

## THE OUTDOOR CODE

To define outdoor ethics a little better, the BSA created the Outdoor Code. That was back in 1948, when Americans were beginning to venture farther and farther into the wilderness—not to find new places to settle but to enjoy their natural environment.



### 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.

## DECODING THE OUTDOOR CODE

The Outdoor Code is something you should memorize, just as you have memorized the Scout Oath. More importantly, you should put its principles to work so you can play a role in preserving America's great outdoor heritage.

**As an American, I will do my best.** *I have a duty as an American and a Scout to care for the environment to the best of my ability.* As more and more people use outdoor areas, Scouts should set a good example of how to care for the land.

**Be clean in my outdoor manners.** *I will treat the outdoors as a heritage. I will take care of it for myself and others. I will keep my trash out of lakes, streams, fields, woods, and roadways.* Make a habit of packing out any garbage you create or come across during your travels in the outdoors, and protect waterways by camping at least 200 feet (75 steps) away from the shore. Each of these small steps can add up to really reduce our impact on the environment.

**Be careful with fire.** *I will prevent wildfire. I will build my fires only when and where they are permitted and appropriate. When I have finished using a fire, I will make sure it is cold out. I will leave a clean fire ring or remove all evidence of my fire.* Be sure that you understand how to use campfires and camp stoves well before setting out on a trip. Follow all safety precautions to the letter.

**Be considerate in the outdoors.** *I will treat the land and other land users with respect. I will follow the principles of outdoor ethics for all outdoor activities.* Being considerate in the outdoors includes such things as keeping your voice down on the trail, avoiding brightly colored clothing, staying on established trails, and crossing private land only with permission.



**Be conservation-minded.** *I will learn about and practice good conservation of soil, waters, forests, minerals, grasslands, wildlife, and energy. I will urge others to do the same.* Keep conservation in mind all the time, and you will make decisions that are good for the environment. Sharing information is one of the best ways to learn, so discuss with your fellow Scouts how conservation guides your decisions.

## BSA OUTDOOR ETHICS

In the early 1990s, the U.S. Forest Service formalized its no-trace policy as the principles of Leave No Trace. Today, the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics helps educate the public through extensive conservation and outreach programs. Scouting is proud to be a partner in this ongoing effort.

More recently, Scouting has also embraced the principles of Tread Lightly!, which were developed by the U.S. Forest Service to guide a wider array of outdoor activities. Today, BSA Outdoor Ethics encompasses Leave No Trace, Tread Lightly!, and the Outdoor Code, which is just as important today as it was back in 1948.

### Sustainability and the Summit

The Summit Bechtel Reserve in West Virginia is a good example of how campers and the environment can coexist. The 10,600-acre camp was built on reclaimed mine land, and 10 percent of the land has been set aside as a nature preserve to trap carbon and protect the headwaters of the nearby New River.



Shower houses at the Summit are built of locally harvested lumber.

Two years before the Summit opened in 2013, 1,400 Order of the Arrow members came together to remove invasive species and build the Arrowhead Trail at the adjacent New River Gorge National River. Through the OA Summit Experience, Arrowmen continue to do similar trail work each summer.

**Summit**  
BECHTEL RESERVE™ 

## LEAVE NO TRACE

Scouting's adventures cover a wide range of activities, from spending weekends at public campgrounds and BSA council camps to backpacking many miles through forests, deserts, and mountains.