

Adirondack Mountain Club's Trailhead Stewardship Program

2021 Manual

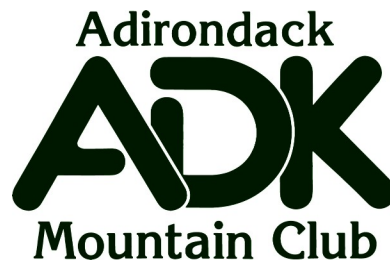


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ADK's Trailhead Stewardship Program manual is a valuable resource to this program. Copies can be found at the Trailhead Steward campsite and the High Peaks Information Center (HPIC).

ADK Background Information

Who Are We?

ADK (Adirondack Mountain Club) works to protect New York's wild lands and waters by promoting responsible outdoor recreation and building a statewide constituency of land stewardship advocates.

ADK is the only nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and advocating for New York State's wild lands and waters while also teaching people how to enjoy natural places responsibly. Since 1922, the organization has offered people opportunities to stay and play in as well as protect, discover, and explore the outdoors. For more information on membership or making a difference, head to www.adk.org or follow ADK on Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter.

The Adirondack Mountain Club was founded in 1922 and is a member driven and directed organization committed to public service and stewardship. The ADK Trailhead Stewardship Program was created in 2017 (formerly known as the HPIC Host Program) in response to an increasing number of visitors recreating from the Heart Lake Program Center. On average in July & August there are approximately 30,000 registered hikers at Heart Lake Program Center trail heads. Recent trends show that weekends in September and October are busier than summer days.

Mission:

Adirondack Mountain Club's Trailhead Stewardship Program is dedicated to educating and instilling an outdoor ethic in New York State recreationists through frontcountry outreach.

Who is an ADK Trailhead Steward?

An ADK Trailhead Steward is an educator and dedicated volunteer professional who enjoys engaging with the public to share their knowledge and assist visitors in having a safe and enjoyable outdoor experience. Trailhead Stewards must be at least 21 years of age and a current member of ADK. They will act as an onsite ambassador for ADK and share ADK's mission with the public, encouraging membership and involvement. These individuals must be comfortable working in a fast paced environment sometimes in extreme weather conditions. Should have thorough knowledge of ADK & its facilities, common hiking trails, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) regulations and Leave No Trace outdoor skills and ethics.

ADK's Trailhead Stewardship Program offers a service that allows you to spend a week greeting and engaging with our visitors about responsible recreation while sharing knowledge of ADK. The program offers a unique opportunity to educate visitors to The Heart Lake Program Center to ensure a safe and enjoyable outdoor experience.

Personal Safety and Physical Requirements

The importance of personal safety cannot be overstated. If there is a situation you are uncomfortable with when interacting with visitors, do not be afraid to remove yourself from the situation. Then please tell the HPIC Manager or other HPIC staff about the situation immediately. They will assist you in filling out an incident report form. It is also imperative that you are prepared with the proper equipment to handle the unpredictable and often extreme weather conditions in the Adirondacks. These conditions may include extreme, heat, cold, precipitation and insects. Please plan accordingly. This volunteer opportunity is very physically demanding. You will be on your feet the entire time and walking 2-3 miles a day in the HPIC Parking Lots. It can be a very intense and fast paced environment.

Hosts Benefits:

- A campsite for two people with a platform tent, picnic table, fireplace, fire wood, picnic shelter cover and sleeping cots, and an electric outlet
- Use of certain specific ADK amenities, when available, such as canoes and kayaks
- Three meals per day provided at the Adirondack Loj (Please notify us of any dietary restrictions or food allergies prior to your arrival)
- During your stay as host a twenty-five percent (25%) discount on all items sold at the HPIC store and Hungry Hiker food stand
- An information package that includes: an ADK volunteer polo shirt, vest with name badge, campground and property maps, list of popular hikes in the area and DEC rules and regulations

Emergency Protocols

If you are witness to any property damage or a visitor approaches you to notify of an overdue, missing or injured hiker please notify an HPIC staff member immediately. In the case of an overdue, missing or injured hiker and there is DEC personnel on property (a Forest Ranger or Assistant Forest Ranger) you can bring the reporting party to them directly. Otherwise please bring the reporting party into the HPIC to fill out an Incident Report Form with an HPIC staff member. ADK is not a search and rescue organization and will leave all emergency response to DEC personnel.

ADK's Trailhead Stewardship Program Schedule

Upon your arrival:

On your scheduled arrival date please check in at the HPIC with Bobby Clark (HPIC Manager) or Mary Dougherty (HPIC Assistant Manager). Please do not arrive earlier than 2pm to allow previous steward a chance to pack up. At this time we will provide an additional overview of stewarding responsibilities/schedule and meal schedule as well as answer any additional questions you might have and introduce you to the HPIC staff. We would be happy to give you another brief property tour and help you get settled in!

Daily Schedule

Please check-in every morning at the HPIC: 6:00am (weekends) and 6:30am (weekdays) to get the radio, weather report and related information. You are welcome to eat leftovers from the staff fridge at the Loj before your shift or can coordinate a hot breakfast break with HPIC staff between 7-8am.

Throughout the morning you will park cars and count spots to help the Parking Booth staff fill the lots to capacity. If any spaces open up please communicate as quickly and specifically as possible with Parking Booth staff.

Though your help managing the parking lots is very valuable to ADK and this program, your role as an outdoor educator is even more so. Please allow folks a few minutes after parking before approaching them but please attempt to interact with as many visitors as possible. Please approach visitors with a smile and a positive attitude while communicating by using the Authority of the Resource technique (see hand outs). Despite trying to reach as many visitors with this outreach it is important to have quality educational interactions with them. This will prove challenging as average interaction time is less than two and a half minutes. We are striving to have every visitor interaction be positive, if this is not possible it is okay to walk away. If someone appears experienced and has proper gear you might spend less time with them about those aspects of their trip and mention current weather and trail conditions. If someone appears less experienced or like they do not have the appropriate gear you might want to spend more time with them about those specifics. It is important to remember we are only there to inform people about the decisions they are about to make. If after we talk about conditions, proper gear, regulations and people still want to do the Trap Dike in the pouring rain then we are not there to stop them. Please keep track of all engagements no matter how short with the hand counter provided. If there are larger groups with overnight packs and there is DEC personnel in the

parking lots, please defer these groups to them to prevent uniform fatigue. Please see pages nine and ten for more pertinent trail advice/regulations. If you have additional time while interacting with visitors please share information about ADK such as membership, facilities and volunteer opportunities.

If it is a slow day and there aren't many visitors to interact with please ask HPIC staff if there is anything additional you can help with, there usually is. Some of those quiet time responsibilities include removing cobwebs from exterior of building, trash pickups to ensure a pristine experience and writing parking tickets for visitors who do not have a valid pass.

At the end of your shift 12:30pm (weekdays) & 12:00pm (weekends) please check in with HPIC staff. We will put your radio back on the charger, ask for that days count and find out how your day went. If you have any questions, comments or concerns we'd be happy to help or provide additional training if necessary.

For lunch you are welcome to eat leftovers in the staff dining room. You are also welcome to sign up for a trail lunch at breakfast if you'd like to hit the trail following your shift. We encourage you to get out and hike the trails, visit Lake Placid, paddle, or go for a swim in the afternoon!

Dinner is served at the Hungry Hiker until 8:00pm

Departure:

Please make sure to leave the Trailhead Steward site clean when you leave and take all of your belongings. Please check out with HPIC staff after your last shift. This will allow us to do a quick debrief and offer you your first opportunity for feedback. You will receive a Program Evaluation Form via email following your stay.

ADK's Trailhead Steward Responsibilities

- A professional appearance and attitude when interacting with the public is of the utmost importance.
- Instill an outdoor ethic with visitors through positive educational interactions.
- Personal contact is very important, both to help people feel welcome and to let them know you are there to help them. Make yourself available for any questions and feel comfortable approaching visitors, but try not to overwhelm them immediately after they get out of their vehicles.
- Provide parking assistance: Ask drivers to park vehicles appropriately to maximize space, give directions upon arrival as to where visitors should park, count empty spots before the lots fill and as they open back up and communicate this with Parking Booth staff via your radio. It is

extremely helpful to the Parking Booth staff to know which lot the spaces are opening up in so they can direct the visitors accordingly.

-Encourage a visit into the HPIC. We've noticed that too few visitors actually stop into the HPIC before their hike, often times missing out on important information pertinent to their planned trip. We encourage you to familiarize yourself with what we have to offer so you can better relay this information to visitors. Let visitors know these services available at the HPIC and Hungry Hiker (bathrooms, water, snacks, gear & rentals). Provide directions to trailheads and other amenities available to visitors.

-Provide up to date weather and trail conditions. It is important to make hikers aware of any expected inclement weather conditions such as: extreme heat, cold, sun, precipitation, wind speeds, insects before they hit the trail. Depending on their destination it is also very helpful to let visitors know of any specifically poor trail conditions such as: mud, ice, rotting snow, sections of trails that are washed out (Feldspar floating bog bridges) or sections of trail that may be impassable due to water crossings (Indian Pass Brook on the way to Street and Nye Mountains). This information will allow visitors to make safe decisions while in the backcountry. If you are unsure of any up to date info on these topics, please defer to an HPIC staff member.

-Educate the public on who ADK is and what we do. Many visitors to the Heart Lake Program Center do not understand that this is private property and that we are different than DEC. Don't be afraid to encourage support through donations, membership and volunteer opportunities.

-Provide quality backcountry education including Leave No Trace outdoor skills and ethics and DEC regulations specific to the Central High Peaks and other zones in the High Peaks Region to promote a safe and enjoyable outdoor experience.

- Provide objective backcountry & trail information. It is of the utmost importance that we make the distinction between *objective* and *subjective* information. *How* you convey information to the public is nearly as critical as *what* you say. As a representative of ADK, the public will perceive you as an expert on backcountry information. Therefore, the information you give will be trusted and expected to be accurate. This means the information you give must be accurate for everyone, no matter what his or her individual capabilities.

Objective information is that which can be measured and will be the same for every person. Examples of this type of information are distance in miles, weather conditions in terms of current temperature and precipitation, and elevation gain of a particular trail. Providing objective information will let each hiker make accurate judgments based upon their own personal capabilities. Remember that we do not under any circumstances give or verify time estimates.

Subjective information is that which will vary depending on the individual concerned. Examples of this are: how much time a trip will take, how hard or easy a trail is, can the hike be

completed by dark, and what is the weather going to be like. The individual hiker is the only one who can accurately judge the time it will take to complete the hike. Information on trail conditions gathered from other hikers is anecdotal to that person's experience and should only be relayed with that caution. You will receive current weather forecasts each morning for lower and higher elevations, but Adirondack weather is very unpredictable and individuals should be prepared for the unexpected.

As the experts that the public will seek out for answers, Trailhead Stewards need to be very careful about giving out information that might not be applicable to that particular person. The potential for that person getting into trouble out on the trail is increased dramatically if they are provided subjective information that might not necessarily be true for them. The main focus of ADK's Trailhead Stewardship Program is to provide objective information that is as accurate as possible and avoids misleading someone into attempting to complete a trip that is out of their ability range. By receiving objective information, each recreational user passing through the Heart Lake Program Center will have the tools to make safe and accurate backcountry judgments. If you don't know something, don't make it up! Find someone that would know the answer. It's okay not to know everything.

- When parking lots are full it is often helpful to assist with turning cars away in front of the parking booth and providing alternate hike/trailhead options. It is easier to help with this and continue to manage the lots with two Stewards.

- If it is a slow day, please ask Information Center Staff if there is any additional way you can help. Other occasional responsibilities include removing cobwebs from exterior of building, trash pickups to ensure a pristine experience and writing parking tickets for visitors who do not have a valid pass.

Radio Protocol

- The yellow or camouflage Motorola radios should be used for communication between the Trailhead Steward, the parking booth attendant and staff inside the HPIC.

- Please hold down the button on the side of the radio 3 seconds before you start speaking and for 3 seconds after you finish, avoiding being cut off.

- Identify yourself first and then who you are speaking to. Please keep messages short and concise. On busy days it might take booth staff a minute to respond so please be patient.

- It is of the utmost importance to use appropriate and professional language when talking over the radios because visitors may be able to hear you.

- Please be sure to put the radio back in the charging dock inside the HPIC after you are done hosting for the day.

Parking Specifics

Parking Rates

	Full Day	Half Day (after 1pm)	Week*
Member	\$7	\$3	\$28
Non-member	\$15	\$7	\$60
Local	\$7	\$3	\$28

*Only extended to groups who are going into the woods for a backpacking trip, not for people who will be leaving the property and returning a different day. We do not reserve parking spaces.

Local rates extended to residents of:

Lake Placid	Saranac Lake	Tupper Lake
Paul Smiths	Keene	Ausable Forks
St Huberts	Keene Valley	Jay

-No buses, RVs or trailers! (short buses okay)

-The only people allowed to park at the Loj are Loj guests, guests participating in a scheduled education program or staff members. The only guests allowed to park in the campground lots are campground guests. Locals and Members who are not overnight property guests must park in the hiker parking lots, NO EXCEPTIONS!

-Cars are not allowed to “wait for a spot”. They may park in the snowplow turn around temporarily (<20 minutes) to drop people off or stop into the HPIC to rent equipment, make purchases or use the restrooms but must move to overflow parking or another trailhead when finished.

-People are not allowed to sleep in their cars or camp in the parking lots. We are unable to allow visitors to sleep in their vehicles due to Department of Health regulations. Free camping is permitted on Meadows Lane (remind them that no fires are allowed).

-Visitors with a season parking pass do not need to pay for parking but must park in the hiker parking lots if there is space available.

-Overflow parking is permitted 1 mile down the road “on or past Meadows Lane” which is about 1 mile from the HPIC, meaning cars can park all the way down Meadows Lane (only on one side)

or on the right side of Adirondack Loj Rd from Meadows Lane towards Route 73. Visitors cannot park between the “no parking” signs on either side of the road between the parking booth and Meadows Lane; otherwise they will receive a parking ticket. There is also absolutely no parking allowed at the bridge pull off between the parking booth and Meadows Lane. Please stress the importance of safety when discussing overflow parking and walking on the road back up to the trailhead. Personal safety is more important than parking somewhere illegal because you don’t mind paying for a ticket. Encourage visitors walking from overflow parking back up to the trailhead to walk single file facing oncoming traffic as far off the road as possible.

Primary Regulations and Considerations for Central High Peaks Wilderness

Food Storage

- Bear Canisters are required for all overnight users in the Eastern High Peaks between April 1st and November 30th and are strongly encouraged in areas where they are not required. It must be a commercially manufactured Bear Canister (Blue Bear Vault and Orange Frontiersman Canisters DO NOT work in this area. We offer a free rental of an HPIC bear canister for those who come in to show us their bear vault or frontiersman canister)
- All scented objects must be in there: toiletries, medications, food, garbage, etc
- Avoid cooking at dawn or dusk and cook 150ft away from where you are sleeping (roughly 70 large steps)
- Store on the ground 150ft away from where you are staying, away from water sources, cliffs, and other people’s tent sites. Do not keep anything strapped to it during the night
- We rent them for \$8.00 for 1-2 nights and goes up by \$8 for every 2 nights after.

Group Size

- Overnight group size is limited to a maximum of 8 people (over sized groups must camp at least one mile apart)
- Day use group size is limited to a maximum of 15 people (over sized groups must remain at least one mile apart at all times, they cannot meet up as one large group at their destination or at any time)

Camping

- Camping must be done at designated tent and lean-to sites, no pristine camping
- No Camping above 3500 ft except at designated sites
- No more than 8 people or 3 tents allowed per tent site (hammocks are considered a tent and must be at a designated tent camping site)
- No tents allowed in lean-tos or at lean-to sites
- Tents must be within 15 ft of the DEC marker for a designated tent site
- If you arrive at a lean-to or tent camping site that is not at capacity, other visitors cannot refuse you the opportunity to stay there

Campfires

-No campfires allowed in the Eastern High Peaks. All cooking must be done on a backpacking stove. Stoves that burn any organic material as fuel cannot be used (biolite, charcoal, etc.).

Miscellaneous

- Pets must be leashed and under control at all times
- No soap or disposal of food in any water body
- No use of any motorized equipment: drones, atv's, chainsaws, etc.

- Hikers must register at every trail register box they pass, even if they are not returning the same way
- Quiet hours must be observed from 10pm – 7am
- Use existing outhouses or deposit human waste in catholes dug 6-8 inches deep and at least 150ft from any trail or water body
- Summit weather conditions can be more severe than at the trailhead
- A cell phone is not a replacement for a map (navigation source) or headlamp (light source)
- Encourage visitors to have a dedicated light source and set a turnaround time

Heart Lake Property Rules

(Loj and Campground guests)

- Only overnight property guests can swim in Heart Lake due to Department of Health regulations.
- Overnight property guests and visiting ADK members may rent boats on Heart Lake. ADK Members who are just here for the day get the discounted rate of \$7 per hour and the regular rate is \$10 per hour.
- All guests must sign in at the front desk before swimming, boating or fishing
- Quiet Hours are strictly enforced from 10pm-7am. Radios are not permitted
- All guests must bring their trash and recycling to designated trash and recycling areas before dark. All other food items must be stored in vehicle with windows rolled up

How Do I Become An ADK Trailhead Steward?

You can become a trailhead steward by contacting Bobby Clark, HPIC Manager, at 518-523-3480 ext 122 or email bclark@adk.org to request an application. If you need to change or cancel your scheduled time please contact Bobby Clark, HPIC Manager, as far before your scheduled assignment as you are able.

Adirondack Mountain Club's Trailhead Stewardship Program Evaluation

Completed by the Volunteer

We appreciate the information you provide as an ADK Trailhead Steward. Your feedback is an important part of the continued effort to improve the program. You may remain anonymous or you may sign your name.

Name:

Date:

1. How was the information and training provided to you upon arrival?

_____ Excellent

_____ Adequate

_____ Needs improvement

2. To what extent do you feel you were accepted by the Loj staff (front desk and Loj Crew)?

_____ well accepted

_____ generally well accepted, some exceptions

_____ mixed reception

_____ not well

3. To what extent do you feel you were accepted by the HPIC staff?

_____ well accepted

_____ generally well accepted, some exceptions

_____ mixed reception

_____ not well

4. What is the best and the worst hosting experience you have had while volunteering this week at ADK?

Best:

Worst:

5. How did you hear about ADK's Trailhead Stewardship Program?

6. Would you participate in this program again?

7. What improvements could be made to this program?

8. Please add any additional suggestions or comments:

Please return the evaluation to Bobby Clark, HPIC Manager, at PO Box 867, Lake Placid, NY 12946 or bclark@adk.org

ADK Trailhead Steward Evaluation

Completed by the HPIC Manager

A review of ADK staff interaction with the host to be shared with the ADK Trailhead Stewardship Program Volunteer Coordinator to better evaluate the performance and effectiveness of the trailhead steward.

Name:

Date:

1. Was this person a returning trailhead steward or a new trailhead steward?

2. Did the trailhead steward arrive and depart as scheduled?

3. Did the trailhead steward perform the necessary duties?

_____ yes, every day _____ mostly, w/some exceptions _____ some days, but not consistent

4. Did the trailhead steward seem to understand the responsibilities and the mission of the program?

_____ yes, definitely _____ yes, for the most part _____ not really

5. How would you rate the enthusiasm of the trailhead steward? (5 being the most, 1 being the least) circle one

5 4 3 2 1

6. Was there any feedback (positive or negative) from guests or staff regarding the trailhead steward?

7. Please add any additional comments: