

## ANGELES CHAPTER SIERRA CLUB

(12-30-2008)

# Rules of Conduct

The following rules apply to all persons participating in outings activities of the Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club.<sup>1</sup> Violation of these rules may result in removal of a participant from a particular outing<sup>2</sup> and/or revocation of the privilege to participate in future outings.<sup>3</sup>

**Authority of the Leader:** The authority of an outing leader is nearly absolute.<sup>4</sup> The outing leader is the sole judge of the qualifications of participants.<sup>5</sup> Participants must comply with the orders and instructions of the outing leader.

**Eligibility to Participate:** Most Angeles Chapter outings are open to both Sierra Club members and non-members. Eligibility restrictions, if any, should be stated in the trip write-up. Sponsoring entity themes should be regarded as a clue to the ambiance to be expected rather than a restriction on participation. For example, you don't have to live in the San Fernando Valley to go on an outing sponsored by the San Fernando Valley Group and you don't have to be single to go on an outing sponsored by the Sierra Singles Section.

**Qualification to Participate:** Trip announcements typically give information about the physical challenge involved (distance and elevation gain) and the skills, equipment and experience required for successful participation. Some trips require prospective participants to provide information about their conditioning and experience to the leader for screening in advance of the trip. Other trips may simply ask participants to screen themselves before showing up at the trailhead. In either case, you should be honest with the leader or yourself. If you participate in a trip for which you are really not qualified, you won't enjoy the experience and you may make the experience less enjoyable for other participants. Leaders should give good faith consideration to accommodations requested by potential participants who are disabled.<sup>6</sup>

**Minors:** Participants under 18 years of age must be accompanied by a parent or guardian or have written permission from same giving phone number and authorization for continuing treatment by a physician in case of necessity. An Authorization and Consent form is printed in the Chapter *Schedule of Activities*.

**Liability Waiver:** All participants are required to sign a liability waiver.<sup>7</sup> This is an important legal document which limits your right to sue the Club or its leaders in the event of injury on an outing. Your participation in an outing is a voluntary recreational activity. If you are not willing to sign a waiver, you need to find some other recreational activity.

**Travel Procedures:** Participants are to remain with the group unless the leader gives permission to leave<sup>8</sup>, adhere to routes designated by the leader, refrain from "short cutting" switchbacks on trails, and remain behind the leader and ahead of the trail sweep.

**Leave No Trace:** The Sierra Club supports leave no trace principles, including minimizing the environmental impact of travel and camping, disposing of waste properly or packing it out, leaving natural objects as you find them, using stoves for cooking, limiting campfires to a single small campfire where permitted, respecting wildlife, storing food and garbage securely and being courteous to other visitors.<sup>9</sup>

**Compliance with Laws and Regulations:** Sierra Club outings are conducted in compliance with applicable laws and regulations, including requirements for entry permits, campfire restrictions, campsite location restrictions, waste handling rules, parking restrictions, etc. Rangers and other law enforcement personnel are to be treated with respect.

**Sexual Harassment:** Sexual harassment of Club members, volunteers or others who participate in Club-sponsored activities is prohibited. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual suggestions, physical contact, offensive sexual language or images, or use of club contact information to make unwelcome sexual suggestions outside of Club activities.<sup>10</sup>

**Animals:** Animals (other than guide dogs) are prohibited unless a specific announcement that animals are allowed is included in the trip write-up.<sup>11</sup> The leader may permit a disabled participant to bring a guide dog as long as the group safety isn't jeopardized or local land agency rules or regulations are not violated.<sup>12</sup>

**Firearms:** Always prohibited.

**Cell Phones:** Both leaders and participants are encouraged (but not required) to carry cell phones because they may be a useful resource in an emergency. Inappropriate or excessive use of cell phones for non-emergency communications can be annoying to participants. Outing leaders therefore have the authority to restrict or regulate the use of cell phones.<sup>13</sup>

**Hand-held Transceivers:** May be carried but used only if permitted by the leader and subject to further leader restrictions.<sup>14</sup>

**Radios and Sound Listening Devices:** May always be used at camp if equipped with earphones for private listening. On the trail or when climbing, use may be restricted or prohibited by the leader in the interest of safety.<sup>15</sup>

**GPS Receivers:** Generally permitted, with the sole exception of navigation checkouts, where evaluators may prohibit use or possession in order to test a candidate's skill at non-electronic navigation techniques.

**Hiking Poles:** Permitted unless the trip announcement indicates that hiking poles are not permitted. Even when permitted, leaders have the authority to require safe practices in use of hiking poles and restrict their use when appropriate for safety reasons.<sup>16</sup>

**Bike Helmets:** Participants and leaders must wear appropriate safety helmets while riding on a bicycle outing.<sup>17</sup>

**Technical Climbing Gear:** In general, gear such as ropes, ice axes, or crampons is appropriate only on approved Restricted Mountaineering Trips. There is no prohibition against outings participants bringing along whatever mountaineering or safety equipment they may choose to bring on an outing for their own personal safety. However, the use of technical climbing gear should be restricted to avoiding unanticipated hazards only, not to be used for mountaineering that is not part of the structured outing.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> General resources:

Leader Behavior Problems: <http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/outings/common/incidents/leader.asp>

Participant Behavior Problems: <http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/outings/common/incidents/participant.asp>

<sup>2</sup> A leader removing a participant from an outing must consider whether the participant will be able to safely return to the trailhead safely. An escort may be offered. When problem behavior occurs at an extremely remote location, it may be necessary to attempt only corrective measures short of removal or to consider modifying or terminating the trip.

<sup>3</sup> Revocation of the privilege to participate in future outings of a particular entity requires a formal investigation by the management committee of the sponsoring entity, written notice of the reasons for the action, and notification of appeal rights.

<sup>4</sup> The outing itself is not a democracy, but the actions of a leader are not immune from review by higher authority after the trip is concluded and inappropriate leader conduct may result in a restriction, suspension or revocation of leader status.

<sup>5</sup> This assumes the leader's judgment is based on a good faith evaluation of a prospective participant's qualifications. If a leader were to reject applicants on some improper arbitrary basis, such as race, this could result in disciplinary action. Where rejection is based on a participant's past problem behavior, leaders are encouraged, but not required, to discuss the problem with the prospective participant and consider whether the individual appears adequately committed to correcting prior mistakes.

<sup>6</sup> Can the prospective participant take part on the outing without the Club incurring excessive cost or effort to allow participation? Can the prospective participant take part on the outing without endangering their own safety or the safety of others? Can the prospective participant take part on the outing without fundamentally changing the nature of the activity? See

<http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/outings/common/screening/#disability> .

<sup>7</sup> <http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/outings/policy/waiver.asp> . Prior guidance that leaders and assistant leaders need not or should not sign a waiver should be regarded as obsolete. All participants are required to sign a waiver. Note that post-outing use of contact information on the sign-in/waiver form is limited to membership recruitment, announcement of future outings, call to conservation action and evaluation of the outing. [http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/outings/policy/Guidelines/contact\\_info.asp](http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/outings/policy/Guidelines/contact_info.asp) .

<sup>8</sup> When a participant wants to sign out early, the leader should consider whether they will be able to return to the trailhead safely and consider offering an escort or urging the participant to complete the trip with the group. When a leader allows participants to leave the group campsite to explore the surrounding area, it is wise to have participants leave in groups of two or more and sign a sheet indicating intended destination and return time.

<sup>9</sup> For further information, see <http://www.lnt.org/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.clubhouse.sierraclub.org/administration/policies/personnel/sexual-harassment.aspx>

<sup>11</sup> In practice, this policy mainly relates to dogs. We have never experienced participants bringing cats or birds to outings. This policy does apply to horses and mules. The OMC is aware that some leaders are opposed to dogs on any outing; however after listening to the evidence, the OMC is not convinced that properly managed dogs are harmful. The OMC is, however, convinced that dogs should be limited to outings where all participants have fair warning that dogs will be allowed, as some participants are not comfortable with the presence of dogs.

<sup>12</sup> <http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/outings/Common/screening/faq.aspx#guide-dog>

<sup>13</sup> It does little harm to allow participants to call home occasionally to check with a babysitter or let their family know that they are okay, that they will be home on schedule, that they will be running late, etc. Extended cell phone conversations can, however, be very annoying to other participants. It is recommended that participants be instructed to wait for a rest break before making a cell phone call and then move far enough away from the group that their phone conversation will not annoy others. Although leaders are given considerable latitude in regulating cell phone use, they may not prohibit participants from carrying cell phones. The term "cell phones" as used in these Rules includes satellite phones and any other technology for mobile telephone communication.

<sup>14</sup> Hand-held transceivers (including "walkie-talkies," ham and FSR radios) may be a useful way for the leader to contact the sweep when the group gets stretched out to find out if a delay is due to a slow hiker or an emergency. The main problem with such devices is over-use, which can be truly annoying to participants who have to overhear the incessant chatter. We trust in leaders to exercise sound judgment in regulating the use of such devices.

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<sup>15</sup> Some leaders are adamantly opposed to the presence of radios and listening devices such as iPods. The OMC finds no evidence that the use of such devices at camp when equipped with earphones for private listening causes any harm. Use when climbing presents an obvious problem. Climbers and belayers need to be able to hear each other and all participants need to be able to hear a “rock” warning, so the use of listening devices is inappropriate. The OMC has, however, heard no convincing evidence that listening to a sound device on an ordinary trail hike presents any danger. We leave the regulation of listening device on the trail or when climbing to leaders’ discretion.

<sup>16</sup> The use of hiking poles is very popular and useful in reducing falling incidents, the most common cause of injury on outings. The OMC is aware that some leaders are opposed to the use of hiking poles; however Club policy indicates that “There is no prohibition against outings participants bringing along whatever mountaineering or safety equipment they may choose to bring on an outing for their own personal safety.” <http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/outings/policy/mountaineering.asp#Equipment> . Outing leaders should therefore not prohibit participants from bringing hiking poles but leaders may restrict the use of hiking poles when they believe that conditions warrant such a restriction.

<sup>17</sup> <http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/outings/policy/BikeHelmets.asp>

<sup>18</sup> <http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/outings/policy/mountaineering.asp#Equipment>