

FLORIDA TRAIL ASSOCIATION

ACTIVITY LEADER GUIDE

Florida
Trail
Association
Building More Than Trails



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INTRODUCTION

As an Activity Leader of the Florida Trail Association (FTA), you hold, arguably, the most important job in the Association. Successful leadership will instill in both members and the public the enjoyment and appreciation for the natural world that surrounds them and foster their desire to preserve it.

Background: The FTA was founded in 1964 by a small group of hikers with a very large dream of building a continuous footpath traversing the length of Florida, from the Everglades to the Panhandle. Over the years, the organization has grown and currently partners with federal, state, and local agencies as the recognized authority on building and maintaining hiking trails in Florida. The Association has developed goals and ideals to help define its mission, as well as policies and standards necessary to attain these goals. This growth has also fostered an expansion of activities to include not only trail maintenance and hiking, but also brings people into the natural world through canoeing, kayaking, sailing, biking and other outdoor pursuits.

It is the responsibility of the FTA Activity Leader, while leading or participating in FTA activities, to understand, practice, and teach those skills and ethics consistent with FTA standards, and to discourage those practices which are contrary to FTA standards.

NOTE: Trail Maintenance Activity Leaders

Leading and managing an FTA trail maintenance crew requires not only the skills of an Activity Leader, as described in the following sections, it also involves substantial technical skills and the ability to efficiently and safely coordinate workers doing a variety of tasks spread out over a designated area. There is a separate manual which details the requirements of Trail Maintenance Leaders and it can be found on the FTA website.

1. ACTIVITY LEADER SELECTION AND TRAINING

ALL SANCTIONED FTA ACTIVITIES MUST BE LED BY AN AUTHORIZED ACTIVITY LEADER.

a. PURPOSE

The purpose of authorizing FTA Activity Leaders is to ensure that persons presenting FTA activities uphold the ideals and goals of the Association, displays the leadership and outdoor skills necessary to lead others, satisfy the requirements of FTA liability insurance, and follow proper safety and emergency procedure, as applicable.

b. SELECTION AND AUTHORIZATION

Qualifications for FTA Activity Leaders are judged by experienced, authorized Activity Leaders who are familiar with the candidate's abilities. Two authorized Activity Leaders may recommend those persons participating in FTA activities who exhibit mature judgment, leadership qualities, outdoor ethics and

skills, and an understanding of FTA purposes and goals. As a prerequisite to becoming an Activity Leader, the Association requires that a candidate, in addition to being a member in good standing:

1. Take part in leadership workshops that include FTA policies, practices and skills when offered.
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 each submit a letter of recommendation to the FTA office in Gainesville with a copy to their Chapter Chair or Chapter Activity Coordinator. The letters of recommendation must include the following information (see sample letter in Appendix A):

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

The candidate's letters of recommendation are reviewed by the Executive Director or his agent who decides either to authorize or not authorize the candidate as a FTA Activity Leader. This decision will be transmitted to the candidate's Chapter Chair and Chapter Activity Chair within 30 days of receipt of the letter of recommendation. The FTA Office will send the candidate a written acknowledgment of authorization, a current Activity Leaders Guide, an Activity Leader patch, and an acceptance letter to sign and return for the file.

c. EXCEPTIONS

State and Chapter Officers are considered Activity Leaders only for the purposes of conducting chapter meetings. They must be authorized per the procedure described above to lead all other FTA activities. **Trail Section Leaders and Trailmasters who intend to lead others on trail maintenance activities should first be authorized as Activity Leaders.**

d. TRAINING OF ACTIVITY LEADERS

It is strongly recommended that Activity Leaders be trained through an accredited agency or participate in trainings when offered by the FTA on Wilderness First Aid and First Aid/Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). Prior to an Activity Leader candidate's nomination, the candidate must co-lead at least two activities with two different authorized Activity Leaders. These Activity Leaders should allow the candidate to participate in all phases of the activity, including planning, execution, and follow-up. Once authorized, new Activity Leaders are asked to conduct their first two activities with an experienced Activity Leader acting as co-leader. All Activity Leaders must keep their training current through regular participation in FTA Activity Leaders' workshops when conducted by Chapter or State Activity Leaders or Coordinators, leadership and outdoor skills workshops when conducted by staff, and by regularly leading activities.

e. ACTIVITY LEADER AUTHORIZATION, EXPIRATION, REMOVAL

The FTA office will maintain a master listing of authorized Activity Leaders. Each year the Chapter Activity Chairs will review their chapter's Activity Leaders to determine if they have met the training/activity requirements and if they wish to continue in this capacity. By January 31 of each year, the Chapter Activity Chairs will submit their updated lists of Activity Leaders to the Florida Trail office.

The office will compare the chapter lists against the master listing to verify authorization, and inform the Chapter Chair if there are exceptions.

EXPIRATION

Any authorized Activity Leader whose name has not been resubmitted annually for three (3) consecutive years will be removed from the master listing. To be re-authorized, the former Activity Leader should submit a letter to the Chapter Chair or Chapter Activity Coordinator requesting reauthorization. The Chapter Chair will forward this letter to the FTA office with comments. The office 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 Executive Director or his agent will reauthorize the Activity Leader. If the applicant's record is not in good standing, the request will be referred to the Vice President for Membership for disposition. The decision of the VP-Membership must be delivered in writing to the Chapter Chair and/or Chapter Activity Coordinator, with a copy to the applicant, within 30 days of the applicant's request. To maintain authorization, an Activity Leader must lead or assist at least one activity per year and/or participate in an Activity Leader workshop.

REMOVAL

The Chapter Activity Chair should make all chapter members aware of the procedures and chain of authority for dealing with problematic issues concerning an Activity Leader or activity. The Executive Director, his Agent or Vice President for Membership should not be brought into the issue before the Chapter Activity Chair or Chapter Chair has had a chance to resolve the issue. 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 FTA, the following steps should be taken:

1. The Chapter Activity Chair and/or Chapter Chair meets with the Activity Leader and tries to resolve the difficulty.
2. If the Chapter is unable to resolve the problem, the Chapter Chair shall detail the problem in writing and submit it to the FTA office for review. At this time, the Executive Director or his agent will notify the Activity Leader that the problem is under state review and that the Activity Leader may not lead activities, pending resolution. The Executive Director or his agent will review the problem with the FTA Vice President of Membership. Depending on the nature of the problem, the VP-Membership may act to suspend the authorization of the Activity Leader or may choose to take the matter to the Board for action. Problems requiring public statements or mitigation by the Association must be brought before the Board.
3. All care must be made for due process and privacy. The FTA office will inform the appropriate Chapter Chair of any expirations or removals of Activity Leaders in their chapter.

2. LEADERSHIP QUALITIES AND DEVELOPMENT

The Activity Leader should not be afraid to say "no" to any participant who poses a threat to their own safety, the group's safety or environmental integrity. Keep these things in mind as you prepare for your activity:

1. Become technically competent, which for outdoor leaders includes competency in basic skills such as first aid, route finding, and reading the weather. It is highly recommended that activity leaders have a certification from an agency such as the Red Cross in Basic First Aid, CPR and Wilderness First Aid. Please see section on Equipment Recommendations – Group First Aid Kit for a list of items you should carry in a first aid kit.
2. Get yourself ready first – you may have your hands full of ever-changing factors once you're on the trail.
3. Keep your equipment ready to go and review your competence with it.

4. Get organized – research your trip, make a plan – but leave it open and flexible: get help if you need it.

3. ACTIVITY LEADER DUTIES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND CONSIDERATIONS

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 below have been compiled from suggestions provided by “veteran” Activity Leaders who consistently use them to ensure the success of their activity.

a. PROPOSING AN ACTIVITY

Activity Leaders may submit unsolicited activity proposals to the Chapter Activity Chair, or the Chapter Activity Chair can solicit activities from various leaders. Some chapters have found that having an Activity Leaders’ meeting to plan together leads to more varied activities. Annual, traditional activities are usually successful and well attended. Activity proposals must be submitted by the Chapter Activity Chair to the FTA office in Gainesville on the proper form and must be complete and clearly written. Chapter Activity Chairs should review each proposed activity to make sure that all information is complete, forms are legible, and listed Activity Leaders are currently authorized. A copy of a chapter’s current activity leaders can be requested from the FTA office.

b. 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 FTA requests that Activity Leaders lead only those activities for which they possess the required skills and experience. It is highly recommended that, if at all possible, you, as the activity leader, 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 with which you are familiar and know the conditions.

Be sure to check for current hunting activity in areas where activities are scheduled. Not all areas have the same hunting seasons. In Florida, consult the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) (<http://floridaconservation.org>) for dates. Annual hunt schedules for each wildlife management area are also available wherever hunting licenses are sold. Plan activities suitable for the time of year and location. Consider varying skill ratings of activities to attract participation by members and others from all levels of experience.

c. 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. If the hike is on the Florida National Scenic Trail (FNST), also referred to as the Florida Trail, the primary sources of information are the FNST maps which may be obtained from the FTA office or website. U.S. Geological Survey topographic maps and information may be obtained from: Map Distribution Geological Survey Box 25286, Federal Center Denver, CO 80225 (303) 236-7477 <http://www.usgs.gov/pubprod/> or from local dealers (listed on USGS Florida Index map) State of Florida Dept. of Transportation Suwannee St., Map Center Tallahassee, FL 32304 (904) 488-9220 <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/>

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, as well as parking spaces for vehicles, and 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/paddling.

5. In case of emergency, be prepared for an emergency takeout point, perhaps with a vehicle parked there.

6. Try to gain some prior knowledge of the historical, geological, etc., sites along the route.

7. If the activity is scheduled during hunting season, ensure the route is safe and that participants wear blaze orange clothing or a vest.

d. WHEN PARTICIPANTS MEET - DAY OF ACTIVITY

1. Arrive Early. Introduce yourself and others.

2. Have each participant sign the Assumption of Risk form (Appendix B). PLEASE NOTE: Be aware that this waiver may not stand up legally if you do anything that is considered grossly negligent or take your group beyond anticipated activities for that trip. Ask the participant if he/she has any medical condition or problem that the hike leader should know about.

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, and that each participant has sufficient water, food and appropriate gear. For paddle trips, make sure each (canoe/kayak) person has an approved flotation device and a whistle. 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/herself or others, the Activity Leader may make a judgment decision to refuse to allow that person to participate.**

5. Remind smokers that activities are non-smoking; remind novices about foot care and foot wear, and everyone about staying together. Discuss Leave No Trace practices .

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 ensure all participants stay between them.

e. RESPONSIBILITIES OF A SWEEP

The Leader shall appoint a "Sweep" (last person in the hiking column) who is a strong hiker and who will accept responsibility for checking the hiker count and assuring that no one is left behind. If there is a co-leader on the hike, he/she should usually take the Sweep position. Ideally, designated sweeps have knowledge of the route, carry a first-aid kit, and know how to use it! Both the leader and sweep should carry whistles for communication. Optionally, a cell phone can also be taken, although reception is sometimes poor in remote areas. The hike leader must stop at all trail intersections, junctions or any place where there might be confusion, and assure that all hikers see the correct direction of travel. This usually requires that the leader wait until the Sweep is visible. The Sweep should notify the leader if slow hikers are having difficulty keeping up or are otherwise unsuited for the hike. Note: The slowest participant may volunteer to Sweep so they aren't holding anyone up. This arrangement is not recommended as it can cause problems if the Sweep falls far behind the group. Note: If for some reason a Sweep cannot be appointed, then the leader must make adjustments so that no hiker is left behind.

f. LARGE GROUPS

Sometimes a larger than expected group shows up for a hike. It may be necessary to break the group up into two groups, especially if the Activity Leader senses a wide range of abilities. Usually any number of participants over 25-30 would be considered large and might merit dividing up. However, if this is done the additional group should be led by another authorized Activity Leader, probably the Co-Leader, along with a qualified Sweep. The two groups should remain in contact and rendezvous at agreed upon locations. The leader may indicate a maximum number of participants in planning their activities.

g. DURING THE TRIP

Activity Leaders should be aware that they are in charge of a group and should adjust according to the needs of all participants. Keep tabs on all participants at all times. Stop frequently to allow the slower members of the group to catch up. Know how many participants leave with you from the trailhead, recount at rest breaks and at hike's conclusion.

1. Maintain an acceptable speed for all. Don't allow fast hikers or paddlers to turn a moderate activity into a strenuous one. If the activity is for beginners, make sure those in need get assistance. **All hikers should be between the Activity Leader and the Sweep.**

2. Take rest breaks when needed. Allow time for observing interesting features, socializing, and getting acquainted. This can also be an opportunity for a bathroom break so allow ample time for that as well.

3. Keep the group together, and make a head count regularly. Appoint a participant to wait at every turn even if trail is double-blazed to clearly define when the front part of the group has made a turn.

4. Be alert for limps, sore feet or hands, or other injuries, or a need to switch a steersman who can't steer when paddling, and such. 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. 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.

7. On urban hikes use crosswalks and cross as a group.

h. AT THE END OF THE ACTIVITY

Before leaving the activity site, make sure all participants are accounted for, all cars will operate, everyone has a ride home, and all equipment (and litter) goes home with them. If something significant occurred, such as an accident, or if something special was seen, heard, or accomplished, it is a requirement to complete a Post-Activity Report and submit it to the Chapter Activity Chair with recommendations, who in turn will forward them to the FTA office. It is not a requirement that the Post-Activity Report be submitted after all activities, unless the previous sentence applies.

4. 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. HIKING, 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 : It is strongly recommended that a small “survival kit” be a standard item in your pack. If you have contact with the participants before the activity, they should also be encouraged to carry one. In addition to the map, compass, and first aid items the kit should include other items as well (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 and iodine tablets for water treatment will cover a variety of situations. A few plastic bags of various sizes have many uses, such as waterproofing gear, storing leftovers, and collecting trail trash.

4. REPAIR KITS: 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/kayak repair kit, etc.

5. GROUP FIRST AID KIT: Activity Leaders should carry a first aid kit of sufficient size, appropriately stocked for the activity. Requirements 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 • For blisters and athletic injuries
- 1½” athletic tape • 3” elastic roll bandage • moleskin • molefoam • Second Skin®
- bandage scissors • povidone/iodine antiseptic • topical antibiotic cream • thermometer (sub-normal for cold climate activities) • tweezers • irrigation syringe • cortisone cream • latex gloves • non prescription pain medication (aspirin, acetaminophen, ibuprofen) • anti-diarrhea drug • antihistamine, itching or anti-sting remedy.

6. CELL PHONE: It is recommended that the Activity Leader and Sweep carry a cell phone or walkie-talkie and ask the participants to carry a cell phone. Even though some areas may not have cell phone service, in dire emergencies a cell phone could prove helpful to call in emergency personnel or law enforcement.

5. ACTIVITY LEADER FORMS

All forms described below can be found in Appendix B. Completed forms are to be submitted to the Chapter Activity Chair who will forward them to the FTA office in Gainesville.

a. ACTIVITY PROPOSAL FORM (REQUIRED)

This form is used by the Activity Leader to propose an official FTA activity for publication at the chapter and/or state level. Upon completion, submit one to the Chapter Activity Chair, who will check that all information is provided and that the listed leaders are authorized. The following information must be included:

a) PUBLICATION: Indicate where the activity will be listed: *Footprint* (electronic version), web-based Meetup group, chapter newsletter/website, FTA website calendar, and local media outlets.

b) DATE OF ACTIVITY: Be sure to include start and end dates for multi-day activities.

c) TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Hike (day, overnight, extended), out-of-state, paddle, nature walk, maintenance, bike, chapter meeting, etc.

d) LOCATION: The site, including county or nearest city, where the activity will take place. Include trail section name and number, if applicable. If possible, include a street address for the meeting location so that it would be possible to computer map driving directions.

e) ACTIVITY REGION: Refer to map to determine where the activity will take place.

- f) SPONSORING CHAPTER: The name of the chapter hosting the activity.
- g) ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Be brief but specific. Include details such as trail mileage, pace level, type of terrain, what participants might see, whether reservations are required, etc.
- h) PUBLIC ACTIVITY: Indicate those activities in which you will include the public by checking “yes” on the form. Public activities MUST be on public land.
- i) LIMIT: Indicate the maximum number of participants, canoes/kayaks, or tents allowed for this activity. Use good Leave-No-Trace judgment when setting limits.
- j) DIFFICULTY RATING: This helps potential participants decide which activities best match their experience and skill level.

Moderate - Based on ideal conditions in Florida, overnight hike of 8- 10 miles per day (clear trail with few obstacles); day hike of 6 to 10-miles; overnight paddle trip of 12-15 miles per day, water level, portages; day paddle trip of 14-16 miles per day same conditions.

Strenuous – Indicates an activity more difficult than described in Moderate rating, including longer distance per day, more obstacles or poor trail conditions, as well as other factors.

Leisurely – Indicates an activity less difficult than described in Moderate rating, including shorter distance per day, walking tours or workshops, as well as other factors. Encourage new hikers, seniors, young children, and the physically challenged and those hikers with special needs to try these trips first.

k) LEADER/CO-LEADER: Include the names, addresses (including e-mail, if available) and telephone numbers of the Activity Leader and Co-Leader. The Activity Leader must be authorized. The Co-Leader may be a leader-in- training.

b. ASSUMPTION OF RISK / ACTIVITY SIGN-IN SHEET (REQUIRED)

These are now combined into one form. Every participant, whether a FTA member or not, must READ and sign one. Parents or guardians must sign for minors. See sample in Appendix B.

c. POST-ACTIVITY REPORT (REQUIRED IF THERE IS AN INCIDENT)

A brief report of the completed activity, to include the number of participants, success of the activity, trail conditions, etc., is optional. In the case of extraordinary events (e.g., injuries, misplaced participants, altercations, etc.), this report is required. This report is sent to the FTA office. This report can be submitted by e-mail. Please include all necessary information in the e-mail.

6. ACTIVITY COSTS

Many Activity Leaders consider their costs associated with activities as donations. Please keep an accounting of this type of donation and submit these records periodically to the FTA office (in many cases, the Association can use these donations to satisfy the “in-kind” requirements that come with some types of grants). Mileage and certain other non-reimbursed expenses are also Federal Income Tax deductible as charitable contributions (see IRS rules). 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 and paperwork (passports, visas, etc. for foreign travel) that may be required. FTA Activity Leaders may not, under any circumstances, charge a fee for their services.

7. ACTIVITIES

The following section provides descriptions of some of the different types of activities that the FTA 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 FTA Activity. When designing your activity, think about what would:

- provide a positive outdoor experience for newcomers and “regulars” alike.
- challenge participants to learn new skills.
- entice non-members to join FTA.
- entice members to do more with, and for, FTA.

a. DAY HIKES

Day hiking is probably the most popular FTA 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 drive from most participants, and therefore attract those who are looking for something to do for the day. 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. 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
- Protection from sun, rain, and cold
- Safety gear: compass, whistle, flashlight, waterproof matches or lighter, pocketknife, large garbage bag (good for rain, wind, sitting upon 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.

b. 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. Call everyone’s attention to anything unique and share knowledge. This will create interest and enthusiasm, even if the leader does not know it all.

c. HIKING WITH CHILDREN

The FTA encourages children under the age of 18 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 activity 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 or extended. 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. Do not place yourself in a position of being alone with any participants under the age of 18.

d. EXTENDED HIKES (Hikes and trips longer than a day)

The extended hike creates particular problems: increased weight of additional food, water, and clothing, arrangement of a car shuttle over greater distances. Make sure you as an Activity Leader are familiar with best back packing principals.

e. PADDLE TRIPS

To lead a paddle trip, whether for a day or a week, the first essential quality of the leader is the ability to control the watercraft. The leader should be able to steer, back water, sidle up to other canoes/kayaks, paddle upstream, and catch up with the person in the lead. He/she must have enough skill and stamina to take care of him/herself and help others. The leader should know how to transfer people and gear from one canoe/kayak to another safely in midstream, how to tow a paddle craft, how to upright a flipped canoe or kayak, 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 take-out well before nightfall. The leader must be realistic about the distance to be covered. Start early. 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/kayaks. 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 paddlers. 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 up-to-date 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. When shuttling or deadheading vehicles, the leader should know the distances, the time involved, and the roads to use. When convenient, it may be time saving to deadhead cars the evening before beginning the trip.

f. BICYCLE TRIPS

The initial steps in organizing an FTA bicycle trip include: choosing a day and time, planning a satisfactory route (not on "footpath only" sections of the Florida 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. 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.

**FLORIDA TRAIL ASSOCIATION
ACTIVITY LEADER'S GUIDE
REVISED 4/20/2016**

**APPENDIX A
LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLES
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND ASSISTANCE**

LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLES

1 PLAN AHEAD AND PREPARE

Adequate trip planning and preparation help 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 weather wise; plan clothing and equipment accordingly.
- Repackage food to avoid weight, bulk and litter.

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

3. **SPREAD USE AND IMPACT IN PRISTINE AREAS**

For many hikers and backpackers, a large part of the attraction and magic of the backcountry comes 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. **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

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 obeying 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

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; consider using biodegradable or “backpacker” 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 or hand sanitizer after a cathole visit and before cooking and eating.

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

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 Leave No Trace, Center for Outdoor Ethics, P O Box 997, Boulder, CO 80306.

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

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. Activity Leaders are required to carry a first aid kit, and should ask if others are carrying a first aid kit.

1 TYPES OF EMERGENCIES

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

2 PREVENTION

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
- Knowing the area and current conditions; having a contingency plan
- Having a lead and a sweep; using the buddy system

3. ITINERARY

Know your route. Check it out yourself *before* taking others. Know the potential for high water or other obstacles. 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.

4. 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.

5. MEDICAL

The Florida Trail Association strongly recommends that its Activity Leaders keep up-to-date on the latest accepted first aid skills and techniques for the types of medical situations that might occur on any type of outdoor activity, i.e. hiking, biking, paddling, trail maintenance, etc. 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. *However, you should ensure that all participants read, understand and sign the Assumption of Risk Form. If*

participants are not comfortable with assuming the risk of their own well being, they should not attend the activity.

**APPENDIX B
FORMS**

ACTIVITY LEADER FORMS

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