

New Hike and Backpack Leader Seminar

Tacoma Hiking & Backpacking Committee
February 24, 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 or Backpack 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

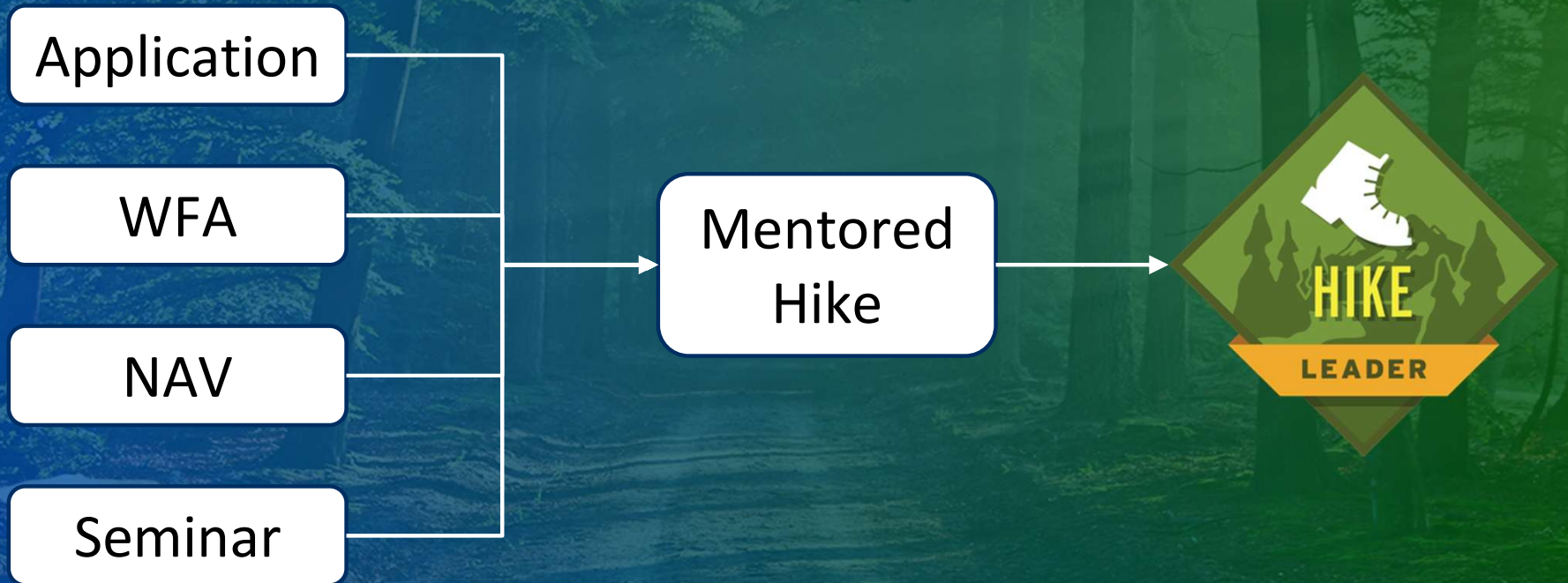
Mountaineers

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.

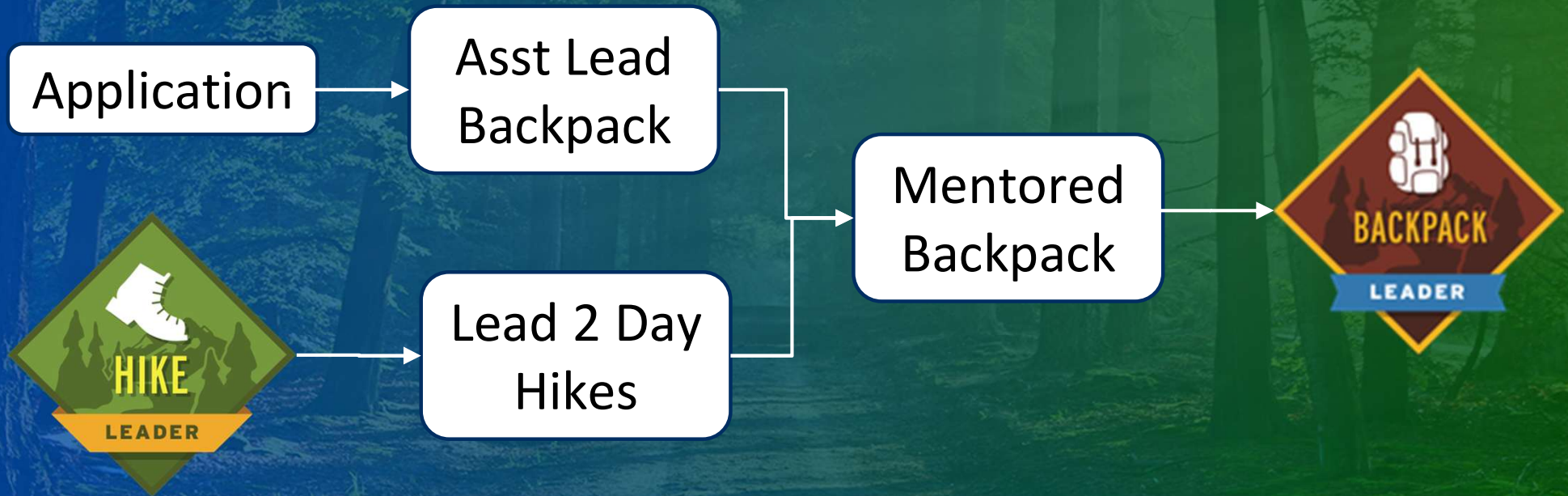


Becoming a Hike Leader



Tacoma branch does not currently offer Urban Walk Leader Badges

Becoming a Backpack Leader



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

A photograph of a dirt path winding through a dense forest. The scene is misty and atmospheric. The image is overlaid with a color gradient that transitions from a dark blue on the left to a vibrant green on the right. The text 'Hiking & Backpacking Leadership' is centered in white, sans-serif font.

Hiking & Backpacking 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 Hike Leader

- **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.

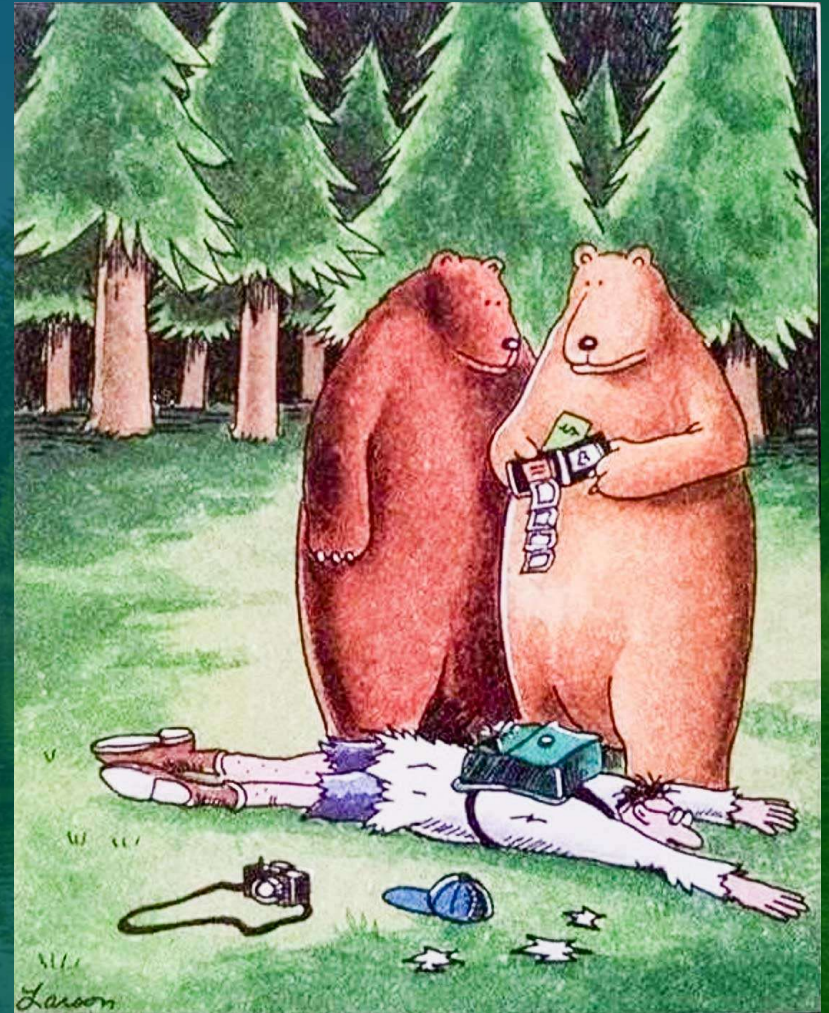
Trail Dynamics

- 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

A photograph of a misty forest path, overlaid with a blue-to-green gradient. The path is narrow and leads into the distance, flanked by tall, thin trees. The overall atmosphere is serene and somewhat mysterious.

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
 - 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 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.

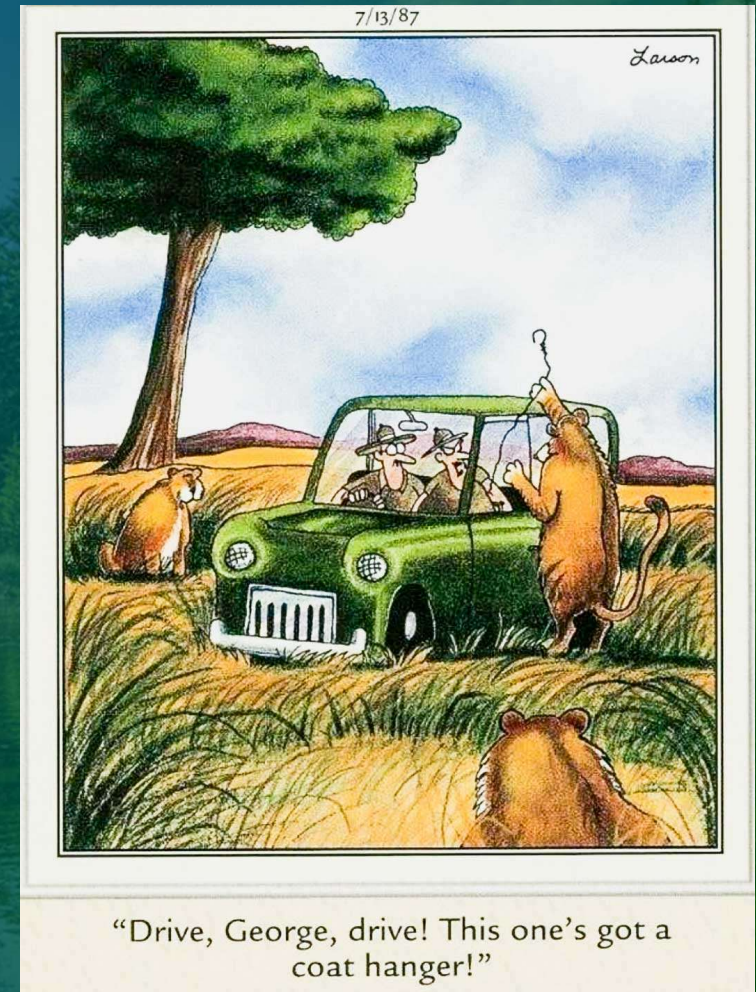
Hike Leader Rating (Pace)

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 dirt path winding through a dense forest. The scene is misty and atmospheric. The image is overlaid with a color gradient that transitions from a deep blue on the left side to a vibrant green on the right side. The text 'Running a Trip' is centered in the middle of the image in a white, sans-serif font.

Running a Trip

Running a Trip

2-3 Weeks Before the Trip

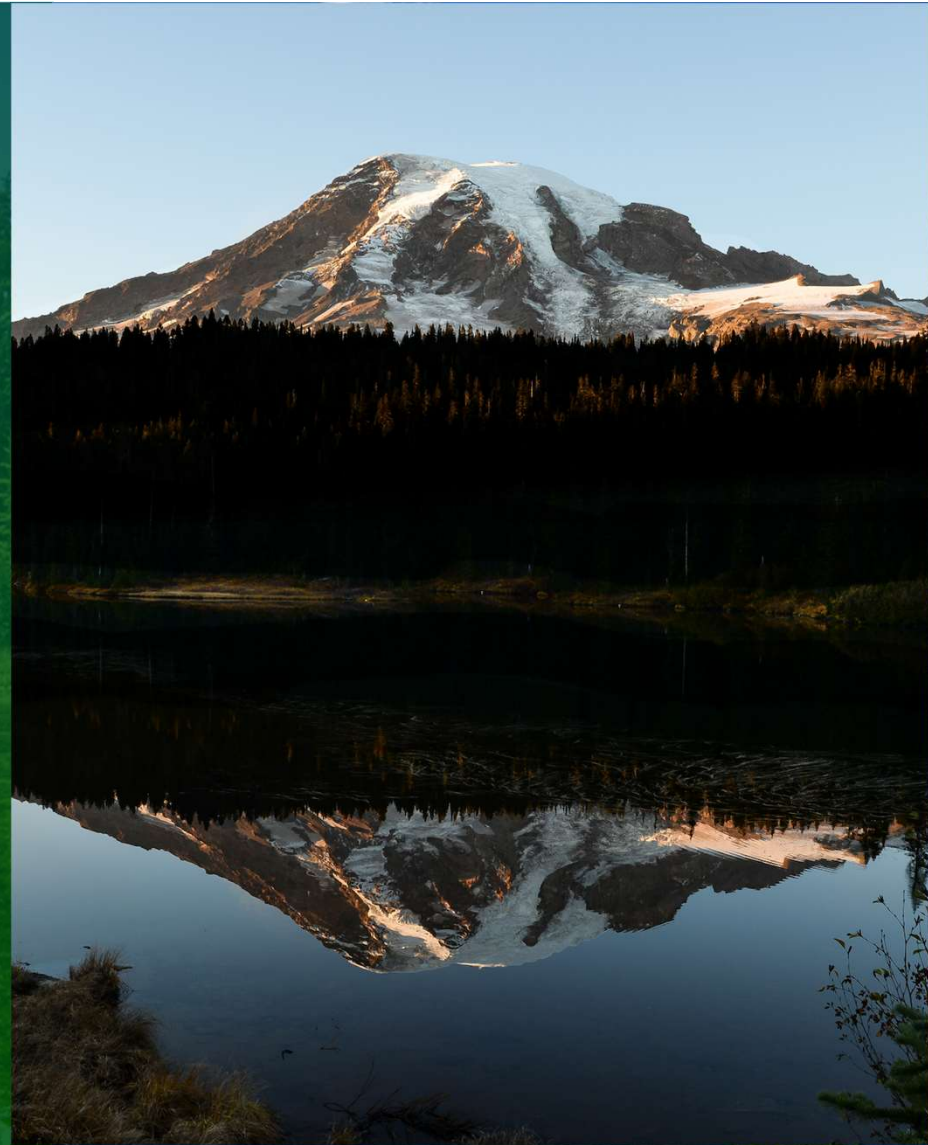
- Choose a safe destination
- Post the hike on the website, with clear and concise description of the route
- Include highlights (what will I see?)



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 forest path, heavily misted or fogged, with a color gradient overlay transitioning from dark blue on the left to green on the right. The path leads into the distance between tall trees.

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 overall atmosphere is serene and slightly mysterious.

Panel Discussion

Panel Discussion

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



Thank You!