**Vetting Criteria for Participants in a Backpacking Trip**

* Does the applicant understand the demands and hazards of the route and expected conditions? Do they accept responsibility to be prepared for them?
* Can the applicant demonstrate based on recent experience that they are prepared with the conditioning, gear and skills to complete the trip safely and at the leader’s planned pace?
  + Need not be Mountaineers experience but that’s a plus! Corroborate the applicant’s claims by contacting a past leader and asking them about the person.
  + If conditions demand certain gear, do they have proper gear for those conditions?
* Does the applicant understand your planned objectives, expectations and style for the trip and are they comfortable that they will enjoy themselves on a trip run based on those?
  + Objectives: What will be your focus on the trip? (Go slow to identify flowers? Go fast to gain conditioning? Enjoy a group experience in the outdoors at a pace that provides exercise? Etc.)
  + Expectations: What do you expect of all the participants? Ability to maintain a particular pace, recent experience, pack weight, willingness to stay together and support each other on the trail; Role model safety and Leave No Trace; Be prepared with proper gear that works and that you know how to operate; Proactive communication in case of an injury or illness
  + Style: Things like what time you will start in the morning, break schedule, keeping the group together vs. letting them spread out, supporting the will of the group and the leader’s decisions even if it doesn’t match their own personal preference
* Does the applicant understand that registering for the trip represents a firm commitment and not a ‘place holder’ in case nothing better comes up?

Additional Notes:

* (From Brian Talbert) I've found that folks that don't hike regularly or don't hike for exercise, often don't have a good sense of distance, elevation, pace, and how they affect one another. Vetting for experience outside the Mountaineers needs a little extra attention to this so as part of "corroborating claims" I would talk through examples of recent personal activity and ask them how they know - maybe they used Alltrails, or Gaia and can share the details of their track, for example.
* (From Cheryl Talbert) We can't count on good intentions to get in shape (as a substitute for actual recent experience) because life can sometimes get in the way.  So if someone doesn’t have recent experience at similar difficulty and skill level as your trip, reach out to them with the specific profile and technical demands of your trip – let them know that you’re asking because you want them and the group to be successful, so you have to get more details on his recent hiking and backpacking experience - what trips have they done in the last half-year with similar distance and gain?  If they haven't done anything similar in the last half-year or prior season, and you don’t get a strong feeling about their current fitness and confidence, then one of your options could be to put them on the waitlist but not add them to the roster until they could complete a couple of Mountaineers hikes or an overnight with similar daily gains, and if space still allows at that time.  Explain that we hope they understand why it's so important for us to consider recent experience to make sure that everyone can do the trip safely and have a good time.