The December 2018/January 2019 shutdown of the United States government provided a revealing snapshot of the recreation impacts that affect national parks and other federally managed lands. Stories about parks overflowing with litter and garbage, illicit off-roading and human waste defiling America's most cherished landscapes were widespread. Without the federal employees that usually remove trash and clean bathroom facilities it became glaringly obvious that too many park visitors simply don't know how to clean up after themselves.

Even when park employees are on duty, it is still incumbent on all of us to reduce our impacts in the outdoors. The effort to educate people of all ages, but especially youth, about what it means to Leave No Trace has never been more important. Imagine how different things could have been during the shutdown if the majority of park visitors had been educated in Leave No Trace as young adults.

I challenge all of us working with youth-serving programs to think about ways that Leave No Trace values can be incorporated into the daily programing we oversee. Gone are the days when Leave No Trace only mattered if a group was going camping in a remote backcountry setting. Any time spent outside can be an opportunity to learn the fundamentals of Leave No Trace. We can all do our part to prepare young people for decisions they will make regarding how to respect natural areas—choices that will stick with them for the rest of their lives.

See you out there,

Andrew Leary
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The Why Behind the 7 Principles

The Seven Principles are often the most recognizable and easily condensed way to introduce youth (and adults) to Leave No Trace. However, giving youth the opportunity to dive deeper into the WHY of each principle can make a longer lasting impact, and help to start building their outdoor ethic. Click on the headers to go further with each.

Learn More

New Year, New Accreditation Updates

The 2019 standards update for the Youth Program Accreditation is available now! This update—the first since the program began in 2017—addresses some feedback around standards’ language, as well as additions to increase the effectiveness of Leave No Trace through a program’s cultural lens. Check out the updated standards and see how they fit with your program!

Read More

We also want to give a shout out to Nevada Outdoor School, the newest Leave No Trace Accredited program!

Featured Activity: Who's Hoo?
Throughout the shutdown, it was disheartening to see and hear about the damage happening at protected areas—often at the price of wildlife. This is a great activity to get youth thinking about what if it was their home that was disrupted and why it’s important to practice Leave No Trace.

Explore More

Featured Educator: Lisa Holstein

Lisa Holstein is the Office Manager at Ramah in the Rockies summer camp. While almost everything at camp is taught with a combination of English and Hebrew words as well as a connection to Jewish values, Leave No Trace remained solely in English and apart. Since campers and staff come from across the US and around the globe, Lisa created a hangtag that included Leave No Trace principles, backcountry basics, and camp values in both English and Hebrew. We’re so excited to see Leave No Trace included in the core values and cultural context within your program!

Submit YOUR activities, games, and ideas! - Each newsletter will highlight a Leave No Trace educator with a unique approach to engaging youth in Leave No Trace through games, activities, and more. Email julia@lnt.org with any leads.

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