



Including the Land Ethic in your Unit's Program



Outdoor Ethics & Conservation Roundtable

January 14, 2026



Agenda

- Welcome and opening
- Safety moment—Keeping Campsites Healthy
- Including the Land Ethic
- Announcements
- Closing
- Open discussion



Paul Schimke, National Capitol Area Council



Pledge

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.





Scout Oath

On my honor I will do my best
to do my duty to God and my country
and to obey the Scout Law;
to help other people at all times;
to keep myself physically strong,
mentally awake, and morally straight.





Scout Law

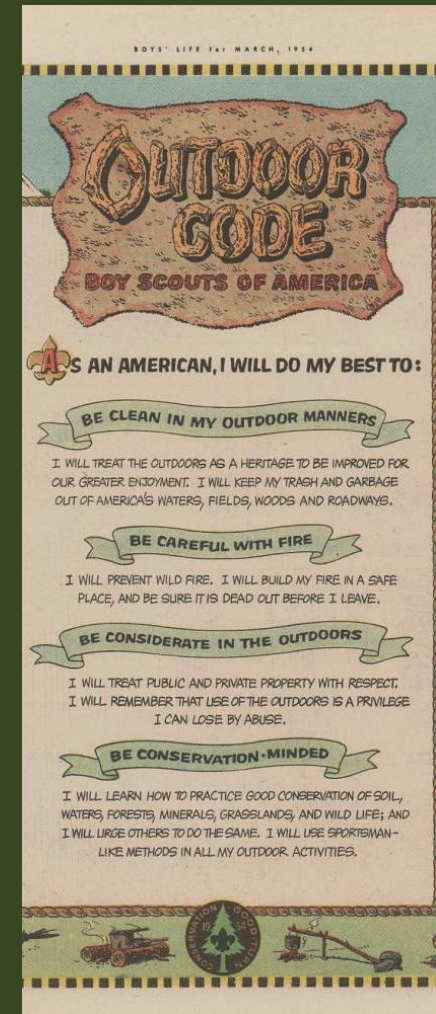
A Scout is:
Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful,
Friendly, Courteous, Kind,
Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty,
Brave, Clean, Reverent.





Outdoor Code

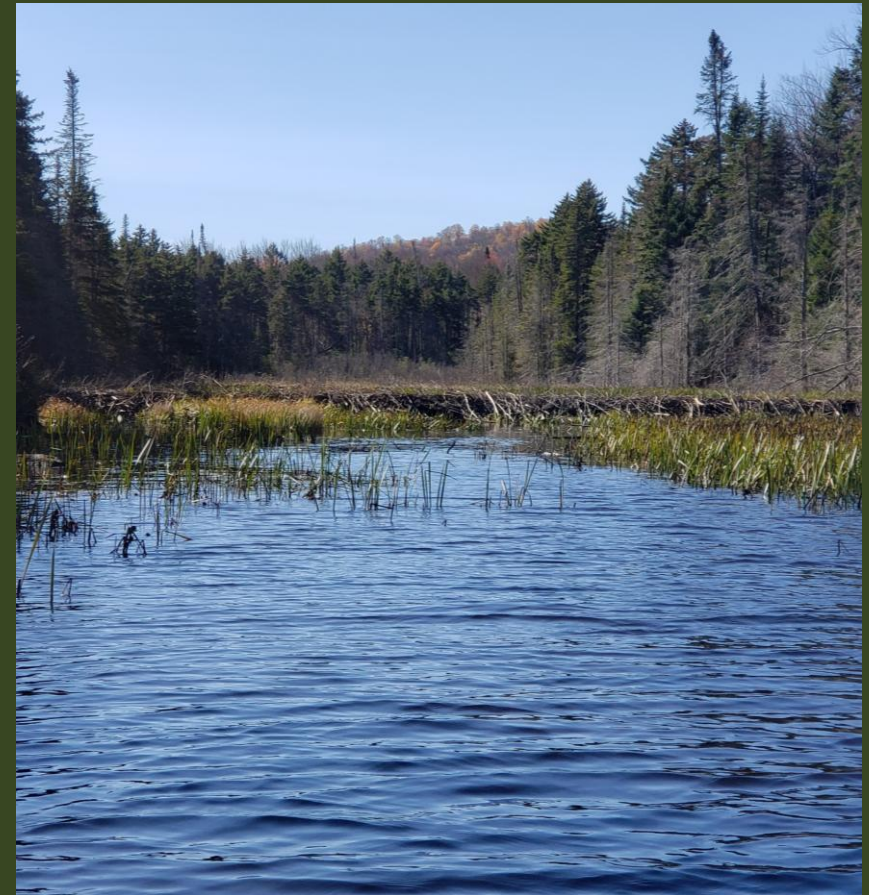
As an American, I will do my best to –
Be clean in my outdoor manners.
Be careful with fire.
Be considerate in the outdoors.
Be conservation minded.





Keeping Campsites Healthy

Michelle Bierstedt, Sioux Council



John Kinney, Twin Rivers Council

Safety Moment

KEEPING CAMPSITES HEALTHY

When Nature Calls...

Properly disposing of human waste is important to avoid polluting water sources, minimizing the chances of spreading disease and maximizing the rate of decomposition.

Check out these tips from the BLM before heading out <https://www.blm.gov/recreation/utah/when-nature-calls>



NPS



I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

with  LEAVE NO TRACE

Principle 3: Dispose of Waste Properly



Nature's calling, now what?!

Going to the bathroom outdoors doesn't have to be scary!

Be prepared with these tips:

Know before you need to go!

Do your research! What facilities are available?
What's the preferred method of disposing of waste?



Build a poop kit.

Hand sanitizer, toilet paper, bag for packing toilet paper & hygiene products out, & a trowel or WAG bag.



WAG Bag Method

Use a WAG bag and pack it out.



Cathole Method

Dig a 6-8 inch deep cathole, 200 feet from water, campsites, or trails. Pack out toilet paper & other hygiene products.



idkt!

go.nps.gov/idkt

Time to Eat...Prepare safe food and water.

Bring safe and healthy foods along on your camping trip. Eating contaminated food and drinking contaminated water can increase the risk of developing certain infectious diseases caused by germs.

Follow these steps to keep your food and water safe:

Pack foods in tight, waterproof bags or containers. Keep them in an insulated cooler.

Wash hands and surfaces often. Use hand sanitizer if water is not available.

Separate raw foods from cooked foods.

Cook foods to proper temperatures (for instance, ground beef should be cooked to an internal temperature of at least 160 degrees).

Chill foods promptly.

Never drink water from a natural source that you haven't purified, even if the water looks clean. Water in a stream, river or lake may look clean, but it can still be filled with bacteria, viruses, and parasites that can result in [waterborne diseases](#), such as [cryptosporidiosis](#) or [giardiasis](#). It is essential that you purify natural water.



Pack out Food Waste

The Basics:

Pack it in, pack it out. Inspect your campsite and rest areas for trash or spilled food. Pack out all trash, leftover food, and litter. Burning trash is never recommended.

To wash yourself or your dishes, carry water 200 feet away from streams or lakes and use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Scatter strained dishwater.

Litter in the outdoors poses a threat to wildlife who may ingest the trash we leave behind. When litter breaks down it leeches chemicals into the surrounding environment, which negatively impacts nearby vegetation and could contaminate water sources. Even trash that is sometimes considered “natural or biodegradable” like banana peels, orange peels, and apple cores can be harmful to wildlife. Trash also creates a negative visitor experience for many of us.

Top Reasons To Pack Out Waste In The Backcountry



1 Protect fragile ecosystems



2 Prevent contamination of waterways



3 Ease burden on land managers

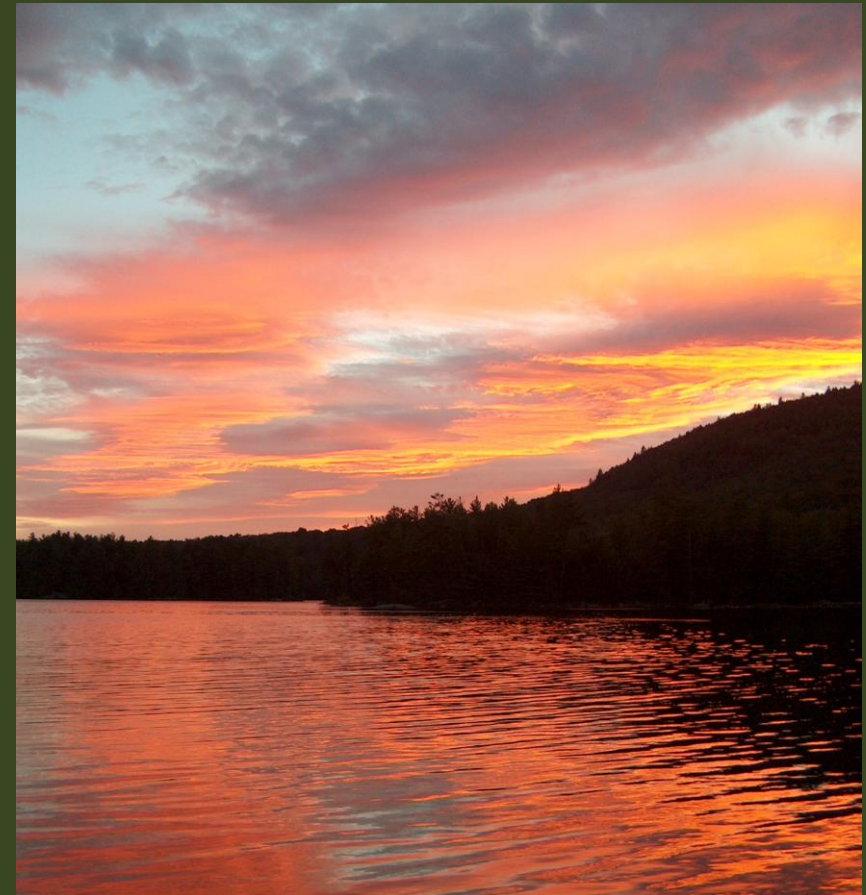


4 Keep public lands open for everyone!



Including the Land Ethic in your Unit's Program

Paul Schimke, National Capitol Area Council



Dave O'Leary, Western Massachusetts Council

Including the Land Ethic in Your Unit's Program

Paul Schimke,
National Capitol Area Council

January 14, 2026



Courtesy of the Aldo Leopold Foundation and
University of Wisconsin-Madison Archives



Agenda

The Land Ethic in Scouting

Knowledge-Attitude-Behavior Framework

How do we teach the Land Ethic in our units?

Examples

Resources

The Land Ethic in Scouting

Scouting America's Mission

The mission of Scouting America is to prepare young people to make **ethical** and **moral choices** over their lifetimes by instilling in them the **values** of the **Scout Oath** and **Scout Law**.

All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts.

Aldo Leopold

The Land Ethic in Scouting

Scout Oath and Law

On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to **obey the Scout Law**; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.

A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent.

The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land.

Aldo Leopold

The Land Ethic in Scouting

The Outdoor Code

As an American, I will do my best to –

Be clean in my outdoor manners.

Be careful with fire.

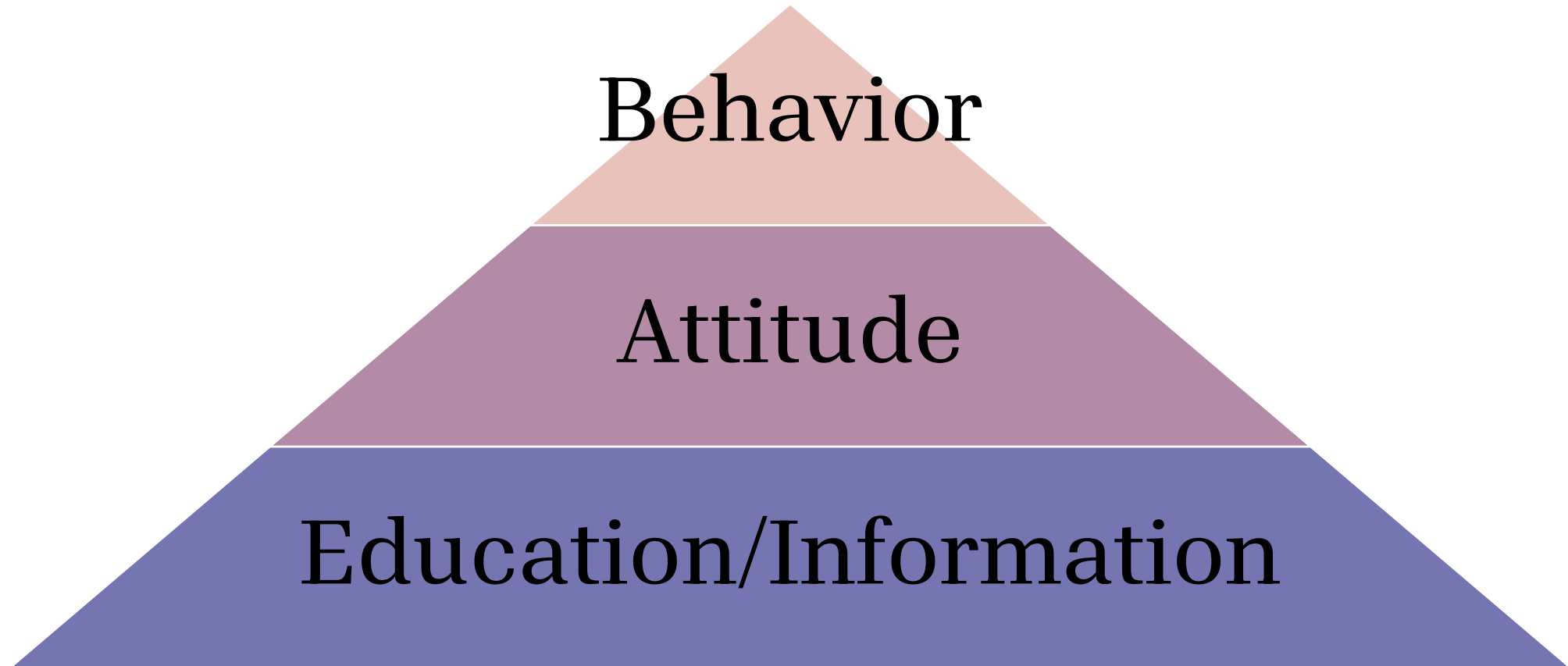
Be considerate in the outdoors.

Be conservation minded.

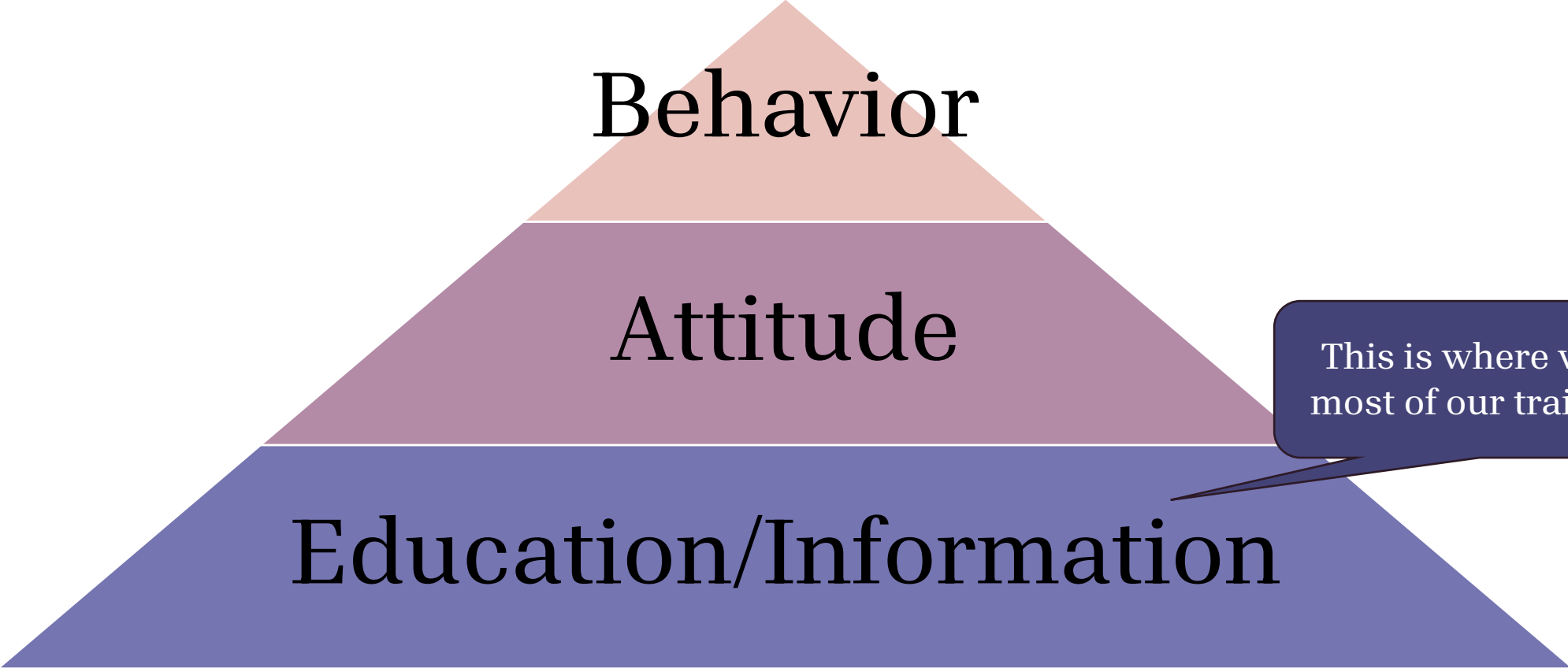
It is inconceivable to me that an ethical relation to land can exist without love, respect, and admiration for the land, and a high regard for its value.

Aldo Leopold

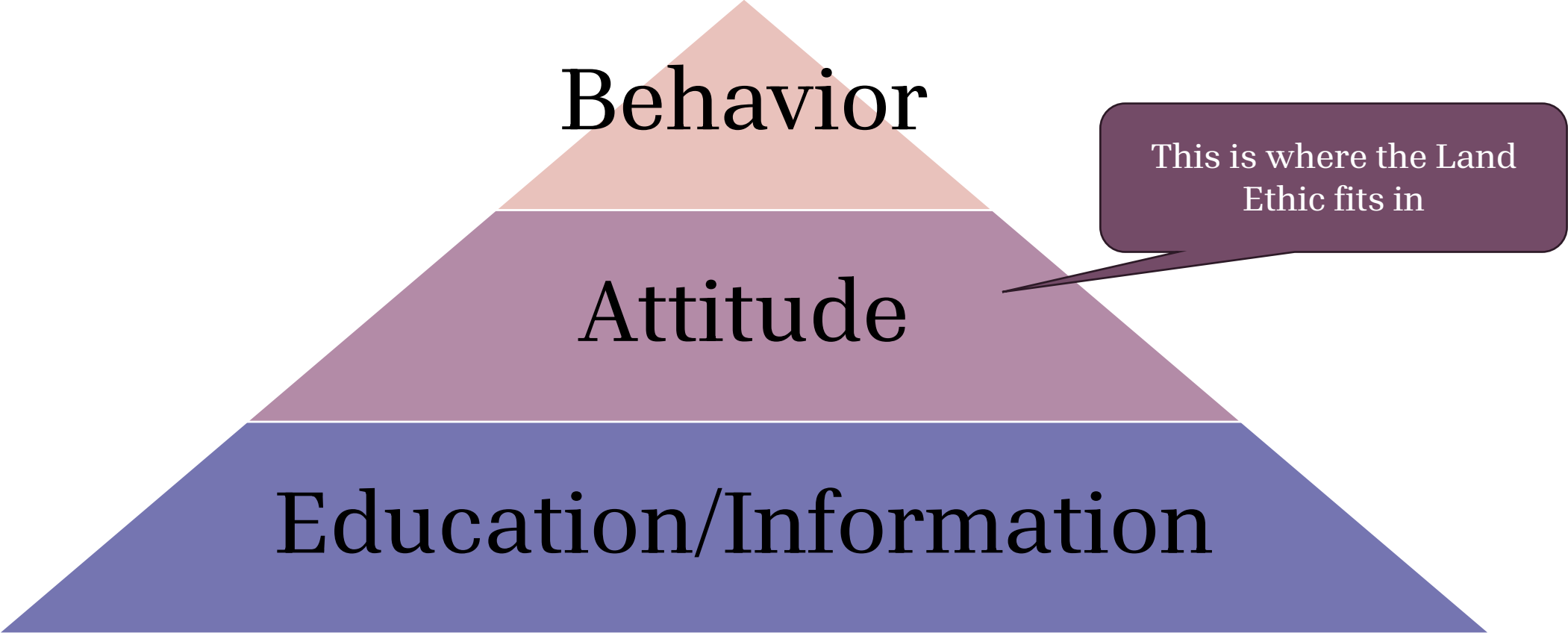
The Knowledge-Attitude-Behavior Framework



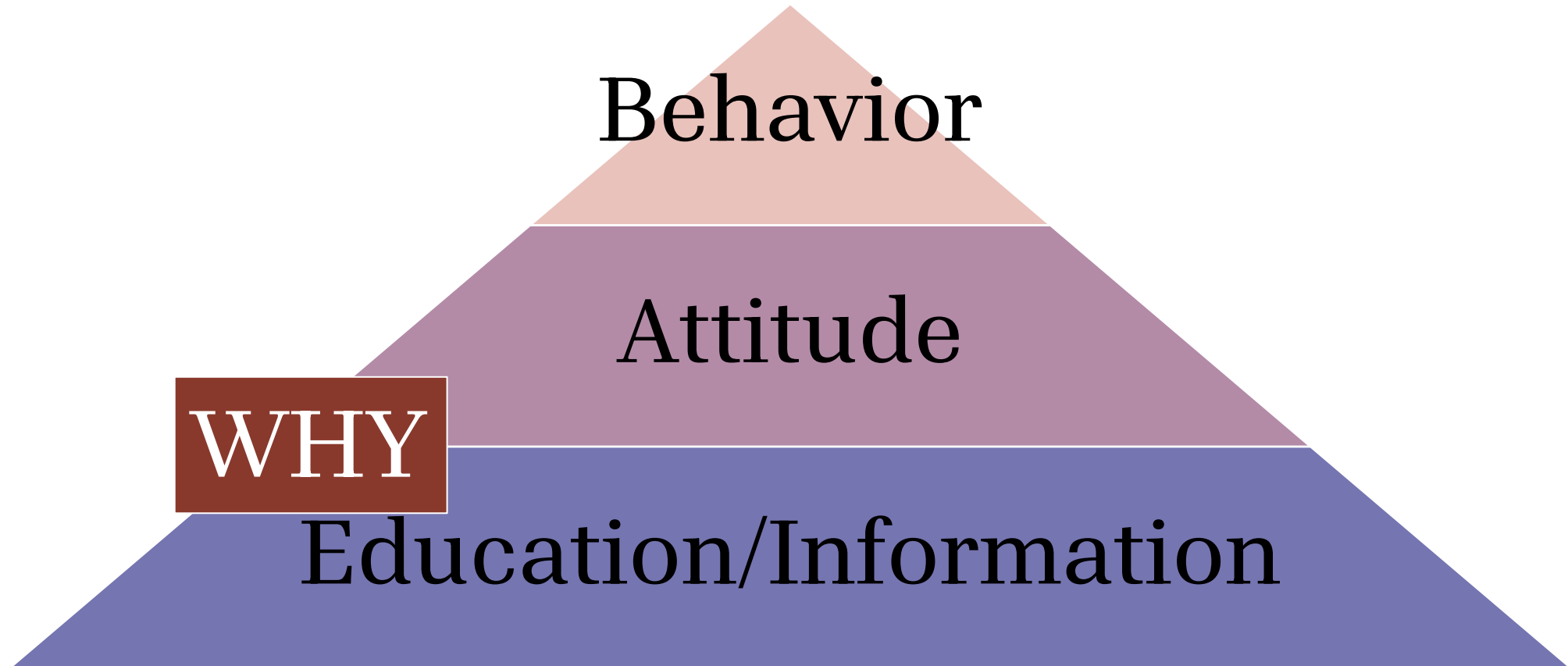
The Knowledge-Attitude-Behavior Framework



The Knowledge-Attitude-Behavior Framework



Why (knowledge) isn't Why (attitude)



How can we “teach” the Land Ethic?

Get outside!



We can be ethical only in relation to something we can see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in.

Aldo Leopold

How can we “teach” the Land Ethic?

Get outside!

Share feelings and values about nature

**A man on foot, on horseback or on a
bicycle will see more, feel more, enjoy
more in one mile than the motorized
tourists can in a hundred miles.**

Edward Abbey

How can we “teach” the Land Ethic?

Get outside!

Share feelings and values about nature

Follow Leopold’s teaching method –

Observation

Participation

Reflection

How can we “teach” the Land Ethic?

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Associate nature with the Scout Law

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Associate nature with the Scout Law

Have conservation projects that address issues
the youth care about

Conservation Project Areas

Human health and well-being

Species conservation

Phenology

Photography/Writing/Art

Heritage/culture

Economics in conservation

How can we “teach” the Land Ethic?

Get outside!

Share feelings and values about nature

Follow Leopold’s teaching method –

Observation

Participation

Reflection

Associate nature with the Scout Law

Have conservation projects that address issues
the youth care about

Join a citizen science effort

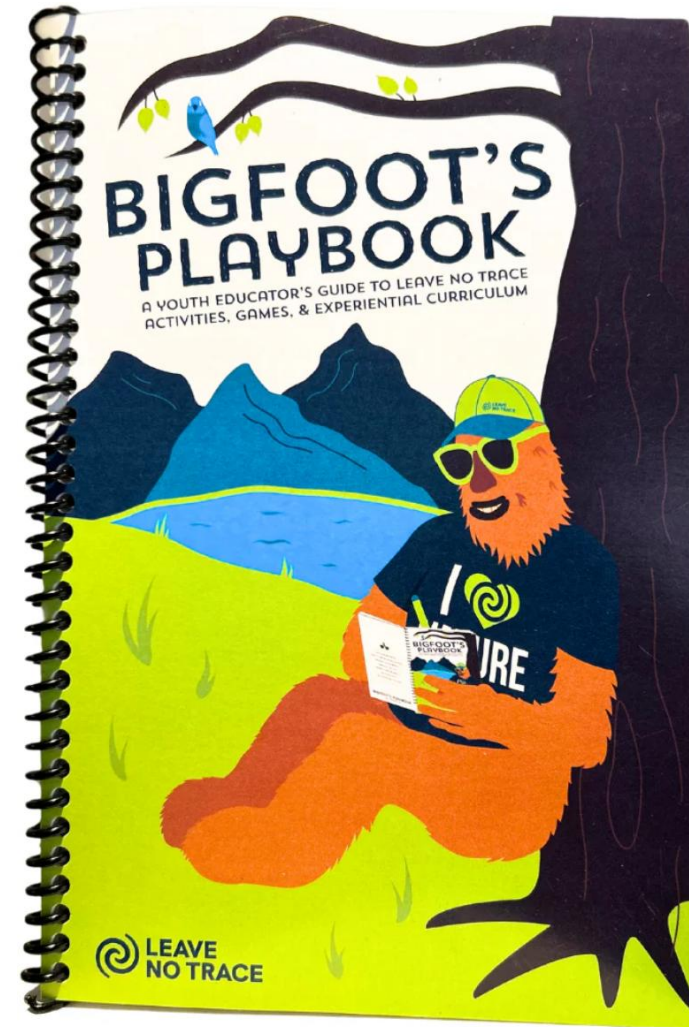
**Better than any argument is to rise at dawn
and pick dew-wet red berries in a cup.**

Wendell Berry

Bigfoot's Playbook

The Moment You Fell In Love With Nature

This activity is all about the Land Ethic!

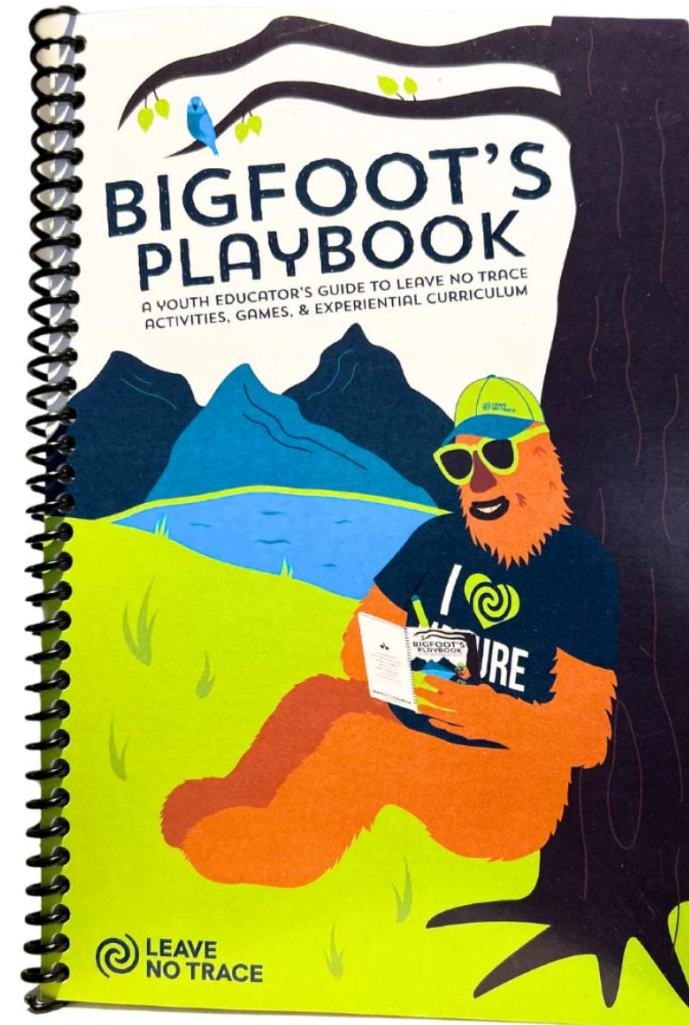


Bigfoot's Playbook

Watch Your Step

Why are these plants and animals important here?

Why are they important for us?

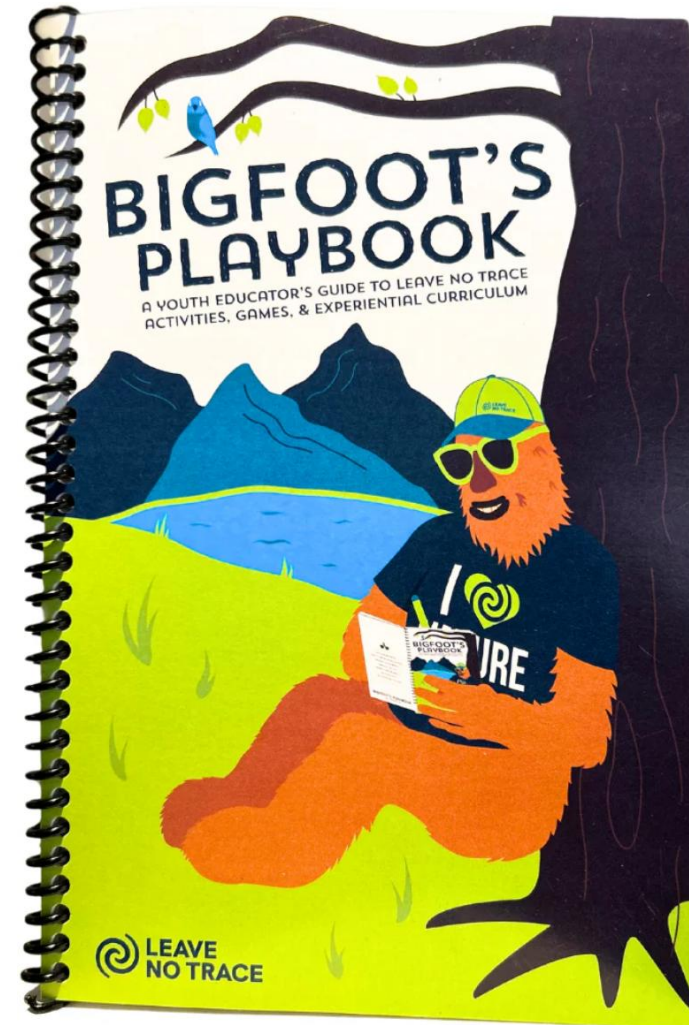


Bigfoot's Playbook

Leaf Collage

How are we helping nature by returning the leaves to where we found them?

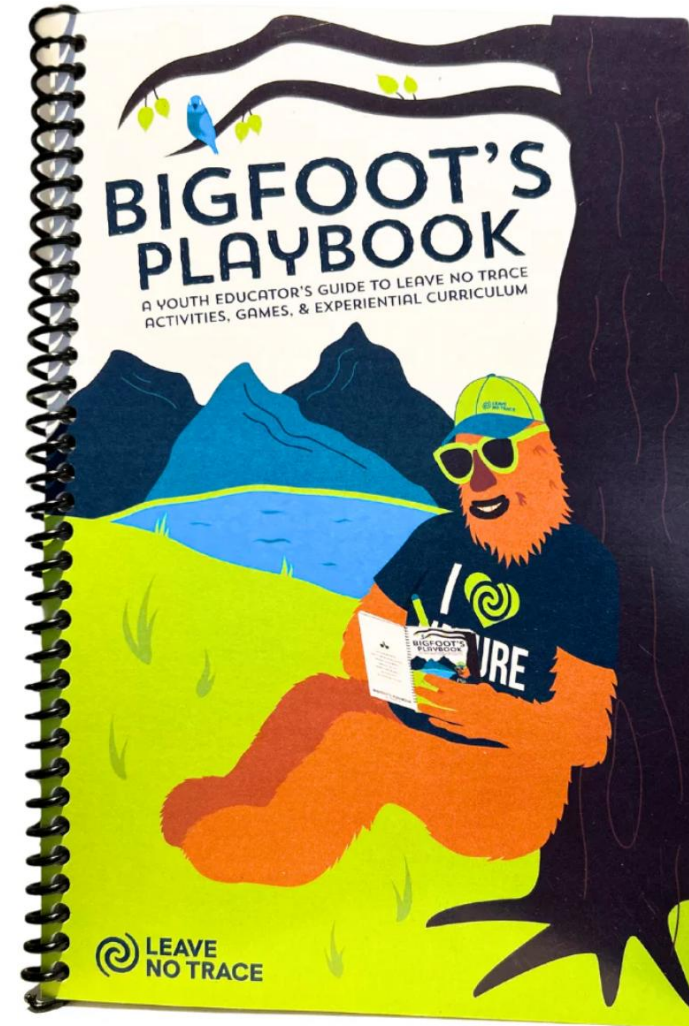
Why is that good for us?



Bigfoot's Playbook

Role Reversal

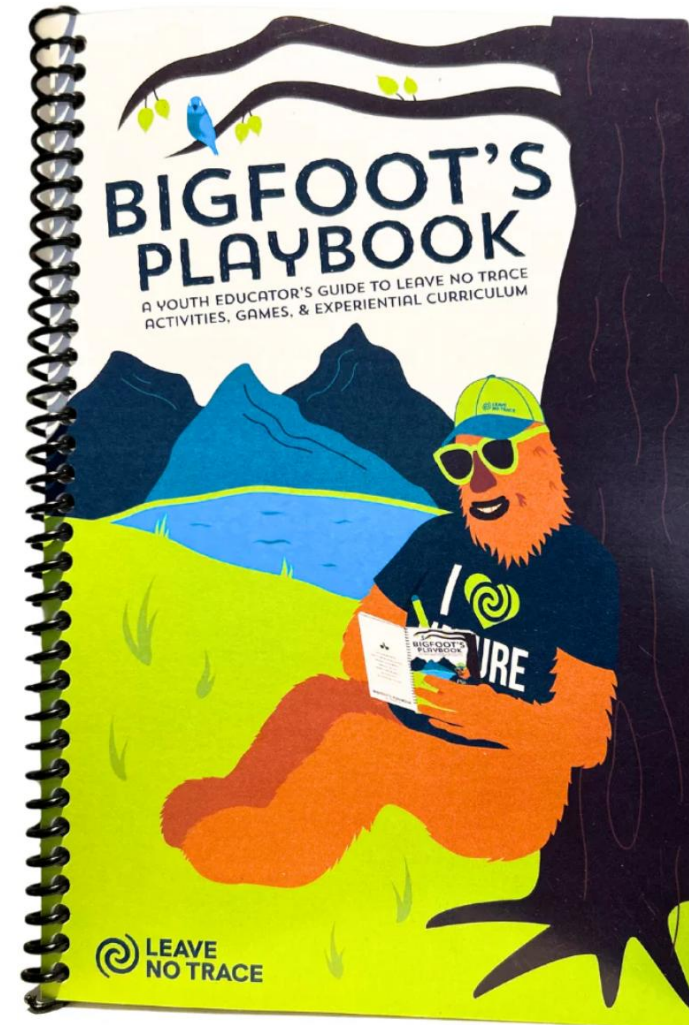
Add a question such as “If (an animal whose role is being played) got mad and left, how would it change the place they left? How would that impact the people who love that place?”



Bigfoot's Playbook

Nest Challenge

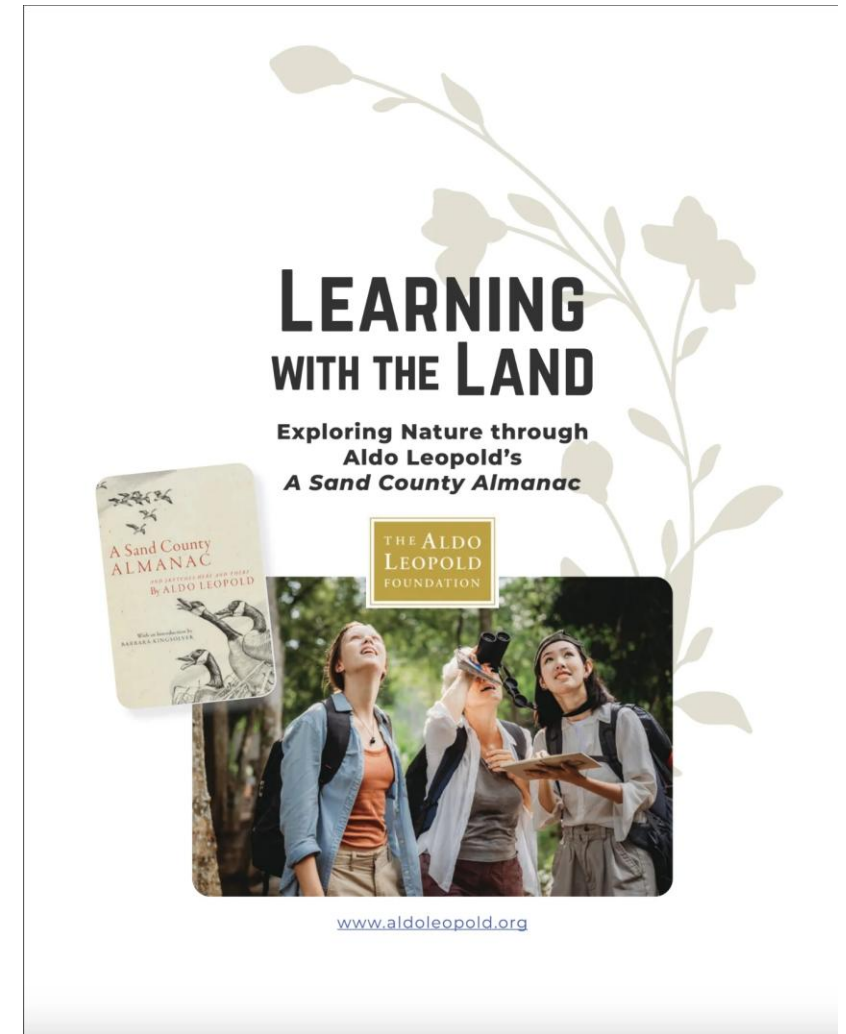
Ask the students “Which materials worked best to make the nests? How can we make sure that the bird/squirrel has what they need to make a safe nest for their babies?”



Learning with the Land

<https://www.aldoleopold.org/products/learning-with-the-land>

| | Adaptations | Birds | Conservation | Creative Arts | Data Collection | Ecosystems | Environmental History | Habitats | Land Use | Phenology | Plants | Values | Wildlife |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------------|----------|----------|-----------|--------|--------|----------|
| Landscape Scene Investigators | | | | | • | • | | • | | | | | • |
| If Tree Rings Could Talk | | | • | | | | • | | | | | | |
| Thinking Like a Scientist | | | | | • | | | | | | | • | |
| Lost Lumber Library | | | • | • | | | | | | | | | |
| Look, See, Discover | | | | | • | | | | | | • | | |
| Mighty Flights | | • | • | | | | | • | | | | | |
| Testing the Waters | | | | | • | • | | • | | | | | • |
| Wake Up Little Birdie | | • | | • | | | | | | • | | | |
| Botany Scavenger Hunt | • | | | | • | | | | | | • | | |

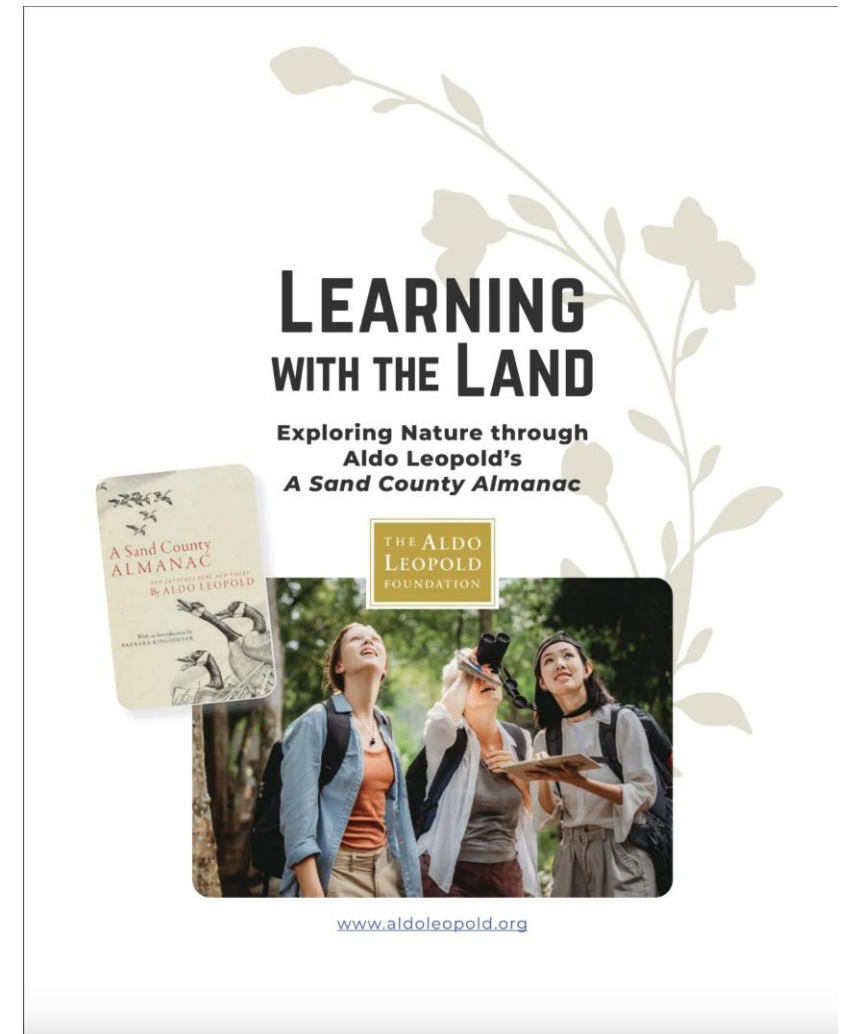


Learning with the Land

Landscape Investigators

Find (or set up) a natural area with evidence of animal activity and interactions.

Have the students work in groups to “read” the landscape and put together a logical story that fits the evidence.



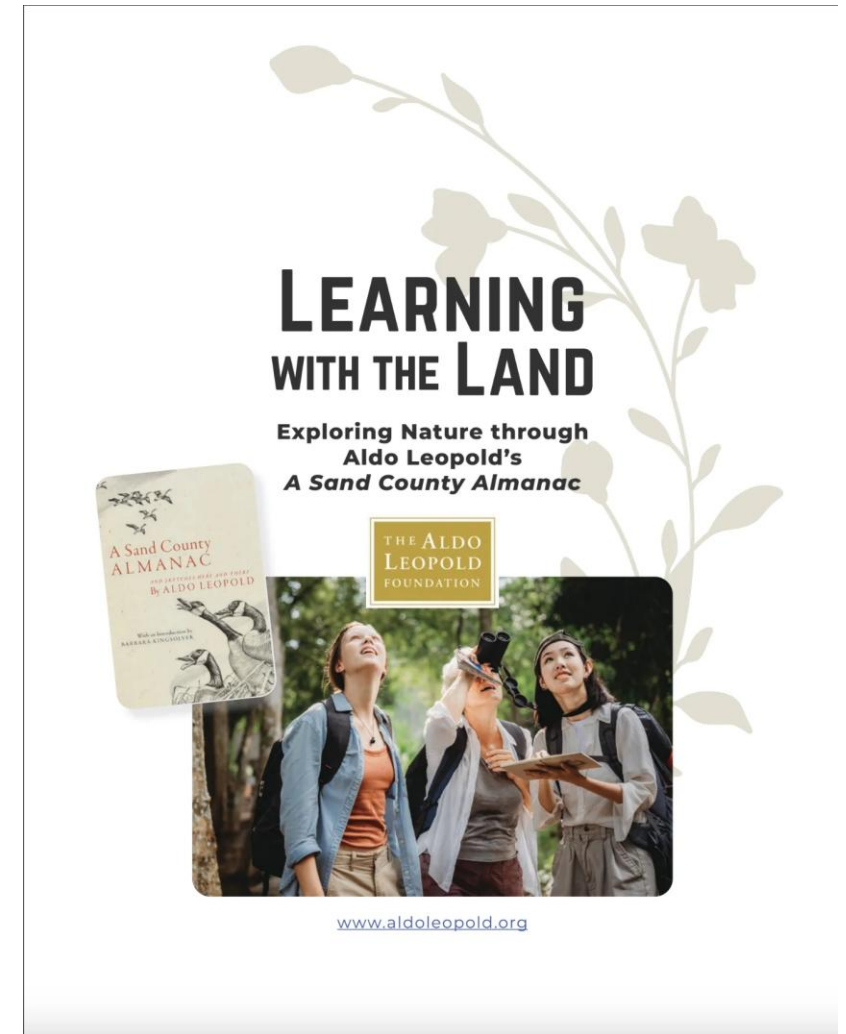
Learning with the Land

What's it Worth?

Find a quiet place for the group to sit in a special place outdoors.

Tell them that someone wants to develop that space.

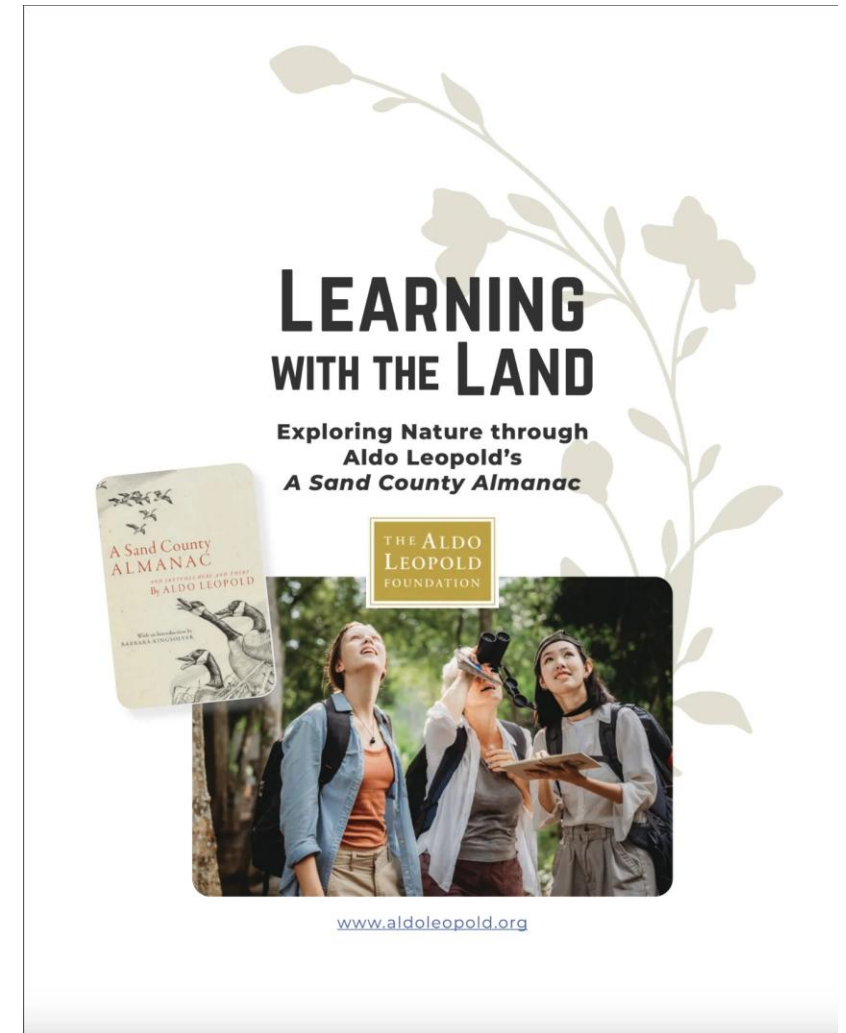
Besides its monetary value, what value does this place have? Can the group agree on what's most valuable?



Learning with the Land

Picture This, Picture That

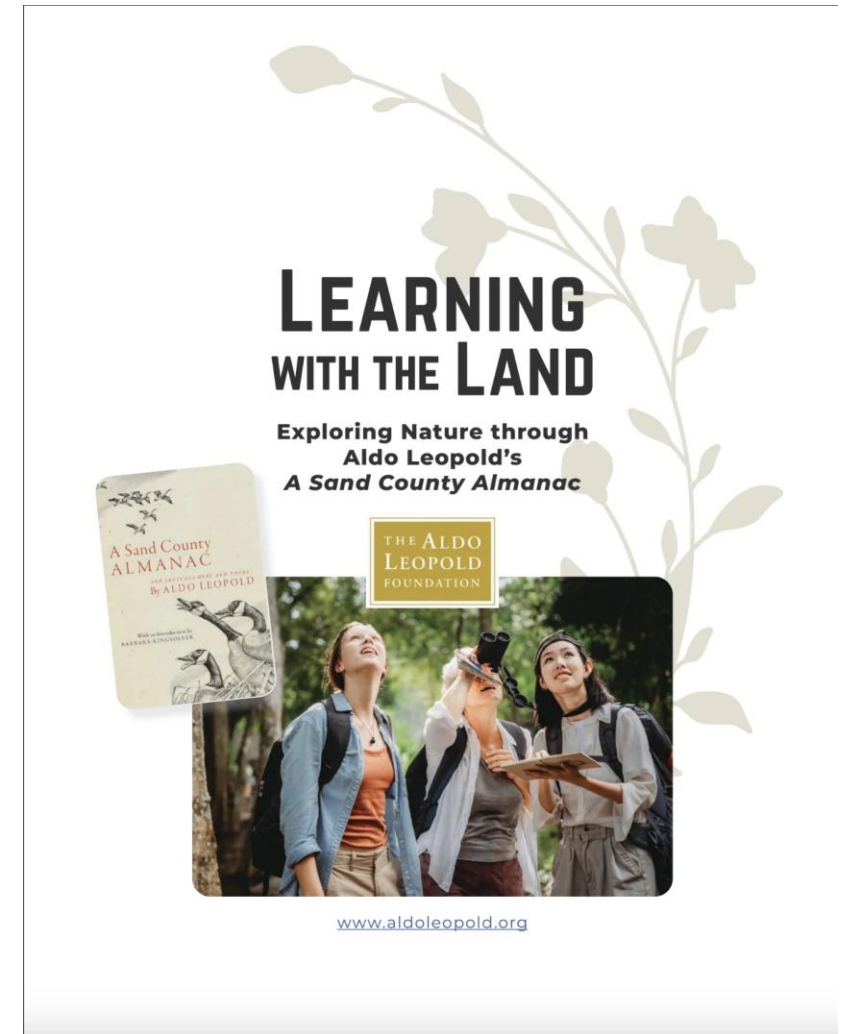
Make an artistic record of your observations using digital photography or make a sketch. Share your work and discuss your work with others. How would this work change if this was a different time of year?



Learning with the Land

Do You Hear what I Hear?

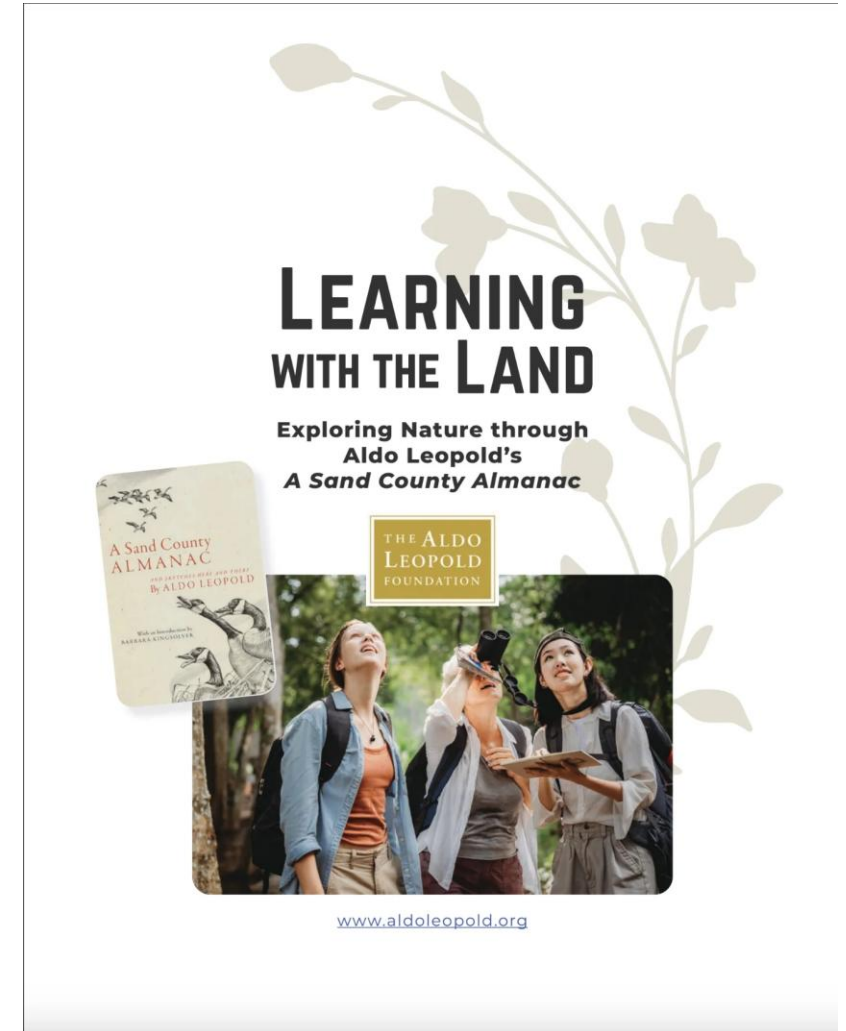
Go to an outdoor area that offers a sense of solitude. Make a sound map of what you hear. After a few minutes, stop and write a one-word reaction to each of the sounds you put on your map.



Learning with the Land

If Tree Rings Could Talk

Find a tree stump or tree cookie with clear annual rings. How old was the tree when it was cut? What can you tell about the history of this place by looking at the tree rings? What events happened in this place over the life of this tree?



Leopold Exploration Cards

<https://www.aldoleopold.org/products/leopold-exploration-cards>

A set of 28 cards for educators to use as prompts in helping people of all ages explore the outdoors. Each card features a different activity based on essays from A Sand County Almanac.

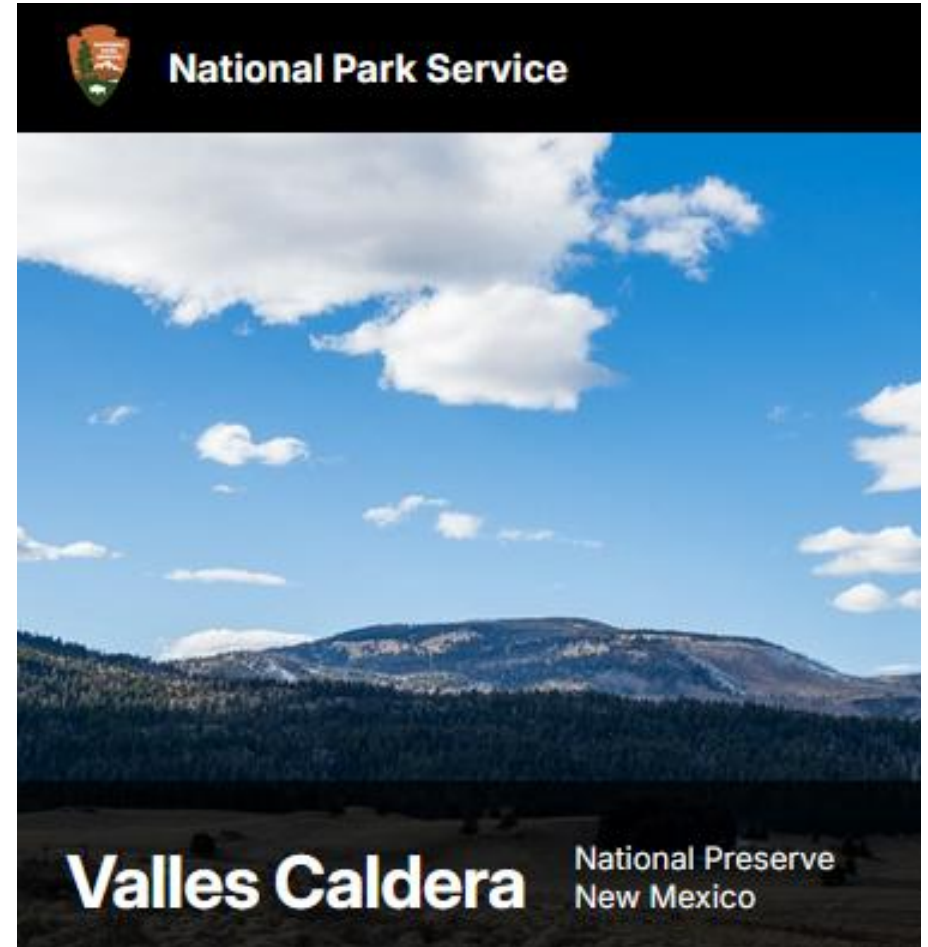


Workshop ideas

Storytelling through Objects

Right Here, Right Now (Observation
Scavenger Hunt)

Mapping a Personal Geography



I would like you to show me, if you can,
where the line can be drawn between an
organism and its environment. The
environment is in you. It's passing
through you. You're breathing it in and
out. You and every other creature.

Wendell Berry

Resources

Aldo Leopold Foundation Learning Hub <https://www.aldoleopold.org/teach-and-learn/learning-hub>

“Nurturing a Land Ethic – In the Footsteps of Aldo Leopold” by Melissa Fu
<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/nurturing-a-land-ethic-in-the-footsteps-of-aldo-leopold-by-melissa-fu.htm>

Teaching Land Stewardship: Respecting Nature and Community
<https://tsfrcbo.org/teaching-land-stewardship-respecting-nature-and-community/>

How do you start a troop tradition? <https://blog.scoutingmagazine.org/2026/01/07/how-do-you-start-a-troop-tradition/>

Resources

Aldo Leopold Foundation – The Land Ethic <https://www.aldoleopold.org/about/the-land-ethic>

Selective Attention Test video <https://youtu.be/vJG698U2Mvo>

How to Read Nature: Awaken Your Senses to the Outdoors You've Never Noticed by Tristan Gooley

The Lost Art of Reading Nature's Signs by Tristan Gooley



Summary

We teach the Land Ethic just as we teach, and as part of teaching, the other ethics we teach our youth.

Most of us are already doing that well.

All of us can do it better.



Thank you

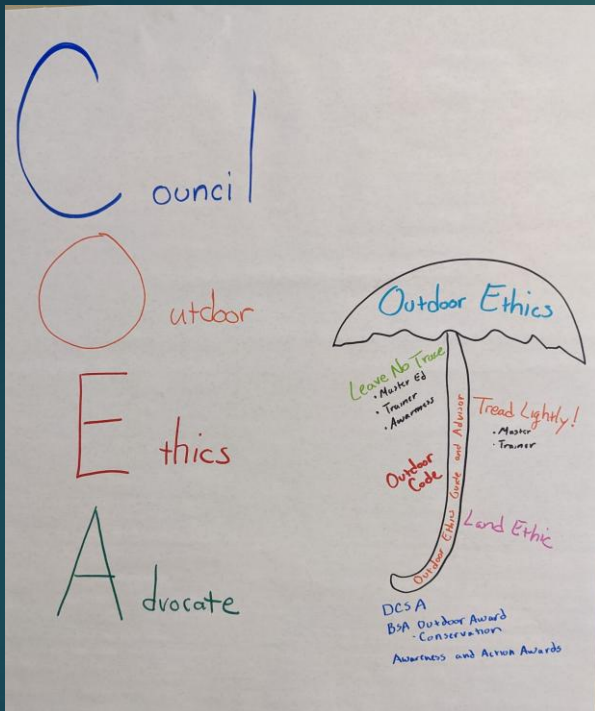
Paul Schimke | paul@schimke.org



Announcements



EvelynAnn Bruno, National Capitol Area Council



VIRTUAL TRAINING COURSE

JAN 24 & JAN 31, 2026

9:30-2:30 CENTRAL TIME, BOTH DAYS

REGISTRATION: SEND YOUR NAME, SCOUTING AMERICA ID #,
COUNCIL AND UNIT NUMBER TO MICHELLE BIERSTEDT –
MBIERSTEDT831@GMAIL.COM

Why Attend?

57

The council outdoor ethics advocate is a volunteer position that coordinates the local council's Leave No Trace training and similar outdoor ethics programs for Scouting America youth and adult members.

This training is meant to enrich the Scouting experience for the members, help reduce our impact on the land consistent with Scouting's historic message, and help ensure continuing access to public lands for Scouting purposes.

This training will give the Council Outdoor Ethics Advocate tools to coordinate with the council's Training, Camping, Conservation, and/or Program committees. Where appropriate, the council outdoor ethics advocate may also serve on one or more of these committees.

Prior training as a Leave No Trace Level 2 or Level 1 Instructor is preferred, but it is not required.



2027 Outdoor Ethics and Conservation Conference is Coming to Sea Base.



February 15 - 21, 2027



Our past conferences have been tied to the land, and now it's time to embrace Scouting America's aquatic adventure side, so we are headed to Sea Base for our next conference! Join us for a week of outdoor ethics and conservation education focused on both land and aquatic activities, hands-on field experiences, and Sea Base adventure opportunities. This event includes pre-conference training courses, sessions led by subject-matter experts, off-site environmental tours and much more!

Main Conference Dates: February 18 (afternoon) - February 21

Pre-Conference Dates: February 15 - February 18 (morning)

While on property, you will be staying in spacious bunkhouses with plenty of ground-level bunks to park your flip flops under. There are two cost options to choose from which include your housing and all meals while on site.

Full Week (February 15 - 21) \$325

The full-week option includes a pre-conference course or optional Sea Base activity of your choice and the main conference, but excludes any additional course/adventure fees that may apply.

Main Conference Only (February 18 - 21) \$230

Getting there is easy! Sea Base is served by airports in Miami, Fort Lauderdale or Key West. Shuttle service is available to and from these airports for a fee of \$55 each way if you don't want to rent a car.

Our planning team is working to bring our members some really great experiences and we hope to see you there! Stay tuned for more information as we finalize our plans.

* Costs are not final yet.

CONSERVATION AT THE SUMMIT



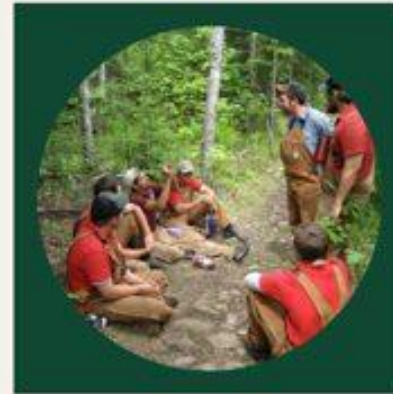
SCOUTING AMERICA

SCOUT CONSERVATION TRAINING

Come ready to gain knowledge, work outside, and become equipped to bring what you learned back home!

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Classroom training on concepts
- Hands-on application of concepts in the outdoors
- Recreation day at the Summit
- Registration for the week is \$350



SUNDAY MAY 31- SATURDAY JUNE 6, 2026

THE SUMMIT BECHTEL FAMILY NATIONAL SCOUT RESERVE
2550 JACK FURST DRIVE GLEN JEAN, WV 25846

JOIN US NOW! REGISTER AT [SUMMITBSA.ORG/TRAINING](https://summitbsa.org/training)



Leave No Trace Level 2 Instructor Courses

| Dates | Council | Camp | Course Info | Field Experience |
|-------------|------------------|---|---|------------------|
| 2026 | | | | |
| May 16-22 | National Council | <u>Summit Bechtel Reserve</u> | <u>Info/Registration</u> | Non-Trek |
| August 9-14 | National Council | <u>Northern Tier High Adventure Base, Ely, MN</u> | <u>Flyer</u> <u>Info/Registration</u> Contact: <u>Mark Hammer</u> | Canoeing |
| Sept 25-30 | National Council | <u>Philmont Scout Ranch, Cimarron, New Mexico</u> | <u>Information/Registration</u> | Backpacking |
| Oct 18-23 | National Council | <u>Summit Bechtel Reserve</u> | <u>Info/Registration</u> | Non-Trek |



SCHOLARSHIPS Available



Partial course scholarships are available for scouters needing financial assistance in order to attend a Scouting America Leave No Trace Level 2 Instructor Course. Please see our [Dan Howells Scholarship](#) webpage for more information.

The Dan Howells Memorial Fund was established to honor the memory of this passionate leader and his lifelong commitment to Leave No Trace and Scouting.

Thanks to the Howells' family and Leave No Trace for creating this wonderful way for us to honor Dan's legacy.

Benefits for Scouting Units



Advancement Opportunities

Scouting for Clean Waterways is now an **activity card** for each of the “**Champions for Nature**” adventures in all ranks in Cub Scouting.

Check them out!

<https://www.scouting.org/cub-scout-activities/clean-waterways-lion/>

<https://www.scouting.org/cub-scout-activities/clean-waterways-tiger/>

<https://www.scouting.org/cub-scout-activities/clean-waterways-wolf/>

<https://www.scouting.org/cub-scout-activities/clean-waterways-bear/>

<https://www.scouting.org/cub-scout-activities/clean-waterways-webelos/>

<https://www.scouting.org/cub-scout-activities/clean-waterways-aol/>



Scouting for Clean Waterways

- Sign up online to receive updates
- <https://www.scouting.org/outdoor-programs/scouting-clean-waterways>





Please send in your photos of Outdoor Ethics education, Conservation projects, or great nature photos you've taken!

roundtable@scouting-oec.org



Paul Schimke, National Capitol Area Council



Your feedback is a gift!
Was this roundtable helpful?
What would you like to see
covered in future roundtables?

roundtable@scouting-oec.org

Feedback !?



Recordings of Outdoor Ethics & Conservation roundtables are posted at <https://scouting-oec.org/roundtable>



Scouting America Outdoor Ethics & Conservation Virtual Roundtables

● Past Roundtable Resource Links - [see below](#)



January Thaw

“The hibernating skunk, curled up in his deep den, uncurls himself and ventures forth to prowl the wet world dragging his belly in the snow.”

Aldo Leopold, “January” from A Sand County Almanac



Paul Schimke, National Capitol Area Council



Thank you for attending.
See you next month!

Citizen Science for Clean
Water



EvelynAnn Bruno, National Capitol Area Council