ALASKA
PUBLIC LANDS INFORMATION
CENTERS

Leave No Trace
in Alaska's Backcountry

People seeking adventure and solitude are drawn to Alaska's backcountry and in many places, the beauty and integrity of the land appear untouched by humans. If we respect and preserve these wild places, they may remain pristine for future generations. All users will be able to enjoy Alaskan wildlands if we leave nature undisturbed by practicing Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics.

Plan Ahead & Prepare

- Know the rules and regulations of the area you intend to visit.
- Travel in small groups to minimize impact.
- Match your route to the skill level of your group.
- Study maps, guidebooks, and trip reports to familiarize yourself with the area. Talk to locals.
- Assess the technical aspects of your route. Are there trails to follow or rivers to cross? How many miles is the route and days will it take to complete?
- Repackage food into reusable containers & remove excess packaging to save weight, space, and trash.
- Be self-sufficient.
- Learn and practice bear safety at all times.

Travel & Camp on Durable Surfaces

- Travel & camp on established trails and impact sites to avoid further erosion and disturbance to soil, vegetation, and wildlife.
- Hiking directly through mud and puddles avoids creating larger paths and trampling vegetation.

- Focus your activity to areas where impact already exists. However, avoid newly established impacts, in order to let them return to a natural state.
- When traveling cross-country, walk on durable surfaces such as rock, gravel, sand, or dry grasses and spread out to avoid creating new trails.
- Select a durable area for a campsite, such as exposed bedrock, sand, gravel, or snow.
- Camp at least 200 feet from water and game trails, with an open view for animals & a breeze for bugs.

Pack It In, Pack It Out

- Everything that you bring into the backcountry should be packed out. Please pack out all food leftovers and trash, including that which you find.
- Store food in bearproof containers to not create human food-oriented bears and other animals.
- Place all items that contain an odor in the food storage container including sunscreen, toothpaste, and garbage. Bear resistant food containers are the best way to store food securely.
- Place bear-resistant food containers at least 100 yards away from tent and cook site.

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Dispose of Waste Properly

- Deposit human waste in catholes dug 6-8 inches deep at least 200 feet from water, camp, and trails.
- Use a trowel, tentstake, or stick to dig catholes.
- Pick up layer of tundra, then dig, 'deposit,' and replace dirt and tundra layer. The area should look as though it was never visited.
- Pack out all toilet paper & hygiene products.
- Use double plastic bags to minimize odor.
- Minimize soap and food residues in wastewater.
- Spread strained dishwasher by tossing it on vegetation downwind from entire camp area; do not pour wastewater in one place on ground.
- All soap, including biodegradeable, should not enter water sources.

Enjoy artifacts such as these caribou antlers, but leave them undisturbed so others can enjoy them, too!

Leave What You Find

- Preserve Alaska's heritage and natural artifacts by examining, photographing, or drawing.
- Leave natural objects and cultural artifacts as you find them so others can experience a sense of discovery.
- Avoid damaging live trees, picking flowers, disturbing mosses and lichens, and moving natural objects.
- Avoid building structures and altering the landscape.
- Observe wildlife from a distance; do not approach, follow, or feed wild animals.

Minimize Use & Impact of Campfires

- Always carry a backpacking stove for cooking.
- Backpacking stoves are fast, do not use natural resources, and reduce the chance of wild fires.
- Consider using a candle or propane lantern instead of a fire as a light source.
- Be aware of current fire restrictions; it is often illegal to have campfires in summer. Also, consult land use regulations before building a fire.
- Tree growth is very slow in the arctic & alpine regions. Scars and impact can last decades.
- Build fires only where firewood is abundant. When collecting firewood, use only dead & downed wood and disperse your gathering to a large area to avoid depleting resources.
- Use established fire rings when available and a fire pan if you plan to build a campfire. Place the fire pan atop rocks or on mineral soil to eliminate damage to vegetation.
- Put out campfires completely by letting embers cool and dumping water on them. After a few hours, dump on more water and collect & scatter the cold ashes by dispersing over a wide area.
- Avoid burning trash; many items do not burn completely and must be packed out.

Be Considerate of Other Visitors & Respect Private Lands & Subsistence Users

- Even though private lands and cabins may be found in Alaskan parks, refuges, and recreation areas, they are not open to public use or travel. Please respect private property and possessions and give these users the space they deserve.
- Be sensitive to local lifestyles, as well as traditional and subsistence activities.
- Avoid traplines and fishwheels, two tools supporting the livelihood of subsistence residents.

Tools like fishwheels may be essentail for rural residents' survival. Please do not disturb them.