Outdoor Code

As an American, I will do my best to—

• *Be clean in my outdoor manners.*

• Be *careful with fire.*

• *Be considerate in the outdoors.*

• *Be conservation-minded.*

The Boy Scouts of America, one of the largest organized users of wilderness resources, introduced the Outdoor Code in 1954. Outdoor activities and conservation of our natural resources have always been a significant part of the Scouting program. The Outdoor Code and Leave No Trace are key tenets of the Scouting outdoor program. As users of our natural resources, it is important for Scouts and their adult leaders to understand outdoor ethics not as a separate skill to master, but as a concept that is deeply woven into all aspects of Scouting. The Outdoor Code, Leave No Trace, and Tread Lightly! can be applied anywhere, from a backyard or local park to the backcountry. For Scouts these concepts should be applied in all their activities while camping, hiking, and participating in all outdoor activities.

The Leave No Trace concept was first established by the U.S. Forest Service in the 1960s. In the late 1970s, the Boy Scouts introduced the concept of “minimum impact camping.” Around the mid-1990s, the BSA introduced Leave No Trace into its publications and program.

**1. Know Before You Go 1. Plan Ahead and Prepare.**

• Be prepared! Remember food and water, and proper clothes.

• Plan where you’re going. Check the maps along the way so you’ll stay on course.

• Learn about the area you plan to visit. Read books, check online, and be familiar with any regulations.

**2. Choose the Right Path 2**. **Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces**

• Walk and ride on designated trails; Do not step on flowers or small trees, they may not grow back.

• Respect private property and camp only on existing or designated campsites.

• Don’t dig trenches or build structures in your campsite.

**3. Trash Your Trash 3. Dispose of Waste Properly**

• Pack it in, pack it out. Put litter, including food scraps, in garbage bags and dispose of it in a designated container or carry it home.

• Use bathrooms or outhouses when available. If not available, bury human waste in a small hole 6–8 inches deep and 200 feet away from water.

• Keep water clean. Do not put soap, food, or human or pet waste in lakes or streams.

**4. Leave What You Find 4. Leave What You Find**

• Leave plants, rocks, and historical items as you find them so others can enjoy them.

• Treat living plants with respect. Carving or hacking on plants may kill them.

**5. Be Careful With Fire 5. Minimize Campfire Impacts**

• Use a camp stove for cooking.

• If you want to have a campfire, be sure it’s permitted and safe to build a fire. Use only existing fire rings to protect the ground from heat. Keep your fire small. Do not bring firewood from home; it can harbor tree-killing insects and diseases. Many states regulate the movement of untreated firewood.

• Burn all wood to ash and be sure the fire is completely out and cold before you leave.

**6. Respect Wildlife 6. Respect Wildlife**

• Observe wildlife from a distance and never approach, feed, or follow wild animals.

• Human food is unhealthy for all wildlife, and feeding them starts bad habits.

• Protect wildlife and your food by securely storing your meals and trash.

**7. Be Kind to Other Visitors 7. Be Considerate f Other Visitors**

• Be considerate when passing others on the trail.

• Avoid making loud noises. • Be sure the fun you have outdoors does not bother anyone else.

***Tread Lightly!***

Explain that motorized recreation imposes greater stress and impact on the environment than does traveling by foot. This can happen while traveling to the trail or camp by car or truck. Tread Lightly! Provides a series of five principles that provide guidance on safe and responsible shooting, boating, and motorized vehicle use in the outdoors.

**T** – Travel Responsibly

**R** – Respect the Rights of Others

**E** – Educate Yourself

**A** – Avoid Sensitive Areas

**D** – Do Your Part

**1. TRAVEL RESPONSIBLY**

• Stay on designated roads, trails, and recreation areas.

• Go over (not around) obstacles to avoid widening the trails.

• Cross streams only at designated fords.

• When possible, avoid wet, muddy trails.

• On water, stay on designated waterways and launch your watercraft in designated areas.

**2. RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS**

• Leave gates as you found them.

• Yield right of way to those passing you or going uphill.

• On water, respect anglers, swimmers, skiers, boaters, divers, and those on or near the shore.

**3. EDUCATE YOURSELF**

• Obtain travel maps and regulations from public agencies.

• Plan your trip.

• Take recreation skills classes.

• Know how to use your equipment safely.

**4. AVOID SENSITIVE AREAS**

• Avoid meadows, lakeshores, wetlands, and streams.

• Stay on designated routes to protect wildlife habitat and sensitive soil from damage.

• Do not disturb historical, archeological, or paleontological sites.

• On water, avoid operating watercraft in shallow waters or near shorelines at high speeds