

FROM DOG WASTE TO DAISY

"LEAVE NO

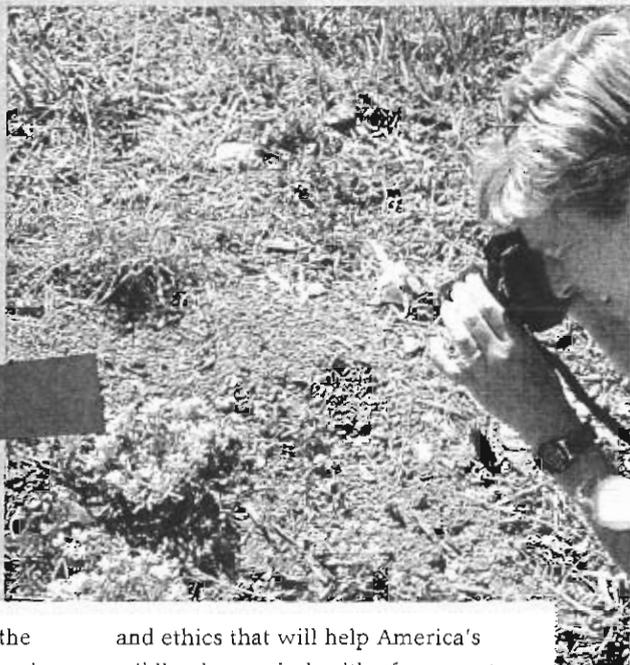
EDUCATES
OUTDOOR
RECREATORS



PICKERS:

LEAVE NO TRACE™

BY SCOTT REID



Americans are rediscovering the great outdoors. A 1997 national survey indicated that more than 94 percent of American citizens enjoy some form of outdoor recreation. Recreational pursuits invigorate and rejuvenate us while giving us pause for introspection and self-improvement. Accompanying that same experience, however, is the potential for significant damage to America's wildlands. Polluted waters, eroded trails, scarred trees, harassed wildlife, and damaged cultural resources will be our legacy if we fail to recognize the individual and cumulative impacts of our enjoyment of public lands.

Leave No Trace (LNT) is a national program dedicated to supporting outdoor recreation while educating users to minimize their impact on the natural world. LNT's goal is to teach all types of recreationists basic outdoor skills

and ethics that will help America's wildlands remain healthy for years to come.

History

The Leave No Trace program originated in the United States Forest Service (USFS) in the 1970s. As the USFS witnessed a boom in backpacking and associated impacts to popular campsites and trails, an educational message was developed to address those management concerns to help visitors make better decisions when recreating.

As the Leave No Trace program grew, the USFS enlisted the help of the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), an industry leader in outdoor leadership and wilderness travel. NOLS and the USFS then joined other federal land agencies—the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Fish and

Leave No Trace, Inc. has developed a Frontcountry Program that

for wildlands near urban areas.

Wildlife Service—to create regionally specific Leave No Trace information. Believing that the LNT program applied to any environment, the originators developed curriculum for the majority of the land classifications in North America—from rainforests to deserts, mountains to rivers, caves to coasts. Different types of users, such as rock climbers, sea kayakers, spelunkers, and equestrians, were targeted.

Since 1994, Leave No Trace, Inc., a non-profit organization, has managed the LNT program. With a mission to promote and inspire responsible outdoor recreation through education, research, and partnerships, Leave No Trace, Inc. joins forces with a variety of organizations and agencies to promote a "minimum impact" message to every visitor of America's wildlands. From municipalities to national education groups, outdoor product manufacturers to regional land managers, Leave No Trace, Inc. works with diverse groups to promote a responsible recreation message. Ultimately, the strength of the LNT program lies in the ability to partner with multiple groups to develop and offer information for specific areas and user groups.

Why Focus on Frontcountry Areas?

The roots of the LNT program are found among wilderness trails and in backcountry campsites, but with more than 80 percent of recreation occurring in day-use areas, the LNT message has gained broader appeal in heavily used "frontcountry" recreation sites. To address the growing trend toward day-use recreation, Leave No Trace, Inc.



works with land managers to address management concerns

has developed a Frontcountry Program that works with land managers to address management concerns for wildlands near urban areas. The Frontcountry Program was pilot tested in

1999 in Boulder, Colorado. Their "Leave No Trace on Open Space" program serves as the model for future Frontcountry Program educational efforts.

THE CITY OF BOULDER OPEN SPACE, A Case Study in Leave No Trace Education

Profile

To help develop an effective local LNT program, a site profile for the City of Boulder Open Space Department (CBOS) was developed. Based on local surveys, the following information comprised the baseline information for the educational program:

CBOS manages 30,000 acres of land and 80 miles of trail in and around the city of Boulder. CBOS' management mandate is to protect wildlife habitat, scenic vistas, recreational opportunities, and agricultural practices. Located in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, CBOS lands are comprised mostly of semi-arid high plains and forested foothills. Surveys indicate that CBOS lands experience 1.7 million visits per year, the majority of which occur in the evenings and on weekends. Approximately 85 percent of the visits to CBOS lands can be attributed to 25 percent of the users. In other words, a core group of visitors frequent CBOS lands one to seven times weekly. The top six recreational management concerns faced by CBOS land managers include: dog waste, dog management, off-trail hiking, litter, user conflicts, and picked herbs/flowers/berries. Volunteers augment the staff trailhead education program and offer an excellent conduit for information distribution.

Objectives

Based on that information, the Leave No Trace on Open Space program was developed with four key objectives:

1. Educate frequent visitors about why it is important to reduce impacts on others and on the natural world through low-impact practices and provide specific information to assist in teaching those practices
2. Inform community opinion leaders about, and gain support for, the program
3. Test and improve the program by piloting the project at a limited number of trailheads; research the effectiveness of the program via surveys and observational data
4. Pending success, expand the educational program to all CBOS trailheads

Process

The project began with CBOS and Leave No Trace, Inc. drafting minimum impact guidelines based on the six high priority management concerns. Several focus groups comprised of frequent CBOS visitors were convened to gauge visitor acceptance of an educational program, assess the draft program, and refine the message delivery method. The focus groups included participants



Personal contact between visitors and staff was reinforced b

broadcasts, newspaper articles and limited direct mailings.

from the primary CBOS recreational groups (e.g., runners, walkers/hikers, dog walkers, equestrians, and mountain bikers). A separate focus group gathered feedback from local "opinion leaders" (e.g., recreation, environmental, and community representatives).

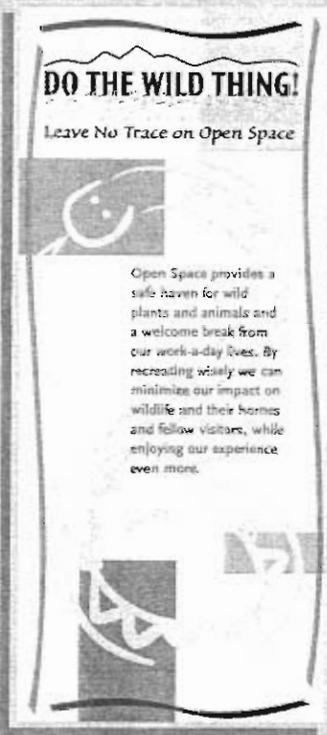
The focus group results indicated that support for the proposed Leave No Trace on Open Space program was nearly unanimous. Visitors expressed strong, positive feelings about their activities on CBOS lands. In general, they perceived CBOS lands to be in good condition, but under increased recreational strain. The draft messages and guidelines presented to the focus groups were widely approved; however, many participants indicated that a more relaxed, informal tone was preferable to authoritative, directive language used on existing information boards. In addition, they desired explanations for the guidelines within the body of the message, as people are naturally curious as to why certain practices help protect lands. Finally, the focus group participants agreed that the most effective educational program delivery method is personal contact at trailheads, with signs and handouts being considered the second most effective method for spreading the word.

Leave No Trace, Inc. and CBOS representatives met to refine the program in light of the information gleaned from the focus groups. Visitors' appreciation of CBOS lands was recognized and used as inspiration within the educational materials. Based on the consensus that CBOS lands are in good





brochures, signs, small trailhead posters, community access channel



repair, educational language focused on preserving existing conditions rather than improving them. The program language was revised to be more conversational and lighthearted, which was the preference of focus group participants. Rationales behind all guidelines were also included within the messages.

After finalizing illustrations to match the revised language, brochures, posters, and signs were generated to enhance the implementation of the educational program. CBOS trailhead educators (both volunteers and paid staff alike) were trained in the program's content and dissemination.

Educators conducted outreach efforts at four select trailheads, and personal contact between visitors and staff was reinforced by brochures, signs, small trailhead posters on information boards, community access channel broadcasts, newspaper articles, interpretive programs, and limited direct mailings. To track outreach efforts, contact logbooks were kept to record the number and activity of visitors, visitor awareness of the Leave No Trace concept, whether visitors took the brochures, and the educator's perception of each visitor's interest in the program. Area "opinion leaders" who were involved in the focus groups embraced the project by disseminating information about the program to their respective memberships and offering to be recognized as "supporters" within the educational materials.

The final element of the program involved research. An intercept survey was administered at the four trailheads

and an observational study of actual behavior supplemented the questionnaires. The intercept survey, conducted throughout a six-week period, queried 630 randomly selected participants about their knowledge of the Leave No Trace on Open Space practices. The observational study gauged actual trail behavior of a select number of visitors.

Results

In general, the Leave No Trace on Open Space program was not only well received, it exceeded expectations. Interest in the program was high (Only 1 in 5 visitors was not interested, with 2 of 5 showing mild interest, and 2 of 5 being either interested or very interested) and visitors were receptive and responsive to the educational initiatives.

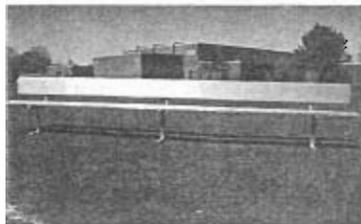
"People have been very receptive at the trailhead," Stacy McColgan, trailhead educator said. "They like the fact that we are out in person talking to them."

Indeed, approximately 82 percent of visitors contacted accepted the Leave No Trace on Open Space brochure. Visitors professing a higher awareness of Leave No Trace ethics were less likely to accept educational materials, which reflects trends in other research findings indicating that knowledgeable people are more difficult to educate.

Visitor knowledge levels were gauged using a series of five questions, which addressed content found in the educational materials. The survey indicated that awareness of the Leave No Trace on Open Space program increased at least 17 percent in the pilot



**You've got
a lot of fans.**



Treat them well.

We've got bleachers and benches with aluminum or wooden seating in a range of sizes to meet your specific needs. Call for a color catalog or visit us on the Internet.

1-800-334-GOAL
www.goalsports.com

GOAL
SPORTING GOODS
Essex, Connecticut

PLEASE CIRCLE READER SERVICE CARD NO. 49

Join Up

day of Service
GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY
Part of the National Recreation and Park Association's Year of Service Campaign

Call 800/649/3042

areas during the first six months of the project. Statistical evaluation indicated that knowledge levels of those who had heard of the program were significantly higher than those who had not. We can assume that some behavioral change took place with the increased level of knowledge, though this aspect was not specifically assessed.

The observational study conducted on CBOS lands indicated that most visitors to open space areas follow the LNT guidelines. Approximately 87 percent of the visitors observed traveled on trail, collected their dogs' waste, refrained from littering, and followed other LNT guidelines as advocated by the literature. Of the 13 percent who did not follow the LNT guidelines, 80 percent failed to follow one of the procedures pertaining to dogs (waste or control).

In other words, dog-related issues represent 80 percent of LNT guideline non-compliance. Although this observational study was less formal than the questionnaire, it did provide a rough snapshot of actual behavior trends. The information obtained echoes conversations with other land managers. Dog-related impact is one of the most pressing issues for wildland managers near urban areas.

Based on the success the LNT program had on a limited number of trailheads, CBOS decided to expand the educational program to every trailhead in its system. Further studies performed this year will assess the program's effectiveness on the rest of CBOS lands.

"Ultimately, we hope to have to deal with less trailside dog waste and fewer eroding trails," states Matt Jones, a

Visitors feel very strongly about wildlan

CBOS recreation planner. "We are very optimistic about the effect of the Leave No Trace program."

Lessons Learned

As a case study, the Leave No Trace on Open Space pilot project succeeded. Important lessons learned include the following:

1. Information tailored to a specific location allows land managers to address key management concerns.
2. Visitors feel very strongly (and positively) about wildland areas close to their communities. If an LNT education program can successfully tap into this emotion, visitors may be more responsive to the message.
3. In an educational program, visitors often tend to prefer a friendly, conversational tone to more authoritative language. Although regulatory language certainly has its place in brochures and on signs, visitors profess to be more receptive to an upbeat message accompanied by illustrations.
4. A strong trailhead education program—volunteer, paid, or both—will greatly assist the implementation of an educational program.
5. Research, although not critical, does assist in the assessment and implementation of an educational program.
6. Informing and gaining support of community "opinion leaders" lends credibility to an educational program and helps spread the message to members of other organizations.

The Frontcountry Program Expanded

So, where does Leave No Trace's Frontcountry Program go from here? What can you do as a land manager to implement a similar program? Can an

areas close to their communities. If an LNT education program can successfully tap into this

emotion, visitors may be more responsive to the message.

LNT program address issues that are more pertinent in your area?

Efforts in support of the Leave No Trace Frontcountry Program have begun in other locales across the country. Land managers for the C&O Canal National Historic Park in Maryland, Red Rock Canyon National Recreation Area in Nevada, and the Animas River corridor in Colorado are currently working with Leave No Trace, Inc. to develop area-specific, frontcountry guidelines based on the LNT program principles. These sites were selected due to the high level of interest on the

part of the land managers, the diversity of the ecosystems, and their associated management concerns. Even though these sites span vastly different areas of the country, they share many similar issues, including dog management and waste, graffiti, visitor safety, user conflict, litter, and social trail development. Each site requires tailored language and different implementation techniques to address local issues.

Leave No Trace, Inc. is interested in working cooperatively with other land managers to expand the Frontcountry Program and increase its scope to

include diverse management concerns not yet addressed in the program. Language and illustrations produced at any of the Frontcountry Program sites are available for use at other selected sites.

Ultimately, the Leave No Trace Frontcountry Program will succeed in altering visitor behavior only when land managers work to develop and implement local education campaigns. If you think your area would benefit from a Leave No Trace education program, please contact Scott Reid at 800/332-4100, scott@LNT.org.

You're Invited to attend the



National Institute on Recreation Inclusion

Behavior Management Institute - September 8

September 9 - 11, 2000

Deerfield Hyatt • Deerfield, Illinois

featuring

- Unique networking opportunities.
- Available Inclusion Models and understanding the Inclusion Process.
- Disability Awareness Training for staff, volunteers and non-disabled participants.
- Court decisions and the ADA regarding Recreation Inclusion.
- Risk management and when "no" is an acceptable answer
- Opportunity to earn CEU's

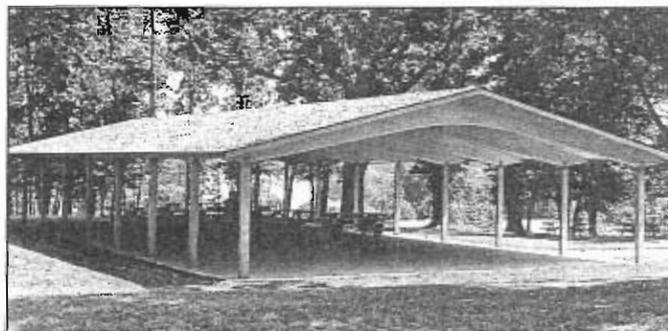


NRPA

Northeast Service Center
22377 Belmont Ridge Rd.
Ashburn, VA 20148-4501

1-800-293-5365

www.activeparks.org



ENWOOD STRUCTURES
MANUFACTURER OF ENGINEERED WOOD PRODUCTS

- Complete Prefabricated Packages • Ready for Fast Installation
- Highest Quality - Rigorous Inspection
- Custom Designs Available
- Direct Distribution Throughout the U.S.

Post Office Box 2002 • Morrisville, NC 27560
Tel. 919/467-6155 • FAX 919/469-2536 • www.enwood.com

CALL TODAY: 800-777-8648

PLEASE CIRCLE READER SERVICE CARD NO. 50