

CONSERVATION NORTHWEST

VOLUNTEER SAFETY RESOURCES



Traveling in Washington's great outdoors with Conservation Northwest's field-based programs is a great way to positively impact our environment. However, as with any time you are recreating outside, there are some good precautions and guidelines to follow. Please use this guide as your resource while participating in our programs, as well as when you are recreating outdoors on your own time!

THE BASICS

Before you hit any trail, no matter how easy, no matter how short, no matter how close to home, make sure your backpack or daypack is loaded with the ten essentials. When in the backcountry you are responsible for your own safety, and any one of these ten items may help to save your life. If you do not have these, please either contact Aleah Jaeger (aleah@conservationnw.org) to borrow them, or head over to REI and stock up!

Also, please make sure you have the proper gear for outdoor travel. For some suggestions, check out Washington Trails Association's website: <https://www.wta.org/hiking-info/basics/gear>

- 1. Map** - Always carry a detailed map of the area where you are hiking. The 15' Green Trails maps are great if you're staying on the trail. If you're planning to leave the trail, it's best to have a 7.5' USGS maps. Keep your maps in a plastic bag to protect them from the rain and know how to use them!
- 2. GPS Unit and Compass** - For our projects, GPS units are typically necessary since you are looking for a specific point. Using either a handheld device or one on a Smartphone. If you need a GPS unit, contact Aleah about borrowing one from Conservation Northwest. Keep in mind that a map is no good without a compass and a compass is no good if you don't know how to use it. It doesn't matter how fancy your compass is, if it doesn't have a compensation setting for true North, make sure you know how to convert magnetic to true North. In Western Washington magnetic North is 20-22° east of true North
- 3. Water** - It is essential to drink a lot of water while hiking. Without water, your body doesn't perform as well and you become more susceptible to heat stroke, hypothermia and altitude sickness. If you are heading out for a longer hike or backpack, you should purify all water with a water filter/purifier, chemical tablets or boiling before drinking.
- 4. Extra Food** - Always bring extra food when hiking in case an unexpected situation delays your return - be it detour, injury or sickness, difficult terrain, weather, etc. Bring at least one extra day's worth.

5. **Rain Gear and Extra Clothing** - Weather can change quickly in the mountains. A sunny, warm day can turn into a cold downpour in a very short period of time. Always tuck rain gear into your backpack and bring along layers of clothes.

6. **Firestarter and Matches** - Always bring along waterproof matches in a water-tight container and have a dry or waterproof striker. You might also bring a cigarette lighter as a backup. And in the Northwest you can expect to have to deal with wet kindling. A candle, solid chemical fuels or balls of compressed wood chips work well.

7. **First Aid Kit** - Don't just have a first aid kit, have a useful first aid kit! If your kit just has a few bandaids and some aspirin, you won't be able to do much. Make sure you have the supplies and knowledge to deal with major injuries. You can purchase hiker first aid kits at outdoor stores or put together your own. Take a first aid course from the Red Cross or the Mountaineers. Here is a good resource for what your first aid kit should contain: <https://www.wta.org/magazine/WA%20Trails%2010-07-FIRST-AID.pdf>. There is also a free app from Red Cross that we recommend: <http://www.redcross.org/mobile-apps/first-aid-app>

8. **Knife or Multi-Purpose Tool** - Knives are indispensable in the backcountry. They can help you prepare food, cut Moleskin or bandages, repair gear, and more.

9. **Flashlight and extra batteries** - It gets dark out there! A light source is vital if you get caught in the woods after dark. Carry spare batteries and an extra bulb, and make sure you test your light before each trip.

10. **Sunscreen and sunglasses** - Your eyes need protection, especially if you are on snow or above treeline. Sunglasses are a must. And those rays are strong and damaging; sunscreen is important for people of all skin types.

A few other items you should consider: insect repellent, whistle, watch, emergency blanket, mirror (for signaling), duct tape (great for repairing anything), gloves, extra socks, and an orange vest (during hunting season).

We also practice the Leave No Trace principles while in the field. Although you will be leaving your trace by setting up remote camera sites, when you are traveling and at your site, keep these principles in mind! Remember you are out there to positively impact your environment, and that means leaving as little imprint as possible. And, hey, see some trash out there? Pick it up and leave the area cleaner than it was before you.

To see the seven principles, visit the Leave No Trace website: <https://lnt.org/learn/7-principles>