles, the leader should know the distances, the time involved the roads to use. When convenient, it may be time-saving to deadhead cars the evening before beginning the trip.

References:

Basic Canoeing, The American National Red Cross

Basic River Canoeing, Robert E. McNair, American Camping Assoc. Inc., Bradford Woods, Martinsville, IN 46151

### 3.9 BICYCLE TRIPS

The initial steps in organizing an AHTS bicycle trip include: choosing a day and time, planning a satisfactory route (*not* on “footpath only” sections of the Alabama Trail!), preparing an understandable road map, finding the best meeting place, and picking a favorable distance. The bike trip leader must also know the state laws concerning bicycles on the public right-of-way. The Activity Leader needs to understand where and how bicycle accidents happen and how to avoid dangerous situations. A good leader can recognize hazardous cycling behavior and knows how to tactfully advise the riders to modify their unsafe actions. Sunday mornings are usually the safest time to ride for there are fewer motor vehicles on the road then.

Distances for beginners (B Rides) should be less than 15 miles and progress to no more than 25 miles as the season extends into summer. Advanced distances (A Rides) should start at 20 miles and become progressively longer up to around 60 miles. Extended or expert rides (E Rides) should start at 40 miles or more. It is desirable to organize a ride which includes at least A and B routes with a road map to show both routes.

Road maps can be traced from county maps and modified with cyclists' information. Distances, location of accessible drinking water, short cuts for B riders, lunch stops, and other stops can be drawn in. There should be enough maps available for every rider who wishes to have one.

A good source of county maps I You may also find county maps for sale at the nearest county court house.

Creative bike route planning will include a loop route rather than one which is out and back on the same road. A good route will have a destination with a special activity or point of interest.

## 4. ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND *LEAVE NO TRACE*

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

There are too many of us. The natural world is *shrinking* around us. Through knowledge and careful conservation we can gain appreciation for the natural world, help preserve what is still left, and take our place in the cycle of living things. As Activity Leaders we have a responsibility to minimize our effect upon the area we traverse. We must teach by example. It is good to think that future generations can walk beside a great cypress swamp, through an oak forest, or along a natural stream. We want to ensure that they experience the same pristine wildness that we currently enjoy.

We at AHTS believe in the Leave No Trace Policy as do others, including the US Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management and others—to advocate and teach the use of LNT principles and practices among both their members and the public. As an Alabama Hiking Trail Society member, whether building or maintaining trail, leading an activity or simply participating in one, you set the example the AHTS is ultimately judged by. It's up to **you** to tread lightly and ***Leave No Trace!***

There are no hard and fast rules for practicing Leave No Trace principles; the impact-minimizing technique applied to one area may not, in fact, be healthy for another. Leaving no trace of our travels through natural areas requires not only skills and techniques, but the wisdom to apply those skills and techniques appropriately for the given situation. But only by understanding, and *believing in*, our ultimate goal—having a fulfilling wilderness experience without damaging that same experience for those who follow—can we *willingly* make the right decisions and use the right skills to fulfill that goal.

A brief outline of the eight Leave No Trace principles for the southeastern states follows below, and includes main points to be considered. For a more comprehensive discussion of the LNT principles, refer to ***Leave No Trace Outdoor Skills & Ethics, Southeastern States***, developed by the National Outdoor Leadership School, available through the AHTS office.

### 4.2 LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLES

#### 4.2.1 PLAN AHEAD AND PREPARE

Adequate trip planning and preparation helps backcountry travelers accomplish trip goals safely and in good style, while simultaneously minimizing their impact on the land.

- Take time to plan and prepare to ensure safety, comfort and enjoyment, and to minimize impact
- Know the area and what to expect weatherwise; plan clothing and equipment accordingly
- Repackage food to avoid weight, bulk and litter

#### **4.2.2 CONCENTRATE USE IN POPULAR OR HIGH-USE AREAS**

That favorite campsite of yours is probably also popular with other campers. This principle will allow you to continue to use it in such a way that keeps it ecologically healthy and aesthetically pleasing.

- Stay on trails
- Choose an impacted campsite to avoid impacting others
- Camp away from trails and water sources
- Leave a clean and “natural” campsite

#### **4.2.3 SPREAD USE AND IMPACT IN PRISTINE AREAS**

For many hikers and backpackers, a large part of the attraction and the magic of the backcountry come from finally getting off the beaten trail. With care and a little extra effort, you can really camp and travel in a pristine area and Leave No Trace!

- Spread out and disperse impact
- Stick to durable surfaces, avoid fragile areas
- Choose a durable area for campsite; separate cooking and sleeping areas
- Naturalize and camouflage before leaving

#### **4.2.4 AVOID PLACES WHERE IMPACT IS JUST BEGINNING**

If impact is just beginning, an area still has a chance to recover to its pristine conditions.

- Avoid camping in areas where impact is just beginning
- Stay off lightly impacted “casual” trails

#### **4.2.5 PACK IT IN, PACK IT OUT**

Imagine your distress upon returning to a favorite campsite only to find it littered with cans, plastic and foil wrappers, and toilet paper. Contrast that picture with a pristine backcountry image of a clear mountain waterfall or a secluded live oak hammock, and you should have plenty of motivation for this principle.

- Food items and packaging are the sources of most backcountry litter. If it isn't found there naturally, it doesn't belong there!
- Plan meals to avoid leftovers, excess packaging
- Animal-proof your food
- Do not bury or burn garbage or trash

#### **4.2.6 PROPERLY DISPOSE OF WHAT YOU CAN'T PACK OUT**

Encountering toilet paper, feces, or other waste improperly disposed of and left behind by inconsiderate or uneducated campers is a common, yet very unpleasant experience in many backcountry areas. Let's minimize the likelihood of such an encounter by informing as many people as possible about proper waste disposal.

- Use a proper cathole; 6-8 inches deep in organic soil, cover and camouflage
- Bury or, better yet, pack out your toilet paper
- Wash bodies and dishes well away from water sources
- Strain and pack out food particles from cooking and wash water
- Minimize use of soap— "biodegradable" labels are misleading—but do use soap after a cathole visit and before cooking and eating

#### **4.2.7 LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND**

Leave it for others to enjoy—allow them the same sense of wonder and discovery.

- Minimize campsite alterations; restore campsite after use
- Avoid building structures
- Don't damage live trees or plants
- Leave natural and cultural artifacts where you find them

#### **4.2.8 USE FIRE RESPONSIBLY**

For many, the thought of going camping without a fire is impossible. Though fires are no longer necessary due to the development of lightweight backpacking stoves, there are practices that allow campers to build fires in the backcountry and still leave little sign of their stay.

- Stoves are better than fires for cooking
- Know the rules about fires in your activity area
- When building a fire: use existing fire rings; keep fires small and burn completely to ash; use only dead and downed wood gathered from a large area (nothing larger than you can break with your hands); clean the fire ring after use
- Avoid fire in pristine areas



Portions of this section were borrowed from the ***LEAVE NO TRACE Outdoor Skills & Ethics Training Guide*** published by the **National Outdoor Leadership School**, P.O. Box AA, and Lander Wyoming 82520.

For more information and materials, call Leave No Trace at 1-800-332-4100, or check their web page, <http://www.lnt.org>.

Other NOLS LNT Publications:

- **LNT Skills & Ethics Series:**

- ◆ *Southeastern States (available from FTA)*
- ◆ *North American Edition*
- ◆ *Rocky Mountains*
- ◆ *Western River Corridors*
- ◆ *Temperate Coastal Zones*
- ◆ *Desert & Canyon Country*
- ◆ *Pacific Northwest*
- ◆ *Backcountry Horse Use*
- ◆ *Rock Climbing*
- ◆ *Alaskan Tundra*
- ◆ *Northeast Mountains*

- **Soft Paths**, by Bruce Hampton & David Cole

## 5. EMERGENCIES AND PREVENTION

With proper planning, preparation, and activity execution, most emergencies can be avoided. However, problems do occasionally occur, and Activity Leaders should be prepared for them.

### 5.1

The types of emergencies encountered on outdoor activities generally involve itinerary, equipment, or medical problems.

- **ITINERARY:** getting lost, getting behind, encountering impassable barriers, etc.
- **EQUIPMENT:** malfunctioning stoves, leaky tents, broken pack frames, lack of proper gear, etc.
- **MEDICAL:** injuries, illness, accidents

### 5.2

The best prevention for emergencies is preparation and planning. Factors that improve your margin of safety include (but are not limited to):

- Good leadership and outdoor skills
- Participants who are well-fed, well-rested, and in good physical condition
- Having, and knowing how to use, quality equipment that's in good repair and appropriate for the activity
- Knowing the area and current conditions; having a contingency plan
- Having a lead and a sweep; using the buddy system

#### 5.2.1

Know your route. Check it out yourself *before* taking others. Know the potential for high water or other obstacles, and make contingency plans. Take a map and compass and know how to use them. Leave your trip plan with a responsible person, as well as instructions on whom to contact if you are unreasonably late. Know where the roads and main trails are; if you *do* get lost, try to head for a road and remain there; your rescuers are more likely to use roads or trails when looking for you.

Know your participants. Provide a list of items they need to bring on the activity, and check it over with them prior to starting. Include overnight "survival" items even on day activities. Don't allow participants to go on the activity if they show up unprepared. Know their limits and plan each day's schedule accordingly. Problems are more likely to occur when hikers are tired; plan rest breaks and finish up well before nightfall.

### 5.2.2 EQUIPMENT

Again, it is important to be sure that all participants have the required equipment for the activity and it is all in working order. If possible, bring repair items (see section 2.2 for recommended items) or spare parts/equipment.

### 5.2.3 MEDICAL

The Alabama Hiking Trail Society recommends that its Activity Leaders keep up-to-date on the latest accepted first aid skills and techniques for the types of medical situations which might occur in the outdoors. These situations may include

- blisters
- scrapes, cuts and other wounds
- bites and stings; poison ivy/oak/sumac/poisonwood
- headache, nosebleed, fainting
- muscle strains, sprains; cramps; broken bones
- heat exhaustion, heat stroke
- hypothermia, frost bite
- shock
- dehydration
- burns

Be sure to find out about any medical conditions your activity participants may have, including where medicines are kept and how and when to administer them, if necessary. Make sure your hikers know where the group first aid kit is kept, and give them a tour of its contents before the activity begins.

Check with your local Red Cross for first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) workshops available in your area. There are a number of good books on wilderness first aid, first aid kit recommendations, and emergency prevention. Check your local outdoor equipment or book stores, library or internet sources for additional information. Some suggested readings include:

- Schimelpfenig, Tod & Lindsay, Linda. *NOLS Wilderness First Aid*. Stackpole Books, Harrisburg PA
- Forgey, Wm., MD. *Wilderness Medicine*. Indiana Camp Supply Books, Pittsboro, IN
- Allen, Dan H. *Don't Die on the Mountain*. New London, NH
- Lathrop, Theodore, MD. *Hypothermia - Killer of the Unknown*. Mazamas, Portland, OR
- Hackett, Peter, MD. *Mountain Sickness; Prevention, Recognition and Treatment*. American Alpine Club, New York, NY

**APPENDIX A**

**ACTIVITY LEADER FORMS**

Alabama Hiking Trail Society, Inc.  
**Activity Proposal**

*(Submit completed ORIGINAL, not a copy)*

Date(s) of Activity:

Type of Activity:

Location:

Activity Region:  Northwest  North  Central  South

Sponsoring Chapter:

Activity Description:

Public:  Yes  No

Limit: Number  /  People /  Tents/  Canoes (Check One)

Rating:  Leisure  Moderate  Strenuous

Leader Name:

Address:

Phone:

Co-Leader Name:

Address:

Phone:

Alabama Hiking Trail Society, Inc.

## Post Activity Report

*(Submit completed ORIGINAL, not a copy)*

Date(s) of Activity:

Type of Activity / Rating:  Leisure  Moderate  Strenuous

Location:

Activity Leader/ phone:

Co-Leader / phone:

No. of Participants (attach Risk Assumption form):

### Summary of Activity:

*Include trail conditions; weather encountered, total mileage, etc. Use back of form or attachments if additional space is required.*

*Describe any extraordinary events or conditions encountered, such as extreme weather, lost hikers, or other emergencies or unexpected situations. Include names of involved persons (if applicable), action taken, and by whom. For injuries, give person's name, type of injury, and any treatment administered.*

Activity Leader  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_