



LIGHT ON THE LAND ACTIONS & ETHICS

Be Light on the Land!

Light On The Land is the Back Country Horsemen of America educational platform of ACTIONS and ETHICS to perpetuate the common-sense use of saddle and pack stock and encourages the wise and sustainable use and enjoyment on our public lands.

With over 50 years of knowledge and experience within BCHA, *Light On The Land* harnesses those best practices to compile a comprehensive platform of resources specific to stock use in the wilderness, back country, and front country. These resources can be accessed and shared efficiently, practically, and free of charge to all BCHA members and the general public.

Plan Your Backcountry Trip

Preliminary preparation will provide the means to ensure safety and enhance the experience while minimizing the impact on natural and cultural resources.

Fundamentals:

- Know the regulations, special concerns, and restrictions for the land resources you are using.
 - Check for required permits or restricted scheduling.
 - Verify health certificates required, pet restrictions, leash statues, etc.
 - Communicate with others who have experience in your destination.
 - Utilize maps.
 - Download maps offline if using an electronic mapping device.
 - Identify land ownership/management of planned route.
 - Study maps to determine routes and amenities available.
 - Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use, if possible.
 - Trailer and Vehicle preparedness.
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- Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies.
 - Explore emergency communication options – cell service, satellite phone, two-way texter, etc.



- Plan for extreme and/or changes in weather – excessive heat or cold, high winds, unpredicted snow, flash floods, etc.
 - Pack your trailer with extra food, water, and emergency supplies for people and animals, especially if you will be starting from a remote trailhead far from emergency services.
 - In the case of a catastrophic injury to your stock, have a plan for euthanasia.
- Plan for stock containment.
 - Determine best option – hobbles, highline, portable fence, staking, etc.
 - Practice techniques to be used before heading out.
- Take only animals that are fit, calm, and experienced.
 - Practice riding with the group you are going with before the trip if possible.
 - Animals should be accustomed to performing in unfamiliar surroundings and on diverse types of terrain that could be encountered – rocky, steep, water crossings, etc.
 - Prepare your stock for other users and interactions on the trail - backpackers, kayaks, llamas, bicycles, etc.
 - Always use familiar tack and gear - ride with the gear you will be using for the trip - any extra ropes, saddle packs, etc. to get the stock used to the weight and feel of the equipment.
- Take only equipment you need to reduce the stock needed.
- Predetermine how you will feed stock – graze, pellets, hay, etc.
 - Introduce any new feeding method in the weeks before the trip.
 - Remember that stock will likely be eating more than normal as they are burning more calories than normal.
- Plan your menu.
 - Repackage human food to minimize waste.
 - Utilize bear resistant containers for food.
 - Pack extra light-weight meals in case of losing packs or unexpected delays.
 - Avoid cans, bottles, double packaging on dry goods, etc.



Trails Usage, Etiquette and Safety

Responsible use of trails will allow travel through areas without detriment to resources, maintain consideration for others, and increase the overall experience.

Fundamentals:

- Know trail designations of planned routes.
- Travel in small groups with the minimum number of animals necessary.
- Split larger parties into smaller groups.
- Concentrate use on existing trails, do not create or utilize social trails.
- Avoid muddy trails, if possible, especially on multi-use trails.
- Ride or walk single file in the middle of the trail, especially when wet or muddy.
- Do not cut corners or switchbacks.
- Do not ride around obstacles that need to be removed - it creates new impacts.
- In pristine areas, disperse use to prevent the creation of new trails.
- Carry a saw and clear obstacles especially those over sixteen inches above trail tread.
- Human restroom stops should be done off trail and no signs (trail lilies) should be left.
- Scatter manure at all rest stops.
- Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.
 - When taking breaks or setting camp do so away from trails and other visitors.
 - Avoid loud voices and noises - let nature's sound prevail.
 - Be courteous. Just because you have the right of way does not mean you should always take the right of way.
 - Communicate and cooperate.
- Communicate and cooperate - some users are unfamiliar with stock. Generally, livestock have the right-of-way. Calmly and politely ask whoever you meet to step off the trail in plain view (preferably downhill side). This allows the stock to know they are there. You may experience someone who does not wish to follow standard etiquette. Stay safe and do not escalate the situation. Report a negative occurrence if necessary to local officials.



Camp Establishment and Usage

Minimalizing camping impacts are challenging, and careful consideration is required to multiple components.

Fundamentals:

- **Camp Site Selection**
 - Good campsites are found, not made.
 - Select established sites, if possible, or durable surfaces - rock, gravel, dry grasses, snow, etc. Avoid areas where impacts are just beginning. Choose a campsite that offers the least impact.
 - Pick a location with water, grass/feeding area, and a good containment location.
 - Observe camping setbacks from lakes, streams, trails, other campsites, and historic and cultural sites and structures.
 - Pick a site for your latrine tent, if using for longer stays.
 - Keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas previously impacted.
 - Do not build structures, furniture, or dig trenches.
 - Do not picket stock in wet meadows.
 - Do not tie stock to trees, except for rest or loading and unloading.
 - Tie stock so they cannot chew on the tree bark or eat the leaves of woody vegetation. A high line between trees is recommended. Use tree saver straps to protect trees.
 - Fill in all holes and return all trampled areas to their natural state.
- **Disposing of Camp, Human and Stock Waste Properly**
 - Pack in, pack out.
 - Do not throw left over food into campfires. It won't burn completely and is an attractant to bears and other animals.
 - Inspect your campsite and rest areas for trash or spilled foods. Pack out all unburnable trash.
 - Leftover food should be packed out or incinerated in a closed container such as a portable woodstove.
 - Deposit solid human waste in holes dug at least six inches deep at least one hundred feet from water, camp, and trails (check regulations for distance). Cover and disguise/naturalize the hole when finished.
 - Strain dishwater and pack out or incinerate in closed container.
 - To wash yourself or your dishes, use tiny amounts of biodegradable soap.
 - Rake or scatter manure when breaking camp, especially around highline.



- Minimize Campfire Impacts
 - ALWAYS be aware of local fire restrictions.
 - Campfires can cause lasting impacts to the resources - do not have a campfire if you cannot control it.
 - Be aware of your surrounding area and make sure you have a safe location for your campfire.
 - Consider using a lightweight propane stove for cooking.
 - Use established fire rings or use a fire pan.
 - Build a mound fire using fire retardant material underneath (old fire shelter).
 - Keep fires small - use sticks that can be broken by hand when possible.
 - Sawing and splitting logs should be done in a manner that minimizes visual impacts to the other visitors.
 - Burn all wood and coals to ash and put out campfires completely. **DEAD OUT!**

Minimize Wildlife Conflicts

Fundamentals:

- Observe wildlife from a distance - do not follow or approach.
- Become familiar with animal signs that could indicate which type of animal is in your area – tracks, scat, rubbings, etc.
- Be familiar with proper response when encountering an aggressive/predatory animal in different situations.
- Be prepared for encounters on the trail with dogs, moose, bear, deer, elk, snakes, etc.
- Carry bear spray when necessary and transport in a proper container - bear spray is considered the best deterrent in preventing an attack.
- Never feed wild animals - feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviors (habituates), and exposes them to predators and other dangers.
- Protect wildlife and your food by storing/hanging rations, grain, and trash in approved bear-resistant methods - remember some personal hygiene items may be misinterpreted as food by some animals.
- Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young, winter, etc.



Preserve the Integrity of the Backcountry

Fundamentals:

- Preserve the past: examine, but do not disturb cultural or historical structures and artifacts.
- Leave natural objects as you find them - check local regulations as removing these items may be illegal.
- Avoid introducing or transporting non-native plant species.
 - Clean seeds, etc. from tack and stock.
 - Use certified weed-seed free hay and grain, ideally 2 to 3 days before the trip begins.
 - Check local weed-free public land requirements.