

To protect the New York State Forest Preserve lands by educating people about the Forest Preserve and how to safely enjoy and protect it

“The Message”

Edited
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Introduction

In April of 2000 the Wildlife Conservation Society sponsored a facilitated workshop discussion of Adirondack recreation-based business owners and others to explore items for improving the economic benefit of outdoor recreation tourism in the central and western Adirondacks. The findings of this discussion triggered a survey of a variety of organizations and individuals connected with providing information to visitors of the Adirondack Park. The survey was designed to get a general overview of what is being done regarding educating Forest Preserve users and whether there appeared to be a broad base of support for a more systematic and coordinated educational effort.

A survey was sent to a stratified sample of organizations and individuals who participate in providing information to visitors to the Adirondack Park. The sampling strata included small businesses catering to tourists, Chambers of Commerce, Adirondack Guides, NYSDEC Rangers and Law Enforcement personnel, Primary, Secondary and Post Secondary School educators, Summer Camp operators, and others.

A couple of things stand out among the questionnaire's findings.

1. Among the respondents there was overwhelming support (83%) for a more coordinated approach to educating the public about the Adirondack Forest Preserve and how to safely enjoy and protect it.
2. There appeared to be a consistent level of support for eight out of the nine suggested priority topic areas for an Adirondack Forest Preserve Education Program. A third or more of the respondents feel Recreational Opportunities (41%), Minimum Impact Techniques (37%), Safety (36%), Unique Characteristics of the Park (35%) and Current Forest Preserve Regulations (33%) are possible priority topics

(The complete survey results can be found at:
<http://www.adirondackresearch.com/harchives.html>)

As a result of these findings the Wildlife Conservation Society commissioned the drafting of an essential "message" of what Forest Preserve Users "must know" when they visit this special resource. Specifically this curriculum addresses the areas of safety, the leave no trace philosophy, and unique characteristics of the Adirondack Park and Forest Preserve Regulations.

The Wildlife Conservation Society sponsored meetings May 7, 2003 and April 19-20, 2004 to present a vision for AFPEP and brainstorming more details of the message and possible means of implementation. At the meeting feedback and input regarding the AFPEP message was solicited.

The following is the most recent iteration of the Adirondack Forest Preserve Education Program.

The Vision:

The vision that has evolved for the Adirondack Forest Preserve Education Program is patterned somewhat after the Leave No Trace™ Program (www.lnt.org). It includes addressing the question, “What does the Adirondack Forest Preserve user need to know in order to ensure that they have a safe, environmentally sound and enjoyable experience?” Once that question is addressed, it is a matter of creating mechanisms for getting this message out.

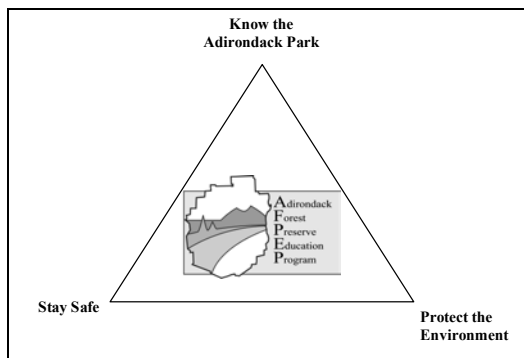
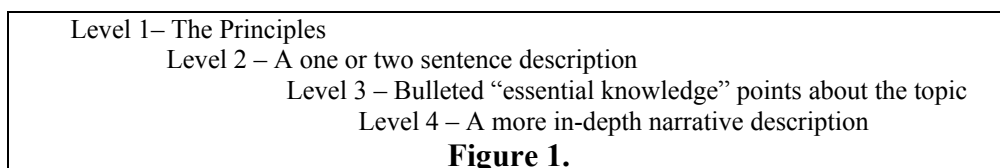
The vision includes:

1. All information providers including, chambers of commerce and visitor’s bureaus, State agencies, non-governmental organizations, outdoor guides/outfitters, convenient mart employees and everyone else that interfaces with the Adirondack Forest Preserve user will have a message that is consistent both visually and in its content.
2. A partnering process that ensures the consistency of the message.
3. Brochures, booklets, hang tags, a website and other means for spreading the message.
4. Training opportunities for people to learn about the message and a process for delivering it.

The Message

The message of essential knowledge for Adirondack Forest Preserve users is patterned after the Leave No Trace™ program. There are 3 broad areas the Forest Preserve users need to know about (figure 2) and 11 principles that make up the AFPEP message. The principles are listed below. At least four levels of information are envisioned. Each level would stand without the next one. The related NYS rules and regulations will eventually be referenced and incorporated for each area.

Figure 1 describes the four levels.



AFPEP Principles – Level 1

Principle 1

Know about the Adirondack Park and understand that it is a 6-million acre patchwork of public and private lands. Choose places appropriate for your activities and abilities.

Principle 2

Plan ahead to assure safe, enjoyable and environmentally sound outdoor travel.

Principle 3:

Have the proper clothing and equipment to protect yourself and the environment.

Principle 4:

Maintain health through adequate hydration, balanced diet, good hygiene, and knowledge of first aid.

Principle 5:

Know where you are going, have a map, stay on trails or have the advanced navigational skills necessary for off-trail travel.

Principle 6:

Respect and be aware of wildlife and wildlife habitat for your safety and theirs.

Principle 7:

Travel and camp on durable surfaces to protect the environment

Principle 8:

Dispose of human, food and packaging waste properly

Principle 9:

Preserve Natural and Cultural Heritage by leaving cultural and natural objects where you find them.

Principle 10:

Minimize campfire impacts to leave the outdoors looking natural

Principle 11:

Respect other visitors so they may also enjoy the outdoors.

AFPEP Principles – Level 2

Principle 1

Know about the Adirondack Park and understand that it is a 6-million acre patchwork of public and private lands. Choose places appropriate for your activities and abilities.

- ◆ The 2.5 million acres of public land within the Adirondack Park is protected by the NYS Constitution, is known as the Adirondack Forest Preserve and is made up of different land classifications. Specific rules and regulations determine what types of activities are permitted on the different types of Forest Preserve land classifications.

Principle 2

Plan ahead to assure safe, enjoyable and environmentally sound outdoor travel.

- ◆ Match your physical ability, your available clothing and equipment and other planning factors to the level of difficulty and remoteness of your intended excursion.

Principle 3:

Have the proper clothing and equipment to protect yourself and the environment.

- ◆ When venturing outdoors the proper clothing and equipment can mean the difference between life and death, will help lighten your impact on the land, and will help keep you comfortable.

Principle 4:

Maintain health through adequate hydration, balanced diet, good hygiene, and knowledge of first aid.

- ◆ Food and water keeps us warm, helps us fight illness, allows the body to maintain itself properly, and helps us to keep a positive attitude. Good hygiene helps prevent wound infections and avoid stomach illness caused by food spoilage, poor food handling, and waste contamination.

Principle 5:

Know where you are going, have a map, stay on trails or have the advanced navigational skills necessary for off-trail travel.

- ◆ Know where you are and keep your group together on the trails and waterways. Good travel technique involves good group organization, conserving energy, and safe maneuvering over varied terrain.

Principle 6:

Respect and be aware of wildlife and wildlife habitat for your safety and theirs.

- ◆ Protect wildlife and yourself by not feeding or approaching animals and safely securing your food and food waste away from all wildlife. Take precautions and protect yourself responsibly against insects and vector-borne diseases such as Lyme disease and the West-Nile virus.

Principle 7:

Travel and camp on durable surfaces to protect the environment

- ◆ Utilize existing trails and established campsites or use special care in camping and hiking in pristine areas.

Principle 8:

Dispose of human, food and packaging waste properly

- ◆ Correctly disposing of human waste helps prevent pollution of water sources, the spread of illness such as Giardia, and limits unpleasant aesthetic impacts to other visitors. Human waste should be disposed in outhouses, catholes, or latrines. All food waste and packaging should be packed out.

Principle 9:

Preserve Natural and Cultural Heritage by leaving cultural and natural objects where you find them.

- ◆ People come to state land to enjoy it in its natural state. Allow others the same sense of discovery by leaving plants, rocks and artifacts as you find them.

Principle 10:

Minimize campfire impacts to leave the outdoors looking natural

- ◆ Campfires can cause lasting impacts. Only set fires where they are allowed. Employ best campfire practices, by keeping them small, using only downed wood and setting fires in designated campsite fire rings or appropriate “mineral soil” sites.

Principle 11:

Respect other visitors so they may also enjoy the outdoors.

- ◆ Respecting other visitors means avoiding loud noises and voices, keeping pets under control and obeying all NYS rules and regulations. Recognize that all legal forms of recreation have their place and everyone deserves to be treated with courtesy.

AFPEP Principles – Level 3

Principle 1

Know about the Adirondack Park and understand that it is a 6-million acre patchwork of public and private lands. Choose places appropriate for your activities and abilities.

- ◆ The 2.5 million acres of public land within the Adirondack Park is protected by the NYS Constitution, is known as the Adirondack Forest Preserve and is made up of different land classifications. Specific rules and regulations determine what types of activities are permitted on the different types of Forest Preserve land classifications.
 - Within the park, roughly the size of MA, 130 thousand people live and work year-round in 105 towns and villages.
 - The Adirondack Park Agency is responsible for developing long-range Park policy, creating both the State Land Master Plan and the Adirondack Land Use and Development Plan
 - It is the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's responsibility to conserve, improve, and protect the State's Natural Resources and environment, and control water, land and air pollution. In the Adirondacks the NYSDEC is responsible for the management of the forest preserve and recreational facilities, including campsites.
 - The Adirondack Land Use and Development Plan regulate land use and development activities on the 3.5 million acres of privately owned lands.
 - The approximately 2.5 million acres of public lands in the Park are managed according to the State Land Master Plan.
 - There are three major State Land classifications, Wilderness, Wild Forest, and Intensive Use. There are approximately 120 different units of State Land within these and other classifications with the Adirondack Park.
 - An Intensive Use area is an area where the State provides facilities for intensive forms of outdoor recreation – including forms of non-motorized and motorized use -- by the public. There are three types of Intensive Use areas – campgrounds, day use areas and boat launch sites.
 - A Wild Forest Area is an area where the resources permit a somewhat higher degree of human use than in wilderness while retaining an essentially wild character. A Wild Forest area frequently lacks the sense of remoteness of wilderness that permits a wide variety of outdoor recreation. Because these areas can withstand more human impact, these areas in theory are allowed to have a higher amount of recreational use.
 - A Wilderness Area is an area where people are visitors who do not remain. A Wilderness Area has a primeval character, is without significant improvements and is managed to preserve and enhances its natural conditions. A Wilderness Area generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable. Wilderness areas generally provide users with outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation and are at least ten thousand acres in size.

Principle 2

Plan ahead to assure safe, enjoyable and environmentally sound outdoor travel.

- ◆ Match your physical ability, your available clothing and equipment and other planning factors to the level of difficulty and remoteness of your intended excursion.
 - Give yourself enough time to plan your trip. Although many people plan trips spontaneously, 3-6 months is usually necessary to prepare yourself physically for the challenge of your trip, to gather and consult resources about your trip's route, legal campsites, regulations, water sources, trail conditions and contingency routes, and to gain the skills needed to safely complete your trip.
 - If the ideal planning time is not available then be sure not to overextend yourself. Match your physical ability, your available clothing and equipment and other planning factors to the level of difficulty and remoteness of your intended excursion.
 - Clarify why you are going. Although it may seem obvious, upon closer inspection there often are a variety of reasons people go on trips in the Adirondacks. If these reasons aren't clear in your group, there may be conflicts between personal goals. Fun, relaxation, physical challenge, reaching a particular destination and observing or harvesting wildlife are all common reasons for going on trips to the Adirondacks.
 - Anticipate what could go wrong and plan for it. Learn the historical weather patterns in your area and get a short-term weather forecast before you start your trip. Research potential Adirondack hazards you may not be aware of, including insects, hazardous vegetation, wildlife encounters, mud, blowdowns, etc. Be prepared to deal with emergency situations by gaining first aid training and carrying a well-stocked medical kit.
 - Ensure that you have the necessary clothing, equipment, food and supplies to safely complete your trip. (see principle #3)
 - Ensure that you know and employ outdoor recreation practices that comply with New York State regulations (<http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/regs/190.htm> - contact your local Forest Ranger) and the principles of Leave No Trace. (www.lnt.org)
 - Be Responsible – Be self reliant and don't depend on others for your well-being
 - Be Prepared – Most of the Forest Preserve is isolated, subject to rapidly changing weather, and has limited cell-phone coverage. So even when going on a short hike **YOU SHOULD BE PREPARED TO SURVIVE A NIGHT.**
 - Anticipate an Emergency – Have a plan in case you do not return on time. Leave a list of people who are on your excursion and your itinerary with a responsible person and make sure the person knows what do if you do not return by a certain time.
 - In the Case of Emergency – For emergencies on Forest Preserve land contact the local Forest Ranger or NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Emergency Dispatch number 518-891-0235

Principle 3:

Have the proper clothing and equipment to protect yourself and the environment.

- ◆ When venturing outdoors the proper clothing and equipment can mean the difference between life and death, will help lighten your impact on the land, and will help keep you comfortable.
 - Don't Leave Home Without Them: Whether going on to Forest Preserve lands for a two-hour hike or a month long expedition the following items are considered essential: matches/lighter with firestarter, flashlight, extra food, rain gear/extra clothes, pocket knife/multi-purpose tool, water, map, compass, first-aid kit, whistle, pencil and paper
 - Stay Dry = Stay Warm. Employ the concept of layering to avoid overheating, which dampens clothing with perspiration. Take thin layers off when exercising and put thin layers back on when resting. In general, top clothing layers protect against wind and rain while inner layers provide warmth and insulation.
 - Leave your cotton behind – it's cold when wet and you *will* get wet in the Adirondacks! Outdoor clothing fabrics should be durable, quick drying and should provide good warmth while remaining light weight. Synthetic fibers, wool and silk insulate your body effectively even when they are wet. Cotton steals your body's heat when it's wet. Cotton is the heat thief!
 - Cover your body. Outdoor clothing should protect your body from exposure to moisture, cold, wind, sun, insects, and vegetation. Remember to bring a hat with visor, neck protection, covering for your arms, legs, feet and hands. Two layers of wool or polyester socks protect your feet from blisters. Rugged footwear that covers your toes protects your feet from sharp objects, sprains, insects, and general Adirondack conditions. Pack a wool hat and extra layers of clothing for unanticipated conditions or for other travelers in need.
 - Give me Shelter! For overnight ventures make sure you have a shelter (waterproof tent or rain fly), insulation from the ground (sleeping pad) and synthetic fill sleeping bag rated for your season of travel. For day trips make sure you have enough food, clothing and equipment to spend an unexpected night or more.
 - Recreational equipment. Make sure you have equipment that can provide you with a safe and enjoyable recreational experience that doesn't compromise the environment. Backpacks, canoes/kayaks, life jackets, snowshoes, skis, and motorized recreational equipment should be well maintained, durable and easy to service.
 - Ask the Experts. Don't be reluctant to ask seasoned professionals at outdoor equipment stores for advice. You also can gain a great deal of knowledge and have a wonderful experience if you take a trip with a reputable outfitter or outdoor education center.

Principle 4:

Maintain health through adequate hydration, balanced diet, good hygiene, and knowledge of first aid.

- ◆ Food and water keeps us warm, helps us fight illness, allows the body to maintain itself properly, and helps us to keep a positive attitude. Good hygiene helps prevent wound infections and avoid stomach illness caused by food spoilage, poor food handling, and waste contamination.
 - Water Water Everywhere. Although water is plentiful throughout the Adirondack Park, no backcountry water source can be guaranteed to be safe. It is essential to carry some water and/or a method to treat water.
 - Feed the Furnace! Food is what gives you the energy to work and keeps you warm. Carry more food than you need, especially on day trips. In wet, cold and windy weather try to eat continuously rather than rely on a few big meals throughout the day.
 - Wash Your Hands! - Most illnesses in the outdoor are due to poor hygiene practices. Three things will drastically minimize your chances of getting sick when traveling outdoors; clean your hands frequently (with soap and water or antiseptic hand cleaners), do not share eating and drinking utensils, and pour snacks rather than letting people reach into your bags of food.
 - The First Aid Kit - Be sure to have a basic First Aid Kit to at least care for blisters and minor injuries. The longer and more remote your excursion the more complete your first aid kit should be.
 - Emergency Care Training – Learn to treat and care for the most common injuries such as blisters and cuts. Acquire emergency care training appropriate to the length and remoteness of your excursion. American Red Cross Community First Aid & Safety is the minimum recommended training.

Principle 5:

Know where you are going, have a map, stay on trails or have the advanced navigational skills necessary for off-trail travel.

- ◆ Know where you are and keep your group together on the trails and waterways. Good travel technique involves good group organization, conserving energy, and safe maneuvering over varied terrain.
 - Stay Together – Getting separated from their group is the number one cause for people getting lost. Don't allow your group to get out of voice range of each other.
 - Lead the Way – Have a leader. The leader takes overall responsibility for the well-being of the group and helps make and communicate decisions along the way.
 - Scout Ahead – Have a person in your group responsible for scouting the way. The “scout” sets the pace, consults with the leader to determine the route and of course is at the front of the line.
 - Bring up the rear - Use a sweep with your group, a person who stays as the last person in line and lets no one behind him or her. If the person feels the group is getting too far apart then tells the scout to slow the group down.
 - Utilize a guide book and map of the area you are traveling
 - Consult with the experts to get an estimate of the distance and approximate time to your destination.
 - Off trail hiking is for the experts. Only hike off trail if you have the skills to do so.
 - Learn to read a hiking map and use a compass so you can have a sense of the direction you are traveling and what the terrain around you should look like.
 - Be observant – keep an eye out for trail markers or the obvious pathway. If you don't see either, stop and figure out where the trail is.
 - Keep a moderate pace so you will conserve energy and not get over tired
 - Exercise extra caution around cliffs, waterfalls and areas prone to avalanche.

Principle 6:

Respect and be aware of wildlife and wildlife habitat for your safety and theirs.

- ◆ Protect wildlife and yourself by not feeding or approaching animals and safely securing your food and food waste away from all wildlife. Take precautions and protect yourself responsibly against insects and vector-borne diseases such as Lyme disease and the West-Nile virus.
 - Observe wildlife from a distance. Remember that you are a visitor to their home.
 - Store food safely and securely from all wildlife. In the Eastern High Peaks Wilderness Area use a bear resistant food canister.
 - Consult the experts on how to store your food in the area you are traveling.
 - Keep garbage and food scraps away from all animals.
 - Keep pets under control
 - Never approach or feed wildlife because:
 - feeding wildlife damages their health
 - approaching or feeding them alters their natural behaviors such as desire to forage and building nests
 - approaching or feeding them exposes them to other predators and dangers
 - Do not disturb nests or collect eggs of migratory birds.
 - Do not use lead fishing tackle – tons of lead fishing tackle are deposited in marine and freshwaters annually, primarily through the loss of sinkers and jigs while fishing. More than 20 species of water birds, including loons, have the potential to accidentally ingest lead fishing tackle while feeding. Ingestion of lead fishing sinkers or jigs results in lead toxicity, and eventually death.

Principle 7:

Travel and camp on durable surfaces to protect the environment

- ◆ Utilize existing trails and established campsites or use special care in camping and hiking in pristine areas.
 - Durable surfaces include established trails, campsites, rock, gravel, and snow
 - Avoid trampling vegetation while traveling in the backcountry
 - Vegetation that is trampled beyond recovery results in soil erosion and undesirable trails
 - Use designated campsites that are marked by a “camp here” disc
 - When a designated campsite is not available, camp at least 200 feet from roads, trails or bodies of water
 - Lean-tos are present at many locations throughout the Forest Preserve but you cannot depend on their availability
 - Focus activity in areas where there is little or no vegetation
 - Take rest breaks on durable surfaces
 - Walk single file in the middle of trail even when wet and muddy
 - Avoid hiking trails during the muddy spring season
 - Disperse use to prevent the creation of new campsites and trails
 - Avoid fragile areas such as alpine summits, wetlands, and shorelines
 - Use sites that are well established and avoid places where impacts are just beginning
 - The 85 acres of remaining alpine vegetation in the Adirondacks contain rare and endangered plants. In these fragile alpine zones of the higher elevations and all areas above tree line, stay on marked paths or on open rock, to avoid trampling vegetation.
 - Contact the experts to learn more about durable surfaces and available campsites

Principle 8:

Dispose of human, food and packaging waste properly

- ◆ Correctly disposing of human waste helps prevent pollution of water sources, the spread of illness such as Giardia, and limits unpleasant aesthetic impacts to other visitors. Human waste should be disposed in outhouses; catholes, or latrines. All food waste and packaging should be packed out.
 - Always use outhouses if available
 - If an outhouse is not available, dispose of human waste and toilet paper by digging a cathole 6-8” deep at least 200 feet from camp, water, or trail and cover with soil.
 - All soaps, including biodegradable soaps, have the potential to be harmful to the environment and should not be used directly in water sources
 - Wash yourself & dishes at least 200 feet from water. Disperse used dishwater over the ground.
 - Carry out what you carry in
 - Repackage food and plan your menu before you leave home in order to minimize trash.
 - Never leave any trash in the fireplace or campsite
 - Take time to leave an area cleaner than when you arrived

Principle 9:

Preserve Natural and Cultural Heritage by leaving cultural and natural objects where you find them.

- ◆ People come to state land to enjoy it in its natural state. Allow others the same sense of discovery by leaving plants, rocks and artifacts as you find them.
 - Do:
 - Leave what you find
 - Identify invasive species and avoid transporting them
 - Carefully clean your water craft to avoid transporting non-native species such as Eurasian milfoil and purple loosestrife
 - Learn to appreciate the unique aspects of the wetlands, shorelines, forests and alpine zones of the Adirondack Park
 - Learn to appreciate the unique historical and cultural aspects of the Adirondack Park
 - Do not:
 - Damage trees and plants
 - Cut live wood of any kind
 - Peel bark off birch trees
 - Alter campsites by digging trenches, moving rocks etc.
 - Disrupt rocks for fire rings

Principle 10:

Minimize campfire impacts to leave the outdoors looking natural

- ◆ Campfires can cause lasting impacts. Only set fires where they are allowed. Employ best campfire practices, by keeping them small, using only downed wood and setting fires in designated campsite fire rings or appropriate “mineral soil” sites.
 - Not all state land units allow campfires
 - Where allowed, small fires should be built in existing fire pits, fire pans, or fireplaces when provided.
 - Learn to build a low-impact mound fire in pristine areas
 - If in doubt don’t have a fire – Natural areas have been degraded by the overuse of fires and demand for firewood.
 - Keep fires small and use only dead and downed wood. Cutting live trees is illegal.
 - Use a camp stove for cooking and a lantern or candles for light
 - Understand the fire hazards (forest fires, root fires) and safety considerations.
 - A fire is not out until you run your hands through the ashes. Extinguish all fires with water and stir until cold to touch.
 - Check with the experts – Be aware of fire bans during periods of high risk.

Principle 11:

Respect other visitors so they may also enjoy the outdoors.

- ◆ Respecting other visitors means avoiding loud noises and voices, keeping pets under control and obeying all NYS rules and regulations. Recognize that all legal forms of recreation have their place and everyone deserves to be treated with courtesy.
 - Avoid loud noises,
 - Obey all NYS rules and regulations (<http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/regs/190.htm>) and the principles of Leave No Trace. (www.lnt.org)
 - Keep pets under control. Pets have an effect on wildlife and others may not feel comfortable around strange animals. Keep pets leashed where required and pick up feces from trail.
 - Be courteous to all outdoor users
 - Respect the privacy of others
 - Leave no trace to be shared with others
 - Recognize that all legal forms of recreation have their place and respect them accordingly
 - Treat other users with respect
 - Many people come to the wilderness to escape hectic lives. Know that cell coverage in the Adirondacks is limited and keep your cell phone use inconspicuous.
 - Minimize visual impact in your campsite by keeping it neat and clean.