



United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service



PACIFIC SOUTHWEST REGION

Restoring, Enhancing and Sustaining Forests in California, Hawaii and the Pacific Islands

Sierra National Forest

Minimize Your Impact Bass Lake Ranger District

WELCOME

Help support a land ethic recognizing responsibility to natural resources - minimum impact camping. Camping practices of yesteryear need to be substituted with a land ethic that minimizes human impact on the land. As a temporary visitor to the forest, you need to leave few imprints on the land. The forces of nature need to be allowed to dominate the landscape.

Please minimize your impact by practicing good backcountry conduct.

BE PREPARED

When visiting the forest, come prepared with needed food, water, clothing and emergency gear. Changes in weather can be sudden, making roads wet and muddy. Most important: *let someone know where you are going and your expected return.* Do not rely on cell phones as in many forest locations connections can not be accessed. Check with local Ranger Stations or visitor centers for the current information, weather and road conditions and needed permits

SOLITUDE AND CAMPSITE SELECTION

The true backcountry enthusiast respects solitude - freedom from the intrusion of urban-type sights, sounds and odors. Choose a campsite that retains this solitude for yourself and others. Select a campsite at least 100 feet from lakes and streams.

This helps prevent water contamination and loss of vegetation and soil along the banks. Avoid camping in meadows or on lakeshores and streambanks keeping these areas available for wildlife to feed and drink.

As a general rule, the best campsites are away from water on higher ground. These sites are drier, warmer and less popular with mosquitoes.

Avoid detracting from the natural setting by not doing brushing, leveling or trenching at your campsite. Avoid destruction, defacement or carving on trees or shrubs. Rearranging rocks and twigs to accommodate your sleeping bag or tent is allowable but remove all traces of your presence before leaving.

CAMPFIRES

Use of camp stoves, barbecues, hibachis or campfire rings requires a valid campfire permit and strict adherence to current fire restrictions. Use of gas stoves is encouraged as they are more convenient and impact the environment less than wood fires. If you build a fire, please conserve firewood by building small fires. In higher elevations, firewood is disappearing faster than it is naturally created. Do not break off limbs or branches from any trees.

Fire rings, blackened rocks and trash disfigure the natural environment. If needed, use one small established fire ring for cooking and warmth. Please do not build new fire rings where one is available. Where none exists, build the smallest size possible, and return the rocks, blackened side down, to their natural positions and remove and spread around **cold** ashes before departing.

Make sure your fire is completely out. When extinguishing your campfire, pour water over the coals and ashes and then stir with a shovel or stick and **feel the ashes with your hands** to be sure the fire is out.



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KEEP A CLEAN CAMP

Keeping a clean camp is important. Litter and food scraps are unsightly and create an artificial food source and mess that can alter the behavior and distribution of many wildlife species. Bears and other animals can smell a camp littered with food wrappings or scraps, dirty plates, dishes, cups, cans, bottles, and utensils. Place all trash in sealed plastic bags and place away from camper, tents and vehicles. Hang the trash from a tall tree limb out of easy reach of a bear.

Pack-out and take home cans, bottles, metal foil, tampons, disposable diapers and unused food. Avoid burning or burying trash or scattering organic wastes.

Avoid setting up camp, sleeping by or stopping in or around rodent burrows. Rodent fleas carry sickness including the plague.

DRINKING WATER

If you do not bring all of your own drinking water, know that forest water sources are not reliable and should not be used without treating with a filter, boiling or purifying tablets.

An intestinal disorder called Giardiasis (gee-ar-dye-a-sis) is contracted from untreated "natural" water. Such waters may be clear, cold, and free-running and look, smell, and taste good. Giardiasis is caused by a microscopic organism, *Giardia lamblia*, with the cystic form found in mountain streams and lakes.

The best treatment of water is by boiling for a minimum of one minute, three to five minutes at higher elevations. Chemical disinfectants such as iodine or chlorine tablets or drops are not reliable in killing giardia. In an emergency where chemical disinfectants are the only possible method, filter the water first. Iodine is more effective than chlorine and let the water stand for an hour before ingesting.

BODY WASTES

To dispose of human waste, select a screened spot at least 150 feet from any trail, camp, lake or

stream. Dig a hole six to ten inches deep, trying to keep the soil together. After use, fill the hole with loose soil, and tamp the soil in place. Do not establish latrine sites as they place a burden on the biological decomposers. It usually takes years before all traces completely disappear.

For further information please contact:

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