

OCSS Leaders' Bulletin

04/08/98

Hello OCSS leaders & hosts,

The time has once again come to brief you and to remind you about the policies and procedures that we all must follow. The intent of distributing this information is to better inform you as a leader so that you may perform your tasks with as little difficulty as possible.

But before we get into the policies and procedures, there is a potentially serious problem that I must discuss with you. This problem could threaten our (Sierra Club) outings program by increasing the complexity of leading outings in National Parks and possibly National Forests (See newspaper article attached for background information). At this time, there is a lot of confusion about what makes an outing commercial. So far, it seems to be just the fact that the outing is charging money beyond its actual costs. Donating the profit to conservation or being a nonprofit organization may not make the outing noncommercial.

OCSS is dependent on raising funds through our outings program to pay its bills, to pay deposits for outings, and to raise money for conservation. If we must also apply for a commercial permit to raise funds, the application process and the requirements may make it more difficult and time consuming for volunteer leaders to complete the process. When I was applying for a backpack permit in the Mammoth Ranger District a few years ago, they wanted me to apply for a commercial permit. They required submitting a trip plan, emergency plan, and proof of current first aid & CPR. I avoided the need for the commercial permit by reducing the group size.

For the time being, we don't have any real information about how we should proceed. It is my opinion that when we apply for permits or make reservations in National Parks or National Forests we must clearly state that the Sierra Club is sponsoring the outing and that profit is being made. We must not put misleading information on our applications to avoid the commercial status or the Sierra Club may face legal action. Unfortunately, different National Parks and National Forests may not enforce the rules the same way. Therefore, you should contact each National Park or National Forest ranger district to determine their requirements and make sure you are talking to someone in authority not their part time help.

I hope that I'm not being premature in releasing this information to you and that it turns out to be a false alarm. I have been in communication with the Angeles Chapter concerning this issue and will let you know when more information becomes available.

Sincerely,

Ronald A. Weimer

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OCSS Outings/Safety Chair

Outings Planning Meeting: July 15th (Wednesday) at 6:30 PM

Once again, Donna Specht has graciously opened her home for this meeting in Huntington Beach. Check your newsletter for details.

Newcomers' Meeting: May 27th (Wednesday) at 7:00 PM

Come on out and socialize with new and prospective members at the next Newcomers' Meeting. Experienced and not so experienced people are needed to chat with and make welcome the newcomers. Check your newsletter for details. Call Donna Specht at (714) 963-6345 if you would like to help out more.

Chapter Schedule:

Please remember all submissions for the Chapter Schedule must be submitted to your Outings Chair & not directly to the schedule editor. In addition, your submissions must follow the detailed instructions attached and/or the latest instructions published in the Chapter Schedule. It is very important that you follow these instructions, & that you submit events by the **OCSS Chapter Schedule deadline** listed in our newsletter. The present Chapter Schedule editor expects these instructions to be followed and may not list an event if they are not. I do not have the time to rewrite your events for you and will return submissions not following these requirements. The earlier you can submit your event the better. In this way, we will have plenty of time to resolve any issues that may prevent approval.

Special Event Approval:

If you are planning a complex event, please consult with your Outings Chair and/or the financial approval officer before starting the detailed planning or making any reservations. It is to your advantage to get a preliminary approval or understanding of any special safety requirements that must be met or prevents your event before wasting your time planning it.

The following list describes some of the restrictions:

Backpack Trips:

Prior backpacking experience is a leader requirement for outings that involve backpacking. Consult with your Outings Chair for leader approval.

Foreign Outings & Domestic Outings in Excess of 10 days:

Outings outside the United States & domestic outings in excess of 10 days require special approval by the National Sierra Club. Contact your Outings Chair for details.

Mountaineering:

Presently, only the Desert Peak Section (DPS), Sierra Peak Section (SPS) & Wilderness Training Committee (WTC) have approval to conduct these outings.

Water Restrictions:

The Sierra Club has negotiated broader insurance coverage for water activities. In order to take advantage of this new policy, the leader must obtain approval (as described in the following paragraph) prior to making any arrangements or commitments or advertising the event. If you wish more information, please let me know.

Chapters and Groups wishing to conduct watercraft activities that include the **engagement of a concessionaire**, domestic rental of watercraft over 30 feet, or utilization of watercraft owned by persons acting on behalf of the Club (i.e. leaders) must submit required information described on page 6, to **Cathy Benton, National Coordinator for Chapter & Group Outings, 730 Polk Street, San Francisco, Ca 94109, prior to making final arrangements.**

Waiver Policy:

1. OCSS does not require the use of waivers but leaders may choose to do so.
2. The waiver to be used is the one provided with the Sierra Club Insurance Policy. This form has been reviewed by counsel and approved by the Sierra Club.
3. The Sierra Club may require the use of waivers on certain outings (i.e. mountaineering, water, etc.)

Events Sponsored by other Groups, Sections or Committees in our Newsletter:

In the past, it has been my policy to accept event write-ups sponsored by other Groups, Sections, or Committees directly from the leader. I did this for the convenience of the leader assuming that it had been approved by the sponsoring entity.

It has recently been pointed out to me that I am violating the Angeles Chapter Safety Policy by doing this and that I must conform to policy. Therefore, future write-up submissions sponsored by other entities must be submitted to me by the sponsoring entity's Outings Chair even if you are an OCSS leader.

To help smooth this process, I suggest that you submit your write-ups early with stamped envelopes (addressed to the appropriate Outings Chair) & also warn the Outings Chair that you want a write-up forwarded (email forwarding is acceptable). I am sorry for the inconvenience that this may cause.

Safety Policy Quote: "It is required that all write-ups for the Schedule and for newsletters shall be submitted through the Outings Chairman of the sponsoring Group, Section, or Committee to assure compliance with applicable safety policies."

Provisional Leaders:

The Angeles chapter has published new "Guidelines for Provisional Leaders". These guidelines stress that provisional leaders must lead trips that are a solid example of the rating level they are trying to achieve. This means beach walks are not acceptable. In addition, the checkout leader must be an experienced leader, not a close associate, and not a new leader. Please confer with your Outings Chair while planning your trip to prevent possible trip disapproval.

Return Completed Sign In Sheets:

All completed sign in sheets must be sent to your Outings Chair. The safety policy requires that completed sign in sheets be retained for one year.

Expiration of OCSS Privileges:

The privileges of being an OCSS leader/host are reserved to current Orange Peel subscribers only. Leaders and/or hosts that have allowed their memberships to lapse will lose the privilege to list their activities in the OCSS newsletter.