

New Hike, Backpack, and Urban Walk Leader Seminar

Tacoma Hiking & Backpacking Committee
October 20, 2025



Housekeeping

- Emergency Exits
- Restrooms
- Water Fountain
- No breaks planned, just excuse yourself if you need a break
- Please silence cell phones
- End at 8:30
- Tacoma Program Center is carbon-neutral
 - Solar panels on roof & lithium batteries in storage closets

Agenda

- 6:30 Introduction
- How to become a Hike, Backpack, or Urban Walk Leader
- Leadership Techniques
- Mountaineer Standards
- How to lead a hike
- 7:30 Scenarios
- 8:00 Panel Discussion Q&A
- 8:25 Wrap up
- 8:30 Adjourn

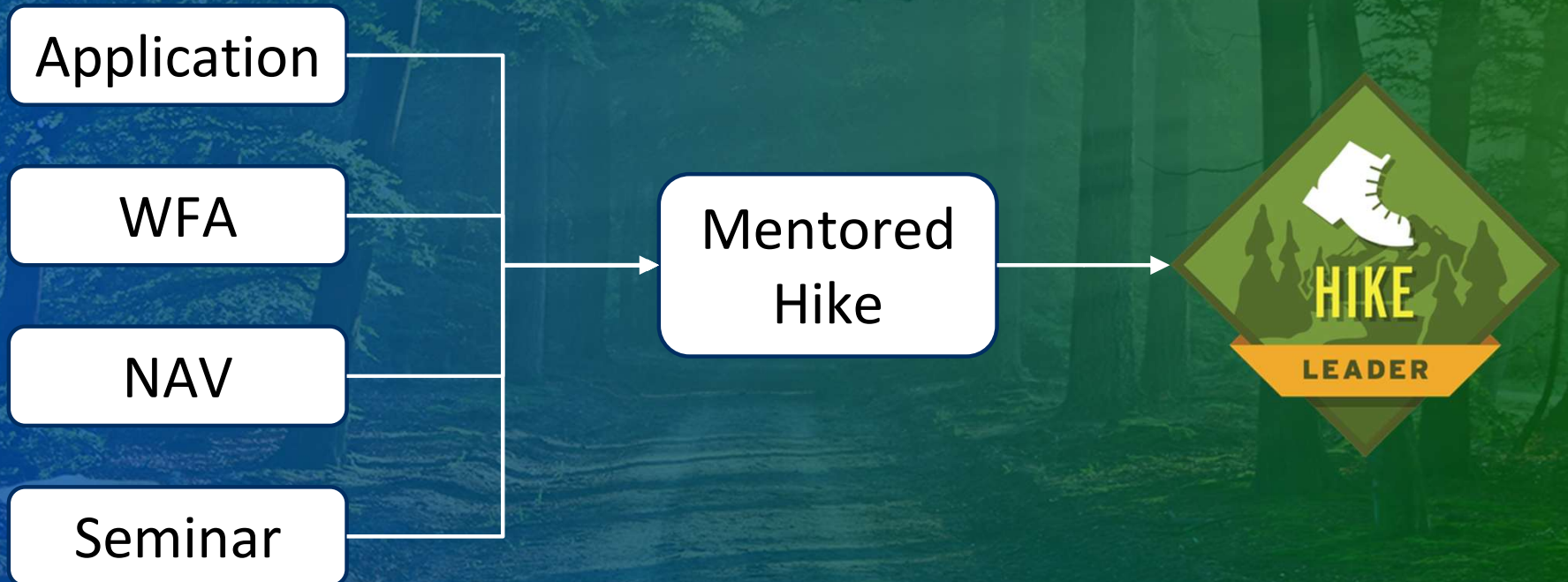
Mountaineers

A Relationship Beyond Land Acknowledgements

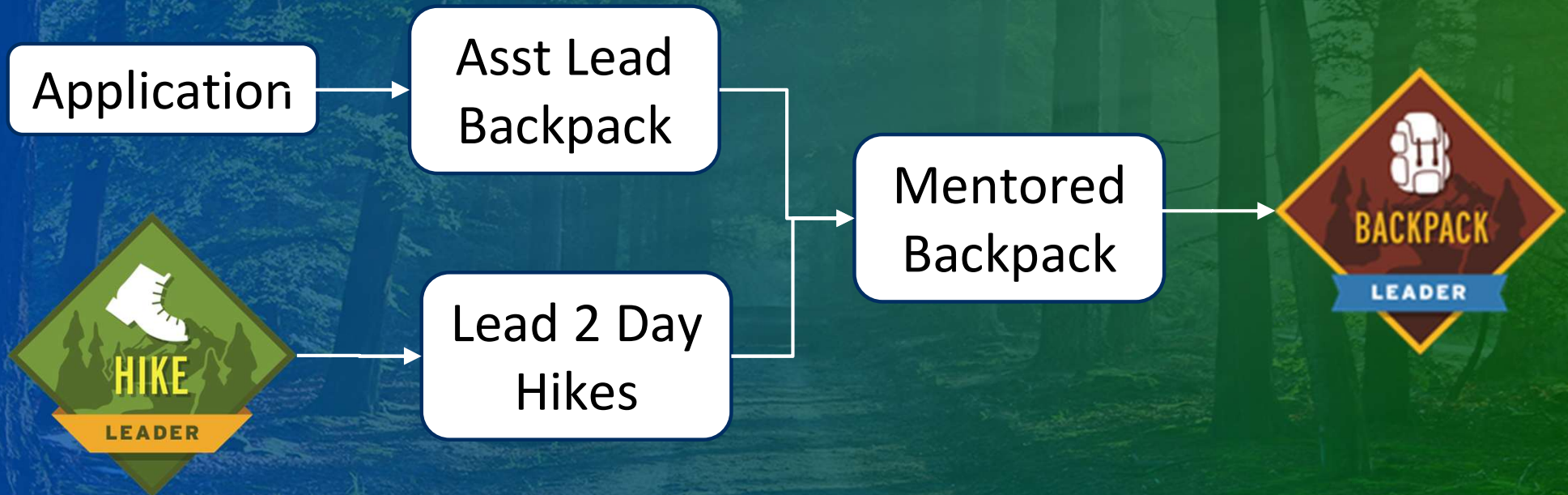
The Mountaineers acknowledge that we are on the lands of the Pacific Northwest Indian tribes, who live here and steward these lands and waters as they have since time immemorial. As we pursue our mission, we strive to listen to and amplify Native traditions and values through respectful engagement.



Becoming a Hike Leader

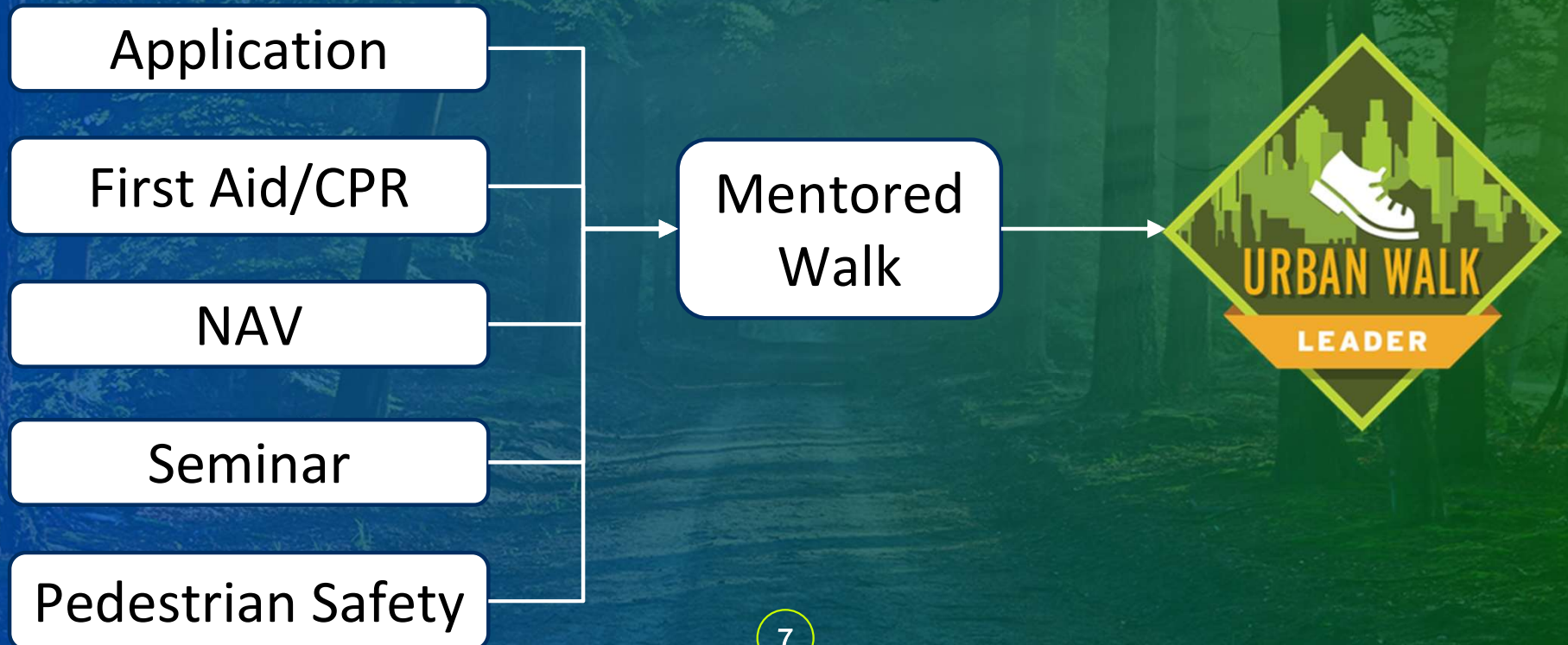


Becoming a Backpack Leader



- WFA and NAV must be current
- Other Active Leader Badges accepted (Scrambling, Climbing, Kayak, ..)

Becoming an Urban Walk Leader



A photograph of a narrow, winding path through a dense forest. The path is covered in fallen leaves and small puddles, reflecting the ambient light. Tall, slender trees line both sides of the path, their branches reaching overhead. The scene is misty, with a soft, ethereal atmosphere. A blue-to-green gradient is applied over the entire image, with the blue being more prominent on the left and the green on the right.

Hiking, Backpacking & Urban Walk Leadership

Five Pillars of Hiking Leadership

1. Planning and Preparation,
2. Communication,
3. Risk Management and Decision Making,
4. Fostering Positive Group Dynamics, and
5. Environmental Stewardship

Roles and Responsibilities of Leaders

- **Plan and Prepare** – Research routes, check weather, assess group abilities, and pack necessary gear.
- **Communicate Clearly** – Provide pre-hike instructions, set expectations, and maintain contact with the group.
- **Ensure Safety and Navigation** – Understand maps, terrain, and emergency procedures.
- **Make Informed Decisions** – Assess risks, adjust plans, and lead with confidence.
- **Adapt to Conditions** – Respond to weather, injuries, and group dynamics effectively.
- **Support and Encourage Hikers** – Foster teamwork, keep morale high, and ensure inclusivity.
- **Lead by Example** – Set a steady pace, follow Leave No Trace principles, and stay physically prepared.

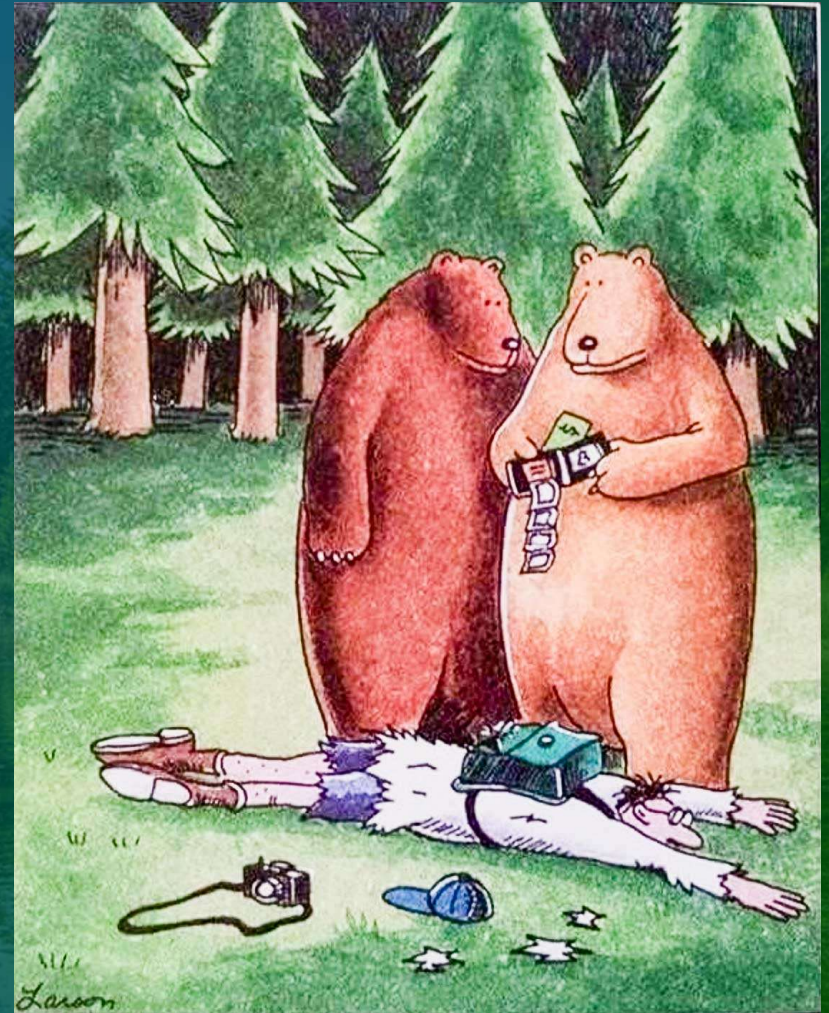
Trail and Route Dynamics

- Assign Roles; Pacesetter, Sweep, Medical
- Lead from Front/Middle/Rear
- Keep Group together vs. break into two groups
- Regroup at all intersections & water crossings
- Let slower hiker set the pace?

Managing Conflict

- Assume Positive Intent
- Be Proactive
- Be Discrete
- Stay Calm
- Listen with Intent
- Identify the Problem, Issue or Concern
- Acknowledge You Understand the Issue by Repeating it Verbally
- Accommodate Safely

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Emergency Management

- Be Prepared
- Stay Calm
- Maintain Focus on the Big Picture



Backpack Leader Considerations

- Multi-day itinerary, water sources, campsites, exit strategies, weather forecast
- Regulations: Permits, Group Size, Bear Canisters, campfires
- Heavy packs affect people differently
- Packs off break every hour?
- Gear Sharing, Group Gear
- Group dynamics more important on longer trips

Urban Walk Leader Considerations

- Street crossings
- Shoulder or shared use
- En route situations
- Urban Walk 10 Essentials

A photograph of a misty forest path with tall trees, overlaid with a blue-to-green gradient. The text "Mountaineers Standards" is centered in white.

Mountaineers Standards

Legal Considerations

- Volunteers are protected from individual liability by Federal and State statute and The Mountaineers insurance on listed Mountaineer Activities
- Know and follow The Mountaineers guidelines and policies at all times
 - Mountaineers Code of Conduct
 - Mountaineers Club-Wide Standards - Hiking
 - Mountaineers Club-Wide Standards – Backpacking
 - Mountaineers Club-Wide Standards – Urban Walks
 - Privacy Policy

Roster Management

- Party Size
 - Minimum party size is 3 (safety and insurance)
 - Maximum party size is 12
- We always recommend having a co-leader or assistant
 - Co-leader must have the appropriate Leader Badge
 - Assistant Lead can be any responsible person in your party

Hike, Backpack & Urban Walk Difficulty Ratings

Hike Difficulty (Route)

Easy (E)	Up to 8 miles and up to 1200 feet of elevation gain round trip.
Moderate (M)	Up to 12 miles and up to 2500 feet of elevation gain round trip.
Strenuous (S)	Up to 14 miles and up to 3500 feet of elevation gain round trip.
Very Strenuous (VS)	Over 14 miles or over 3500 feet of elevation gain round trip.

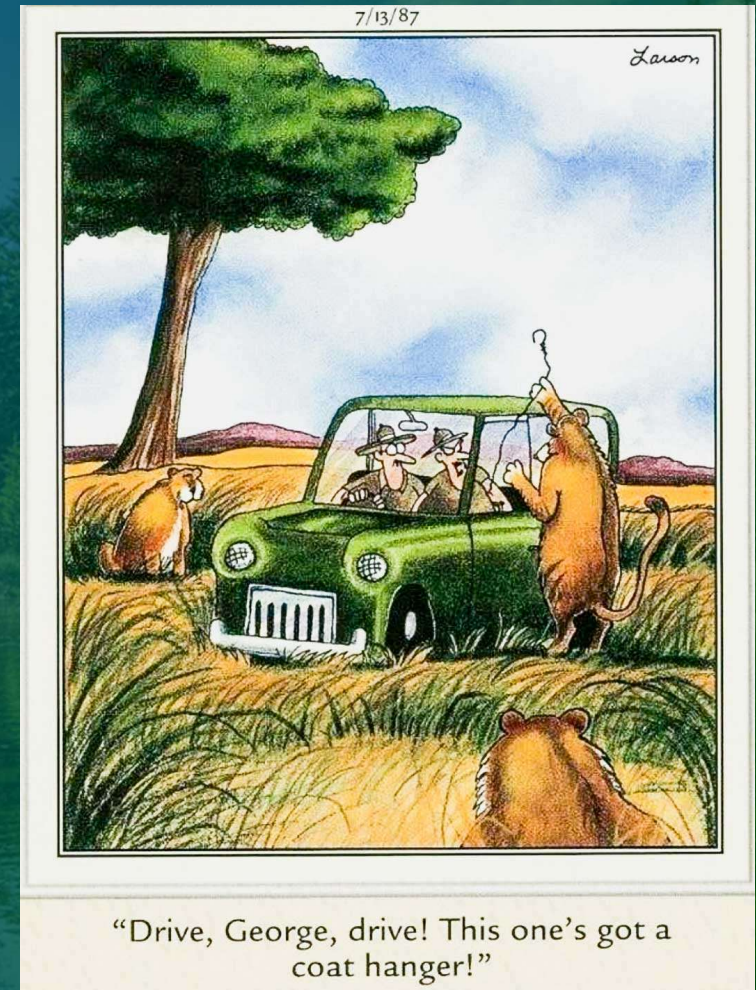
Hike Leader Rating (Pace)

Casual	Average pace under 1 mph and no technical challenges or special skills needed.
Easy	Average pace 1-1.5mph and no technical challenges or special skills needed
Moderate	Average pace 1.5-2mph OR an easy route with an overnight pack, or some route challenges (e.g. rough trail, log crossings, steep terrain)
Challenging	Average pace >2mph OR a moderate route with an overnight pack, OR significant route challenges or skills requirements (e.g. fixed ropes, very rugged terrain, steep scree descents, snow or ice crossings; snow camping, bear canister requirement, carrying water to a dry camp)

For Backpacking trips, use the rating of the most challenging day

Carpooling

- Carpooling is Encouraged
- Leaders CANNOT assign or require carpools
- Willing drivers are a precious resource
- Remind people that it's an important courtesy to reimburse their driver



Member Privacy

- Mountaineer members can make their profile data **private**
 - Visible to Staff & all Mountaineer Leaders
 - Not visible to members at large
- Important that leaders do not disclose Private member data
 - Use the “Send email” function on the website, or
 - Use the “Copy emails” function and paste into the BCC line
 - Carpools and photo sharing are especially challenging
- Ask for permission before posting pictures to social media

Pet and Service Dog Considerations

- If you as a leader/co-leader want to bring your pet dog
 - Advise participants in advance in trip posting
 - Follow posted trail rules
 - Follow leash laws and cleanup after them
- If a member wants to bring a service animal
 - Contact Member Services for direction
- Dogs count as part of the 12 maximum group size

A photograph of a narrow dirt path winding through a dense forest. The trees are tall and thin, with their trunks visible on both sides of the path. The ground is covered in fallen leaves and some patches of moss. The overall atmosphere is misty and serene. A blue-to-green gradient is applied over the entire image, with the blue being more prominent on the left and the green on the right.

Running a Trip

Running a Trip

2-3 Weeks Before the Trip

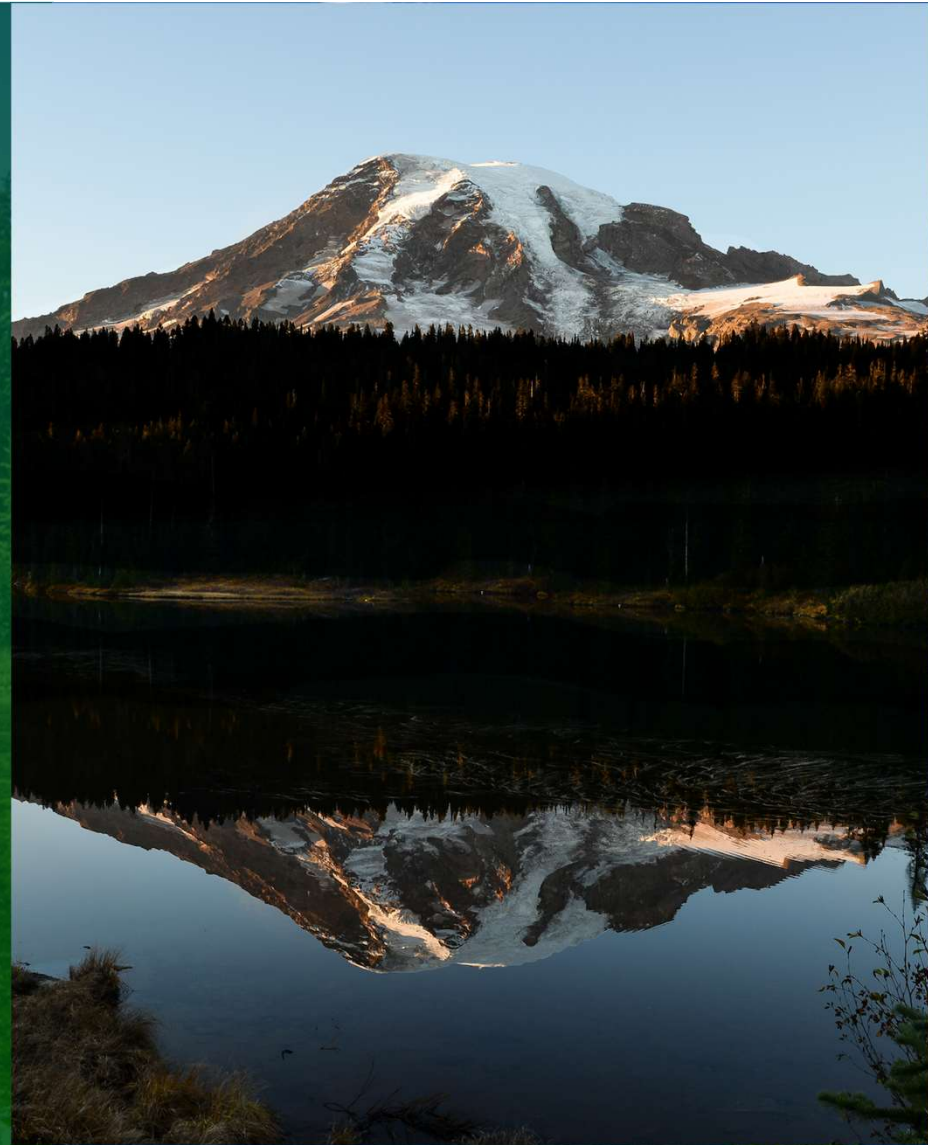
- Choose a safe destination
- Post the hike on the website, with clear and concise description of the route
- Include highlights (what will I see?)



Running a Trip

3-7 Days Before the Trip

- Check weather forecast, road & trail reports
- Check the roster – screen participants
 - Check a participant's activity and course history on the website
 - When in doubt, contact the participant
 - Add people from the waitlist if possible
- Send out "Hello Hiker" email(s)
 - Every detail your team needs to know
 - Reminder: leave no valuables in car
- Print/Save Emergency Contacts



At the Meeting Place/Trailhead

- Arrive early
- Attendance, Introductions and ice-breaker
- Describe how you plan to keep the group together
- Review the trail map
- Encourage open, respectful communication of safety concerns
- Ask for volunteers to be first-aid leader and sweep
- Encourage people to speak up for bathroom breaks (“party separations”) or equipment adjustments
- Essential Equipment Check
- Safety first! The group will turn around if the conditions are unsafe

During the Trip

- Manage the pace for the safety and morale of everyone in the group.
- Stay vigilant for participant, weather or route issues.
- Stop and help struggling participants.
- Lead for the whole group's success!
- If the conditions change, find a safer alternative or turn around.
- Don't be afraid to make an unpopular call if YOU believe it's important for the safety of the group.

After the Trip

- At the Trailhead
 - Make sure everyone is back
 - Short debrief, thank everyone for participating
 - Make sure all vehicles start
- At Home
 - Update roster status: successful, canceled or no show
 - Update mileage, vertical, volunteer hours, and participant notes
 - Report any safety incidents. (Note that participants also have an opportunity to report incidents as part of the trip evaluation.)
 - Close the trip

A photograph of a narrow, winding path through a dense forest. The path is covered in fallen leaves and branches, leading into the distance. The trees are tall and thin, with their canopies forming a dense overhead cover. The lighting is soft and diffused, creating a misty or foggy atmosphere. The entire image is overlaid with a color gradient that transitions from a deep blue on the left to a vibrant green on the right.

Scenarios

Scenarios

- Split up into groups
 - One scenario per group
 - Assign someone to take notes and report to the class
- Discuss your scenario and answer the questions (15-20 mins)
- Each group will then brief their scenario

A photograph of a misty forest path, overlaid with a blue-to-green gradient. The path leads into the distance, flanked by tall trees. The text "Panel Discussion" is centered in white.

Panel Discussion

Panel Discussion

- Have questions?
- Things that are concerning to you?
- Need Advice?
- Hiking, Backpacking or Urban Walk Specific?
- Ask us about our favorite trips



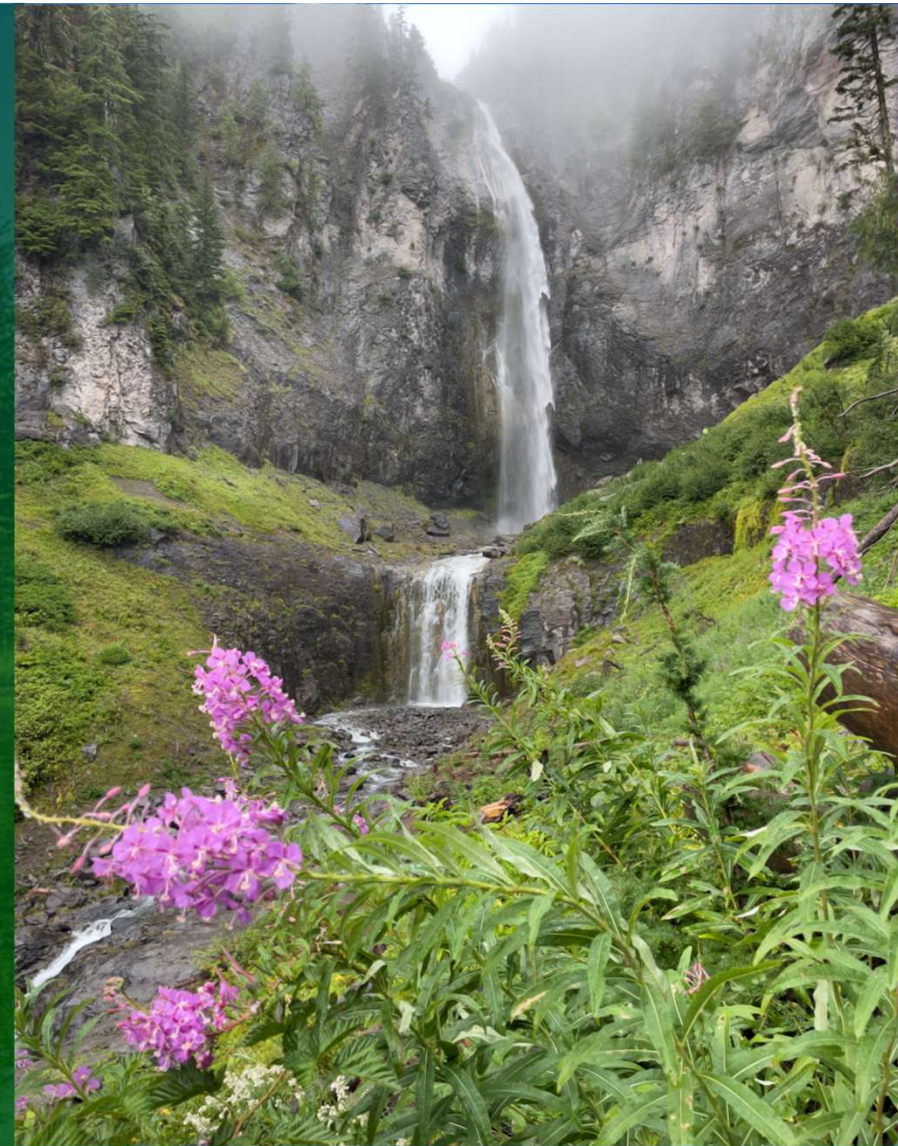
Thank You!

BACKUP SLIDES

Steps to Becoming a Hike Leader Prerequisites

Complete in Any Order

- New Hike & Backpack Leader Seminar: Attend this seminar—from any branch.
- Online Application: Submit your application online. Be sure to specify Tacoma Branch. You should receive confirmation of your application within a few days.
- First Aid Training: Complete either Wilderness First Aid (WFA) or Medical First Aid (MOFA). Trail Emergency Preparedness is acceptable providing you complete either WFA or MOFA within one year.
- Navigation Training: Complete either the Wilderness (off-trail) Navigation or Staying Found (on-trail) navigation course.



Steps to Becoming a Hike Leader

Mentored Hike:

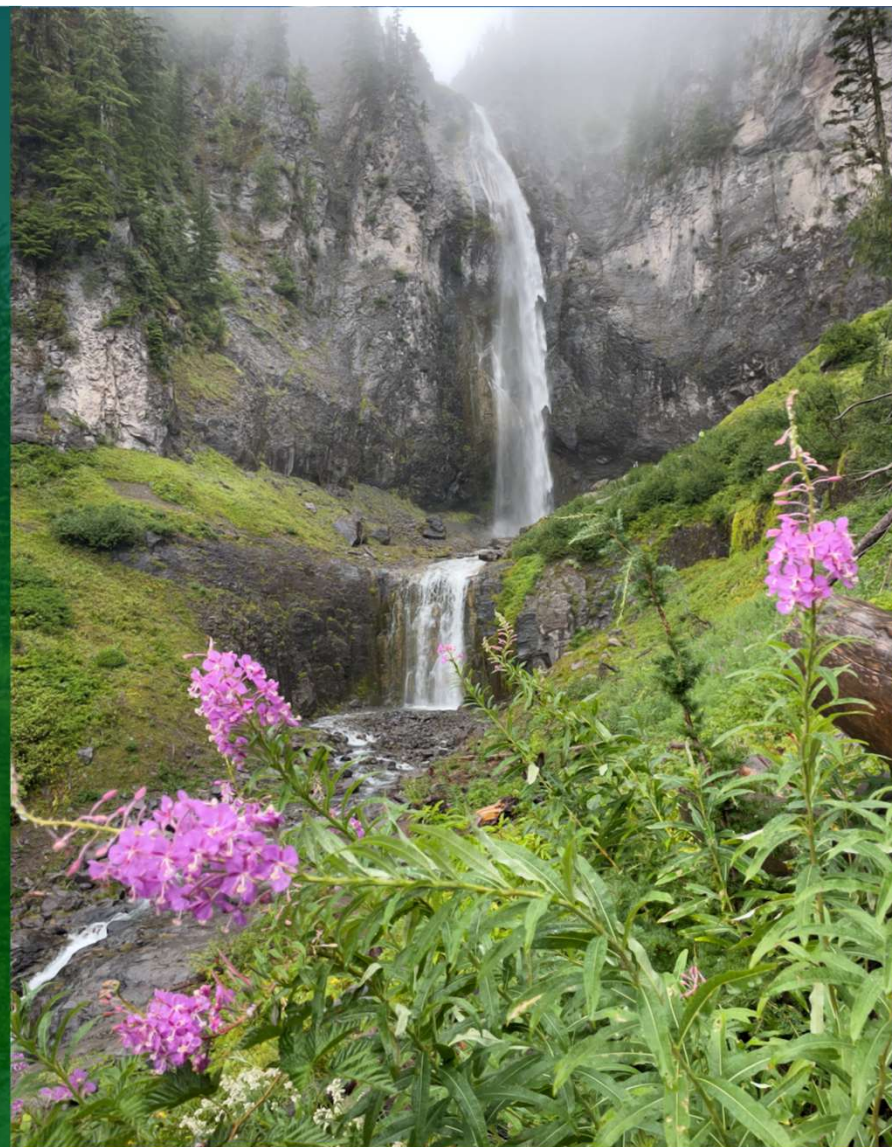
- Mentored Hike: The committee will approve a mentor, and then your final step is to successfully lead a mentored hike. The committee will then approve your Hike Leader Badge.



Steps to Becoming a Backpack Leader Prerequisites

Complete in Any Order

- Lead two day hikes: Become a hike leader and lead two day hikes.
- Backpack Skills: Earn a Basic Backpack Skills Badge.
- Online Application: Submit your online application. You should receive confirmation of your application within a few days.
- Assistant Lead: Be an Assistant Lead on one Tacoma Branch backpack trip. Similar Mountaineer overnight trips from other committees may be accepted.



Steps to Becoming a Backpack Leader

Mentored Backpack

- Mentored Backpack: The committee will approve a mentor, and then your final step is to successfully lead a mentored backpack. The committee will then approve your Backpack Leader Badge.



Steps to Becoming a Urban Walk Leader Prerequisites

Complete in Any Order

- New Hike, Backpack, & Urban Walk Leader Seminar: Attend this seminar—from any branch.
- Online Application: Submit your application online. Be sure to specify Tacoma Branch.
- First Aid Training: Complete Wilderness First Aid (WFA), Wilderness First Responder (WFR), or Red Cross (or equivalent) Adult First Aid Course.
- Navigation Training: Complete either the Wilderness (off-trail) Navigation or Staying Found (on-trail) navigation course.
- CPR Certification
- Pedestrian Safety Skills Badge

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Steps to Becoming a Urban Walk Leader

Mentored Hike:

Mentored Hike: The committee will approve a mentor, and then your final step is to successfully lead a mentored hike. The committee will then approve your Urban Walk Leader Badge.



Active Mountaineer Alternate Path

**Leaders from other committees (e.g., Scrambling, Climbing, Snowshoe, etc.) can become Backpacking Leaders directly, without needing to become Hike Leaders and leading two day-hikes first
or
you can earn both badges concurrently**

Maintaining Hike, Backpack, & Urban Walk Leader Badge

- Hike and Urban Walk leaders must lead at least two trips per year.
- Backpack leaders must lead any combination of the following per year:
 - a. Two overnight trips OR
 - b. One day hike and one overnight backpack trip OR
 - c. One multi-night backpack trip.
- Be in adequate physical and mental condition to properly lead each hike, backpack, or Urban Walk scheduled.
- Meet and follow the Minimum Club-wide Standards for Hiking, Backpacking, and Urban Walks as outlined on the Mountaineers website.



Leader Checklists

Review the Leader Checklists on the Leader Resources page

- Before the hike
- At the meeting place
- At the trailhead
- On the trail
- In case of emergency
- After the trip



Positive Group Dynamics

- Write Common Goals, Expectations and Style in trip listing
- Goals
 - Dependent Goals (don't have control over)
 - Independent Goals (have control over)
- Expectations (not negotiable)
- Style (how you like to do things)

Give some examples of each