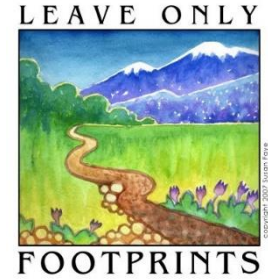


Trail Talk Calendar: January 2024

Topic: Leave No Trace Principle 3 - Leave What You Find

This month the conservation committee would like to promote the importance of preserving our outdoor spaces by leaving what you find. We are asking Worcester Chapter activity leaders to promote this topic and to incorporate it into your pre-activity trail talk.



This is the fourth of the seven principles of “Leave No Trace,” and is valuable in reminding us to leave the natural landscapes we find in good or better condition than we found them.

Here is some information to discuss with your group:


1.) Avoid Damaging Live Trees and Plants

- Please respect wild plants and vegetation by leaving them in their natural state and not altering them.
- Do not cut down trees, rip off branches, and carve your name into a tree’s bark. Any inflicted wound or exposed part to a tree makes it susceptible to disease which could infect and kill a tree. 🌳
- People tend to want to leave their mark on the landscape or take something home with them to remember. Leave only footsteps and take only pictures or drawings! 😊📷
- Remember “pictures are worth a thousand words”. You can still remember a landscape through a picture and don't need to take anything.
- Don't pick wildflowers and leave them alone. Although wildflowers may be beautiful and colorful, they are on the landscape for a reason! Flowers are a crucial part of any ecosystem for the food resources they provide for wildlife. 🌸
- Many pollinators including bees and butterflies are endangered. Flowers are important to their survival and for the reproduction of plants to be pollinated and spread. 🐝

2.) Leave Natural Objects and Cultural Artifacts

- Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects where you find them. Do not move or take any objects.
- If every hiker takes a rock, before long there will be nothing left and all the rocks will be completely depleted. Especially in areas of high visitation.
- We all have a tendency to take ocean shells, rocks, pine cones, acorns, and leaves. We want to take a piece with us, however we are hurting the environment by disturbing the natural habitat. 🪨🍁🌰
- Those natural objects deserve to be there as nature intended. Each serves a purpose in the environment.

Historical and cultural objects

- Some objects found in the outdoors are relicts of human past on the land.
- Should be left on the landscape for the culture significance and the stories they tell about the history of people who utilized the land before us.
- Here in New England these objects could be stone walls, gravestones, old cellar holes, pot shards, antique bottles, old farm equipment, railroad spikes, and arrow heads from Native Americans.
- The Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 prohibits the removal of historical artifacts from public lands.
- Removing or disturbing archeological sites, historic sites, or artifacts on public land is illegal and punishable by the court of law.
- Let's preserve history and not destroy it! 

3.) Minimize Site Alterations

- Leave natural areas as you find them. Follow these guidelines:
- Do not build any type of structure or makeshift furniture, such as lean-tos, tables, or chairs.
- Do not dig trenches for tents.
- Do not build cairns or move rocks. Moving rocks can cause erosion and affect the habitats for insects and other species. Building cairns can cause navigation issues for others who use the area.
- If you clear a campsite of rocks, twigs, or pine cones, replace them before you leave. Try to leave the area as it was when you arrived. Remember the adage: Good campsites are found, not made.
- DO leave properly and legally constructed structures, such as a single fire ring. Taking them apart could cause additional impact as they likely will be rebuilt with new rocks.

4.) Invasive Species

Avoid transporting and introducing invasive species to natural areas. You can minimize this risk by taking some simple steps:

- Check in with the park or area you are visiting to learn about any issues they have with invasive species.
- Wear short gaiters that cover your socks and pant bottoms. Gaiters can prevent small seeds from getting stuck in your socks.
- Before and after hitting the trail, clean your shoes or boots. Mud and dirt stuck on your boots can carry the seeds of invasive species along the trail or to other areas where you hike. Consider carrying a boot brush in your pack or car and use boot brushing stations when provided. If possible, rinse the soles of your shoes.
- If you're building a campfire, use local firewood. Do not move firewood or bring in firewood from outside the immediate area.

- Wash your car or bike if you have been driving on unpaved roads or off road to avoid transporting plant materials in your tires or undercarriage.
- Shake out all of your camping equipment, including your tent, camp chairs, and sleeping bags, before leaving the campsite. This will help remove any plant or seed materials.
- Brush off or wash your pets before leaving the area. Sticky seeds can hitchhike on fur.

References

<https://Int.org/why/7-principles/leave-what-you-find/>

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/invasive/prevention.htm>