

Stewardship Activity Standards

This standard applies to Mountaineers stewardship activities.

DEFINITIONS

Stewardship

- The primary purpose of a stewardship activity is to care for our public lands, waters, and other outdoor spaces. This could include, but is not limited to: trail work, habitat restoration activities, trash removal, historic lookout maintenance, care of Mountaineers facilities.
- Stewardship activities must always be approved by the relevant land or waterway manager.
- Stewardship activities take place on a variety of terrain. Stewardship activities typically take place on non-technical terrain (ex: restoration work on trail); any Mountaineers stewardship activity taking place on technical terrain with a participant skill prerequisite (ex: cleaning a rock climbing route, shoreline trash removal by kayak) should be led by a leader also approved to lead activities on that terrain.
- All Mountaineers stewardship activities must be sponsored by a committee that includes stewardship in the scope of their charter.
- Stewardship co-sponsors are external organizations that:
 - Do/organize stewardship work that meets the definition for Mountaineers stewardship.
 - Have authority over the land or waterway or written approval from the land or waterway manager to carry out their stewardship activities.
 - Have a minimum general liability coverage of \$1M per occurrence/\$2M aggregate and can provide a certificate listing The Mountaineers as additional insured.

Activity Types

- **Mountaineers sponsored activity:** The Mountaineers provide all training, full oversight, and assume all responsibility for the activity.
 - Mountaineers leader on-site who has been approved to lead the full stewardship activity, including both the stewardship component and activities in all relevant terrain. The Mountaineers has written approval from the land or waterway manager to do the stewardship activity. These activities may be listed for registration on The Mountaineers website.
- **Mountaineers co-sponsored activity:** The Mountaineers share the training, oversight, and responsibility for the activity, and have a written agreement that outlines each party's roles/responsibilities.
 - Mountaineers leader on-site who, at minimum, has been approved to lead activities in all relevant terrain. The Mountaineers has a written agreement with, and current certificate of insurance from, any external entity (co-sponsor) providing oversight and/or resources for the stewardship work performed during the activity. The Mountaineers and/or the co-sponsoring entity has written approval from the land or waterway manager to do the stewardship activity. These activities may be listed for registration on The Mountaineers website.
- **External activity:** The Mountaineers provides no training, oversight, or responsibility for the activity.
 - The Mountaineers does not have a leader on-site and/or does not have a written agreement with, and certificate of insurance from, the external entity running the

stewardship activity. These activities may not be listed for registration on The Mountaineers website.

Stewardship Credit

- The Stewardship Credit badge represents the successful completion of one day (6 hours of work) of stewardship through a Mountaineers or external activity.

ACTIVITIES

All Mountaineers stewardship activities must meet the above criteria for a Mountaineers sponsored or co-sponsored activities. Leaders may use the [Stewardship Activity Checklist](#) on Page 7 when organizing an activity.

DIFFICULTY RATINGS

The physical difficulty of a stewardship activity will be rated using this scale as a general guide¹, and the rating must be entered on the activity listing with any additional, relevant details communicated to participants in pre-trip communications.

Most stewardship activities include some amount of bending, lifting, and squatting. Many will involve reaching, kneeling, twisting, and the use of tools, including basic hand tools, shovels, picks, brush hooks, saws, and specialized devices. At most stewardship activities, there are a variety of ways to be involved - expect to be physically active at your own pace for the duration of the activity.

Stewardship difficulty ratings are based on the following criteria:

- Setting and remoteness of stewardship activity
- Grade and stability of the terrain/surface of the work site
- Weight and hazard of the tools that may be utilized
- Elevation gain/loss to and from work site

Casual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting: Location near restroom facilities • Terrain/surface of work: Flat and stable • Tools: None or small hand tools • Elevation: None
Easy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting: Areas near road access; work area may be on or off trail, and usually not remote from staging area • Terrain/surface of work: Mostly flat or slight slope and stable, but on natural surfaces in the wild • Tools: Small hand tools • Elevation: Minimal
Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting: Wilderness; on and off trail; may be moderately remote from staging area • Terrain/surface of work: Flat to moderate slope, generally stable ground, but likely irregular or rocky natural surfaces • Tools: Small hand tools, shovels, picks, wheelbarrow • Elevation: Minimal; may include short walks to work site

¹ Adapted from the Irving Ranch National Landmarks [Land Stewardship Difficulty Ratings](#).

Strenuous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Setting: Wilderness; mostly off trail; remote work sites possible. ● Terrain/surface of work: Sloping, hilly, possibly rocky or unstable ● Tools: Small hand tools, saws, shovels, brush hooks, weed wrench ● Elevation: May include moderate ascents and descents to work site(s)
Very Strenuous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Setting: Wilderness; off trail in and up canyons, gullies, ravines; may be very remote ● Terrain/surface of work: Steep, rocky, possibly unstable ● Tools: Use of tools that may include shovels, picks, weed wrenches, saws, and axes on sloping terrain and loose surfaces ● Elevation: May include steep ascents and descents to multiple work sites

PARTY SIZE

The minimum party size for a stewardship activity is 3, unless determined otherwise by the leader for safety requirements.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR STEWARDSHIP LEADERS AND/OR TRAIL CREW LEADERS

There are two types of leaders for stewardship activities: Stewardship Leaders and Trail Crew Leaders.

All leaders for stewardship activities must be Mountaineers members, at least 18 years old, with an up-to-date waiver on file. New leaders are strongly encouraged to go on a minimum of 3 stewardship activities with The Mountaineers, preferably with different leaders, before becoming a leader themselves. Individual committees have the discretion to require more or fewer activities based on the applicant's experience and skills.

Leaders must be approved to lead stewardship activities by a Mountaineers branch/lodge stewardship committee² and entered on their committee's leader list. Once approved by one branch/lodge committee to lead stewardship activities, a leader may request to be added to another branch or lodge's stewardship committee's leader list. The committee chair of the requested branch/lodge has discretion to approve or deny leaders and/or to require that the leader complete any additional branch-specific requirements not met before being added to the roster.

Leaders must demonstrate basic competency in each of the following key elements before being approved to lead a Mountaineers stewardship activity. Under each key element, bullets highlight examples of the skills, behaviors, or knowledge factors expected of a Mountaineers Stewardship Leader and/or Trail Crew Leader.

ELEMENTS REQUIRED FOR BOTH STEWARDSHIP LEADER AND TRAIL CREW LEADER:

- **KEY ELEMENT 1: Group Leadership – examples of expected competencies**
 - Planning and organization
 - Screening of participants (as appropriate)
 - Communication (clear and effective)
 - Ensures that all party members are accounted for periodically and at the trip conclusion
 - Respectful, caring, considerate
 - Sound judgment and decision-making skills

² Including any branch/lodge committee chartered to offer stewardship activities

- Establishes trust
 - Focuses on group well-being and success as a whole
 - Adapts as required, exhibits situational leadership
 - Teaches, coaches, and also learns from others
 - These skills could be developed by taking a stewardship leader training, a Mountaineers Leadership Development course, or other as determined by the approving committee
- **KEY ELEMENT 2: Navigation— examples of expected competencies**
 - Effectively navigates route, relevant to the activity being led; this may include use of map and compass and any other appropriate tools to "stay found" (GPS, altimeter, watch)
 - A leader may develop these skills by taking Wilderness Navigation, Staying Found, a Map and Compass course, or other as determined by the approving committee
- **KEY ELEMENT 3: Outdoor Safety Skills— examples of expected competencies**
 - Shows good understanding of major seasonal hazards and how to assess the level of risk due to conditions for the trip being led
 - Shows good understanding of methods to prevent, mitigate or manage major risk factors
- **KEY ELEMENT 4: First Aid and Emergency Preparedness – examples of expected competencies**
 - Able to handle common first aid situations likely to be experienced on an outing
 - Know the "7 steps of Emergency Response," or an equivalent emergency management process
 - Exhibits a good understanding of how to handle emergency situations such as late return/after dark/lost participant/off route/lost group
 - Demonstrates problem solving and leadership skills relating to medical emergencies or unexpected weather and trip conditions
 - Knows how to communicate/summon help
 - A leader may develop these skills by taking Wilderness First Aid/Mountaineering-Oriented First Aid, Red Cross First Aid/CPR, Trail Emergency Preparedness, First Aid for Hike-Backpack Leaders, or other as determined by the approving committee
- **KEY ELEMENT 5: Knowledge of Standards and Policies— examples of expected competencies**
 - Familiar with applicable Mountaineers standards or procedures such as carpools; liability; waivers, postings, and closings; ratings
 - Knows incident reporting expectations
 - Familiar with maximum group size, permitting, and other applicable land or waterway management agency regulations

ELEMENTS REQUIRED FOR STEWARDSHIP LEADER

- **KEY ELEMENT 6: Technical Skill – examples of expected competencies**
 - Has experience and physical abilities commensurate with the trip being led.
 - Has knowledge and experience of stewardship best practices related to the trip being led.
 - Has relevant safety training for the tools and equipment being used. **Stewardship Leaders lead activities with minimal tools, or where training/oversight of tool usage is outsourced to a co-sponsoring entity.** Leader is responsible for ensuring participants have adequate training for the job they are doing.

- Practices low impact recreation and has the resources to coordinate with relevant land or waterway managers
- Practices good trail/trip etiquette.
- Knowledge and use of 10 Essentials.

ELEMENTS REQUIRED FOR TRAIL CREW LEADER

- **KEY ELEMENT 6: Technical Skill – examples of expected competencies**
 - Has experience and physical abilities commensurate with the trip being led.
 - Has knowledge and experience of stewardship best practices related to the trip being led.
 - Has relevant safety training for the tools and equipment being used. **Trail Crew Leaders lead activities with a variety of trail maintenance tools and provide training/oversight for use of those tools.** Leader is responsible for ensuring participants have adequate training and/or certification for the job they are doing.
 - Has experience and skill to oversee stewardship-specific group management, relevant to the activity being led, including: Explanation of required PPE; Tailgate safety briefing; Job hazard analysis; Land or waterway manager relationships (radio/phone/in-person); Check-in and check-out; Emergency Action Plan.
 - Practices low impact recreation and has the resources to coordinate with relevant land or waterway managers
 - Practices good trail/trip etiquette.
 - Knowledge and use of 10 Essentials.

PROCESS TO QUALIFY AS A MOUNTAINEERS STEWARDSHIP LEADER AND/OR TRAIL CREW LEADER

Sponsoring committees must have a documented and transparent process, available to any interested member, by which a prospective leader can qualify as a Mountaineers Stewardship Leader or Trail Crew Leader, if the activity is in the scope of the committee (included in the committee's charter). Committees are responsible for verifying that prospective leaders are competent in the key elements listed above using a structured, objective method. The following are examples of avenues that could be used:

- Data from application form and/or activity/course history
- Other Mountaineers leader badges (ex: Hike Leader)
- Documented completion of classes (ex: Wilderness First Aid, "Staying Found", Wilderness Navigation, or equivalent external class)
- Hike Leader or other new leader seminar or equivalent. This could include a structured interview with Committee Chair or other designated committee member to validate prospective leader's knowledge
- Mentored trip, in which the mentor evaluates the prospective leader on a relevant trip against the standards to the degree possible

Committees have flexibility to use different combinations of the above methods appropriate to individual leader candidates, maintaining flexibility to recognize experience and training from another activity or from outside the club where it directly applies to the key leader competency requirements. However, the committee must maintain a mechanism to document their evaluation of a leader candidate against the key criteria so that any outside party can understand the objective method used to qualify the person.

It is strongly recommended that Stewardship and Trail Crew Leaders attend a relevant leader seminar and/or participate in a mentored trip to receive an overview of the standard and all the key leader

criteria and expectations, even if they have led other activities for The Mountaineers. Because stewardship activities have no prerequisites, Leaders often face much greater challenges in screening participants, ensuring basic preparedness, providing first aid and navigation expertise for the group, and managing safety and pace during the activity than leaders of many other activities that have significant prerequisites for participation.

Upon review of the prospective leader's completion of the requirements, the sponsoring committee may grant the applicant the Stewardship Leader badge and add them to their committee's leader roster.

PARTICIPANT QUALIFICATIONS

Unless specified by the leader or taking place on technical terrain, there is no prerequisite for signing up for a stewardship activity. Participants must meet any relevant participant skill prerequisites for stewardship activities on technical terrain.

Participants are responsible for signing up only for trips that are within their capabilities, wearing suitable clothing/bringing suitable equipment as specified by the leader, and carrying the ten essentials.

STEWARDSHIP ACTIVITY CHECKLIST

All Mountaineers stewardship activities must meet all criteria for a Mountaineers sponsored or co-sponsored activities. Leaders may use the following checklist when organizing an activity.

- The stewardship work performed meets the definition for Mountaineers stewardship.
- The Mountaineers and/or the co-sponsoring entity has written approval from the land or waterway manager to do the stewardship activity. Approval can be in the form of a simple email, formal agreement, or other; it should include approval of the date(s), location(s), and specific tasks to be completed.
- Any external entity co-sponsoring the activity must meet the criteria outlined in “Definitions” (page 1).
- An approved Mountaineers leader is on-site for the activity. Depending on the type of activity (Mountaineers sponsored or Mountaineers co-sponsored), this may be a Stewardship Leader and/or another Mountaineers activity leader approved to lead activities in the relevant activity terrain.
- If the stewardship activity takes place on technical terrain with a participant skill prerequisite, the Mountaineers leader must be approved to lead activities on that terrain. The activity should also be listed in a way that includes those participant skill prerequisites.
- The Mountaineers has a written agreement with, and current certificate of insurance from, any external entity (co-sponsor) providing oversight for the stewardship work performed during the activity. This agreement should be reviewed by Mountaineers staff and include roles and responsibilities of all parties involved. These roles and responsibilities should also be clearly reflected on the activity listing.
- Link to [☰ Template Agreement for Co-Sponsored Stewardship Activities](#) .