



LEAVE NO TRACE ASSESSMENT

park & protected area

Criteria	0	1	2	3	4
Staff (x2)	No staff have received Leave No Trace training	At least one full-time staff member has completed a Leave No Trace training at any level	Multiple staff members have completed any level of Leave No Trace training	Multiple staff have completed any level of Leave No Trace training AND at least 1 staff member is certified Leave No Trace Level 1 or Level 2 Instructor 	Multiple staff have completed any level of Leave No Trace training AND at least 2 staff members are certified Leave No Trace Level 1 or Level 2 Instructors 
Volunteers	No volunteers have received Leave No Trace training	Volunteers receive information about Leave No Trace or minimum impact practices as part of service	At least one volunteer member has completed any level of Leave No Trace training	Volunteer organization(s) working with the site have multiple members trained at any level OR at least one member is a certified Level 1 or 2 Instructor	Volunteer organization(s) working with site have multiple members who are trained at any level AND at least one member is a certified Level 1 or Level 2 Instructor
Training Opportunities	No Leave No Trace training is offered to staff and/or volunteers	Site encourages staff and/or volunteers to take the 101 Course or other Leave No Trace workshop	Site facilitates or makes available Leave No Trace training for staff and/or volunteer onboarding	Site facilitates or makes available Leave No Trace training for staff and/or volunteers annually	Site facilitates or makes available Leave No Trace training for staff and/or volunteers during onboarding and annually
On-Site Messaging	No on-site messaging related to Leave No Trace	Minimum impact information included on-site	On-site messaging sometimes includes a combination of minimum impact and Leave No Trace information, but it is not locally tailored	On-site messaging sometimes includes a combination of minimum impact and Leave No Trace information that is locally tailored	On-site messaging consistently includes a combination of minimum impact and Leave No Trace information that is locally tailored
Educational Materials	No educational materials related to Leave No Trace	Minimum impact information included in educational materials	Educational materials sometimes include a combination of minimum impact and Leave No Trace information, but it is not locally tailored	Educational materials sometimes include a combination of minimum impact and Leave No Trace information that is locally tailored	Educational materials consistently include a combination of minimum impact and Leave No Trace information that is locally tailored
Online Information	No online information related to Leave No Trace	Minimum impact messaging included in online information	Online information sometimes includes a combination of minimum impact and Leave No Trace messaging, but it is not locally tailored	Online information sometimes includes a combination of minimum impact and Leave No Trace messaging that is locally tailored	Online information consistently includes a combination of minimum impact and Leave No Trace messaging that is locally tailored
Programs	No programs that include Leave No Trace offered	Minimum impact information included in programs	Programs sometimes include Leave No Trace information, but it is not locally tailored	Programs sometimes include Leave No Trace education that is locally tailored	Programs consistently include Leave No Trace education that is locally tailored
Youth Education	No youth education programs that include Leave No Trace offered	Minimum impact information included in youth education programs	Youth education programs sometimes include Leave No Trace information, but it is not locally tailored	Youth education programs sometimes include Leave No Trace information that is locally tailored	Youth education programs consistently include Leave No Trace information that is locally tailored
Partnerships	Partner organizations do not include Leave No Trace in their work	Partner organizations utilize minimum impact information	One or more partner organizations sometimes utilize Leave No Trace education, outreach, or training in their programmatic efforts at the site	Site encourages partner organizations to include Leave No Trace education, outreach, or training in their programmatic efforts at the site	Site requires partner organizations to include Leave No Trace education, outreach, or training in their programmatic efforts at the site
Additional Sustainability Measures	Site does not currently incorporate sustainability measures	Site incorporates at least one sustainability measure such as: recycling or composting, single-use plastic mitigation, dark sky preservation, etc.	Site incorporates at least two sustainability measures such as: recycling or composting, single-use plastic mitigation, dark sky preservation, etc.	Site incorporates at least three sustainability measures such as: recycling or composting, single-use plastic mitigation, dark sky preservation, etc.	Site incorporates at least four sustainability measures such as: recycling or composting, single-use plastic mitigation, dark sky preservation, etc.

LEAVE NO TRACE ASSESSMENT

About the Assessment

This instrument is designed for parks and protected areas that wish to assess how they are implementing Leave No Trace, at what level it is being implemented, and to identify opportunities for increasing or improving specific aspects of their Leave No Trace efforts. It can be utilized to track progress over time.

This assessment is also utilized as a foundation for Leave No Trace Gold Standard designation. Areas that score **25** and above on the assessment and meet the minimum score requirement for certain sections are eligible to apply for Gold Standard designation. Please contact Leave No Trace directly to work through this process.

Using the Assessment

To use this assessment, go through each section and determine which scoring level best describes your park or protected area's current efforts. The Staff section scoring is weighted double (x2) because this section is so critical in allowing for implementation elsewhere.

The following provides specific information about each section of the Leave No Trace Assessment and examples for each criteria. Please review the information before proceeding with the assessment, as it will help ensure an understanding of each of the assessment criteria.

CRITERIA 1-3

STAFF & VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Criteria	0	1	2	3	4
Staff (x2)	No staff have received Leave No Trace training	At least one full-time staff member has completed a Leave No Trace training at any level	Multiple staff members have completed any level of Leave No Trace training	Multiple staff have completed any level of Leave No Trace training AND at least 1 staff member is certified Leave No Trace Level 1 or Level 2 Instructor ✨	Multiple staff have completed any level of Leave No Trace training AND at least 2 staff members are certified Leave No Trace Level 1 or Level 2 Instructors ✨
Volunteers	No volunteers have received Leave No Trace training	Volunteers receive information about Leave No Trace or minimum impact practices as part of service	At least one volunteer member has completed any level of Leave No Trace training	Volunteer organization(s) working with the site have multiple members trained at any level OR at least one member is a certified Level 1 or 2 Instructor	Volunteer organization(s) working with site have multiple members who are trained at any level AND at least one member is a certified Level 1 or Level 2 Instructor
Training Opportunities	No Leave No Trace training is offered to staff and/or volunteers	Site encourages staff and/or volunteers to take the 101 Course or other Leave No Trace workshop	Site facilitates or makes available Leave No Trace training for staff and/or volunteer onboarding	Site facilitates or makes available Leave No Trace training for staff and/or volunteers annually	Site facilitates or makes available Leave No Trace training for staff and/or volunteers during onboarding and annually

The presence of Leave No Trace training is an important factor in implementation. It is critical to have a foundational knowledge of Leave No Trace from which to build all other aspects. This includes having staff and/or volunteer groups that are trained in Leave No Trace, as well as having regular opportunities available for staff and key volunteer groups to participate in formal Leave No Trace training. This section examines the number of staff and volunteers who have completed Leave No Trace training at various levels. It also looks at the type and frequency of Leave No Trace training opportunities available to staff and volunteer groups.

Regular and consistent training is important to keep current on changes and updates and keep the information front of mind.

In some sites, staff may be volunteers. However, please do not 'double dip' and count the same trained volunteer in both Staff and Volunteer criteria.

In order to achieve Gold Standard designation, the site must score at least one 3 or above in this section. Because staff training is so critical to all aspects of Leave No Trace implementation, the score for this criteria is weighted x2.

Criteria 1-3

Staff & Volunteer Training

1

Staff: At least 1 full-time staff member has received Leave No Trace training at any level. This could be from an online Leave No Trace course, a Subaru/Leave No Trace Team workshop, a workshop by other site staff or partners, a Skills course, or an Instructor course.

Volunteers: The site's volunteers are told about Leave No Trace or minimum impact practices during their service. For example, the project leader discusses how to protect vegetation by sticking to durable surfaces during a trail work project, or volunteers receive a registration email detailing how they can Plan Ahead and Prepare for their project. These volunteers do not have Leave No Trace training but have heard of the concept.

Training Opportunities: The site encourages volunteers and staff to take a Leave No Trace training at any level but does not facilitate the training or provide time or resources to complete it.



2

Staff: Multiple staff members have received Leave No Trace training at any level. This could be from an online Leave No Trace course, a Subaru Leave No Trace Team workshop, a workshop by other site staff or partners, etc.

Volunteers: At least 1 volunteer has received Leave No Trace training at any level.

Training Opportunities: Leave No Trace training is made available as part of onboarding for staff and/or volunteers. This could be through providing time for training, funding for training, or facilitating the training at the site.



3

Staff: Multiple staff members have received Leave No Trace training at any level AND, for sites with less than 100 employees, 1 full-time staff member is a certified Level 1 or Level 2 Instructor. For sites with more than 100 employees, 2% of staff are certified Level 1 or 2 Instructors. The certification should be current.

Volunteers: Multiple volunteers have received Leave No Trace training at any level OR at least one volunteer is a certified Level 1 or Level 2 Instructor.

Training Opportunities: Leave No Trace training is made available annually for staff and/or volunteers. This could be through providing time for training, funding for training, or facilitating the training at the site.



4

Staff: Multiple staff members have received Leave No Trace training at any level AND, for sites with less than 100 employees, 2 full-time staff members are certified Level 1 or Level 2 Instructors. For sites with more than 100 employees, 5% of staff are certified Level 1 or 2 Instructors. The certification should be current.

The increase in trained staff for sites with more employees is designed to create an equitable assessment for different size parks and protected areas and to ensure that there are a sufficient number of employees trained to support other implementation efforts.

Volunteers: Multiple volunteers have received Leave No Trace training at any level AND at least one volunteer is a certified Level 1 or Level 2 Instructor. The certification should be current.

Training Opportunities: Leave No Trace training is made available annually and during onboarding for staff and/or volunteers. This could be through providing time for training, funding for training, or facilitating the training at the site.

CRITERIA 4-6

MESSAGING & INFORMATION

Criteria	0	1	2	3	4
On-Site Messaging	No on-site messaging related to Leave No Trace	Minimum impact information included on-site	On-site messaging sometimes includes a combination of minimum impact and Leave No Trace information, but it is not locally tailored	On-site messaging sometimes includes a combination of minimum impact and Leave No Trace information that is locally tailored	On-site messaging consistently includes a combination of minimum impact and Leave No Trace information that is locally tailored
Educational Materials	No educational materials related to Leave No Trace	Minimum impact information included in educational materials	Educational materials sometimes include a combination of minimum impact and Leave No Trace information, but it is not locally tailored	Educational materials sometimes include a combination of minimum impact and Leave No Trace information that is locally tailored	Educational materials consistently include a combination of minimum impact and Leave No Trace information that is locally tailored
Online Information	No online information related to Leave No Trace	Minimum impact messaging included in online information	Online information sometimes includes a combination of minimum impact and Leave No Trace messaging, but it is not locally tailored	Online information sometimes includes a combination of minimum impact and Leave No Trace messaging that is locally tailored	Online information consistently includes a combination of minimum impact and Leave No Trace messaging that is locally tailored

On-Site Messaging: A crucial aspect in conveying important Leave No Trace information to the visiting public is having Leave No Trace language incorporated into interpretive and informational kiosks throughout the site. This assessment examines if parks have Leave No Trace messaging on signage, if that messaging is tailored to the local area, and how often Leave No Trace language is incorporated into on-site messaging.

Educational Materials: The assessment examines the availability of materials including brochures, pamphlets, stickers, reference cards, and more. It also examines whether or not the content of those materials contains locally tailored information. Leave No Trace has numerous educational materials to distribute to the public that can be utilized as a component of this criteria.

Online Information: The presence of online Leave No Trace information is crucial in helping visitors prepare for their trip in ways that will help minimize their impact while on-site. This assessment includes reviewing whether or not the site has Leave No Trace information on its website(s), online reservation systems, and social media and whether that information is locally tailored. In certain cases, an external website like www.recreation.gov is used for permitting or reservations. If there is Leave No Trace information included in this online process, please include it in your assessment for this criteria.

In order to achieve Gold Standard designation, the site must score at least one 3 or above in this section.

Criteria 4-6 Messaging & Information

1

The information provided is minimum impact but not Leave No Trace. As an example, a sign says "Pack It In, Pack It Out," but does not mention Leave No Trace, the 7 Principles, or include the logo.

Part of the effectiveness of the Leave No Trace message is consistency. Visitors see similar messages and concepts and the logo at various parks and protected areas around the country and even the world. We encourage using Leave No Trace specifically to tap into this broader message.



4

The information provided includes a combination of minimum impact and Leave No Trace messages that are tailored to the local area, activities, or ecosystem, and is implemented consistently across the site.

As an example, multiple education materials, signs, or webpages and social media posts contain information about how and why Leave No Trace is practiced at the site. To be considered consistent, the information should be included in a majority (greater than 50%) of on-site messaging, educational materials, or online information. This consistent messaging can include minimum impact information and all levels of Leave No Trace information, but the locally tailored messaging should be most prominent.



3

The information provided includes a combination of minimum impact and Leave No Trace messages that are tailored to the local area, activities, or ecosystem, but these messages are not consistently included across the majority of resources.

As an example, a sign at one trailhead in a park includes the most relevant Leave No Trace practices and why they are important to that specific ecosystem and a picnic area has information about packing out litter, but most other sites within the park do not include the same type of message.

2

The information provided sometimes includes a combination of minimum impact and Leave No Trace messages, but it is not site specific. As an example, some signs say "Pack It In, Pack It Out," while others contain the 7 Principles of Leave No Trace, but they do not detail how or why the principles are relevant to this specific area, activity, or ecosystem.

It is always best to tailor the message to the local area. This makes the information relevant to the visitor and prepares them for what they might encounter during their experience at the site.

CRITERIA 7-8

PROGRAMS

Criteria	0	1	2	3	4
Programs	No programs that include Leave No Trace offered	Minimum impact information included in programs	Programs sometimes include Leave No Trace information, but it is not locally tailored	Programs sometimes include Leave No Trace education that is locally tailored	Programs consistently include Leave No Trace education that is locally tailored
Youth Education	No youth education programs that include Leave No Trace offered	Minimum impact information included in youth education programs	Youth education programs sometimes include Leave No Trace information, but it is not locally tailored	Youth education programs sometimes include Leave No Trace information that is locally tailored	Youth education programs consistently include Leave No Trace information that is locally tailored

Programs: On-site interpretive programs are a great way for park staff to reach visitors with Leave No Trace information. This assessment examines the incorporation of Leave No Trace into interpretive and education programs including trail outings, campfire talks, ranger programs, and other staff or volunteer facilitated offerings. It takes into account the number of programs Leave No Trace is incorporated into and whether that information is Leave No Trace-specific or general minimum impact information.

Programs do not need to be Leave No Trace focused to count (i.e., How to Leave No Trace in X Park), Leave No Trace just needs to be included. For example, a site may have an interpretive night sky or historical program and spend 5-10 minutes discussing how visitors can Leave No Trace at the site or during the activity. Incorporating Leave No Trace whenever a site has a captive audience can ensure the message is woven in to any visit to the site.

Youth Education: The assessment also looks at the incorporation of Leave No Trace into youth programs specifically. This would include any program or outreach method that is designed to reach youth, including junior ranger programs, field trips, school programs, day camps, scouting activities, etc.

This criteria explores whether or not youth programs include Leave No Trace information, the number of programs Leave No Trace is incorporated into, and whether that information is Leave No Trace-specific, locally tailored, or general minimum impact information.

In order to achieve Gold Standard designation, the site must score at least one 3 or above in this section.

Criteria 7-8 Programs

1

Information about minimum impact practices is included in programs but not framed around or linked back to Leave No Trace. As an example, visitors are encouraged to store food from wildlife or properly plan for a hike, but these practices are not presented as Leave No Trace or discussed as part of the 7 Principles.

Part of the effectiveness of the Leave No Trace message is consistency. Visitors hear similar messages and concepts at various parks and protected areas around the country and even the world. We encourage using official Leave No Trace messaging to tap into this consistency. It helps visitors to remember how they have incorporated these practices before and allows for the message to be reinforced in the future. It also helps visitors know the “why” behind rules and regulations.



2

The information presented in programs sometimes includes Leave No Trace, but it is not site specific. As an example, a program mentions Leave No Trace or the 7 Principles, but not how they specifically apply to the site’s ecosystem, recreation types, etc.

Leave No Trace practices may differ with location, so it is important to always be specific regarding how best to minimize impacts at the site.



3

The information or messages presented in programs is Leave No Trace and site specific, but only utilized sometimes. As an example, one or two programs may include this information, but it is not standardized throughout the site’s programs.

We also suggest that the site utilizes Leave No Trace curriculum, activities, and resources. This can be especially helpful for youth education programs.



4

The information or messages presented in programs is Leave No Trace and site specific, and is incorporated into a majority (greater than 50%) of the site’s programs.

Programs do not need to be Leave No Trace focused (i.e., How to Leave No Trace in X Park); Leave No Trace just needs to be included. For example, a site may have an interpretive night sky or historical program and spend 5-10 minutes discussing how visitors can Leave No Trace at the site to protect the resources being discussed during their visit.

By weaving a short Leave No Trace message into all programs, the site empowers visitors to become stewards and increases the likelihood that learning to protect the site is part of everyone’s visit. We also suggest that the site utilizes Leave No Trace curriculum, activities, and resources. This can be especially helpful for youth education programs. Specific Leave No Trace programs are also encouraged as part of the overall offerings.

CRITERIA 9: PARTNERSHIPS

Criteria	0	1	2	3	4
Partnerships	Partner organizations do not include Leave No Trace in their work	Partner organizations utilize minimum impact information	One or more partner organizations sometimes utilize Leave No Trace education, outreach, or training in their programmatic efforts at the site	Site encourages partner organizations to include Leave No Trace education, outreach, or training in their programmatic efforts at the site	Site requires partner organizations to include Leave No Trace education, outreach, or training in their programmatic efforts at the site

Agencies often work with various partner organizations in or around the site. These could include any outside organization or business that regularly utilizes the site or provides support to the site, such as guides and outfitters, event organizers, friend's groups, conservancies, concessionaires, etc. These partners are a valuable resource in reaching visitors and building educational touchpoints.

The assessment examines how these partners incorporate Leave No Trace and to what level the site encourages or requires this incorporation. For example, while some partners may choose to teach Leave No Trace independently, land managers may find it effective to include a certain level of training or education as a component of special use permits.

1

While partners may utilize some minimum impact language or education in their work, it is not framed around or linked back to Leave No Trace.

The site does not encourage or require this effort. At this level, the partner(s) is taking on this work independently.

2

One or more partner organizations sometimes utilize Leave No Trace education, outreach, or training in their programmatic efforts, but the site does not encourage or require this effort. At this level, the partner(s) is taking on this work independently.

Having the site encourage or require the utilization of Leave No Trace increases the likelihood of its use and demonstrates that this is something the site values.



4

The site requires its partners to include Leave No Trace in their efforts. This requirement is part of special use permits or other processes in place that formalize partnerships with the site.

3

The site encourages its partners to include Leave No Trace in their efforts. This encouragement could come from sharing resources, providing information about site-specific practices, regularly communicating with partners, etc.



CRITERIA 10: SUSTAINABILITY

Criteria	0	1	2	3	4
Additional Sustainability Measures	Site does not currently incorporate sustainability measures	Site incorporates at least one sustainability measure such as: recycling or composting, single-use plastic mitigation, dark sky preservation, etc.	Site incorporates at least two sustainability measures such as: recycling or composting, single-use plastic mitigation, dark sky preservation, etc.	Site incorporates at least three sustainability measures such as: recycling or composting, single-use plastic mitigation, dark sky preservation, etc.	Site incorporates at least four sustainability measures such as: recycling or composting, single-use plastic mitigation, dark sky preservation, etc.

While Leave No Trace focuses on outdoor recreation, other sustainable and planet-friendly practices are important components of protecting and preserving our natural world. This criteria examines any additional sustainability measures that might be in place at the site.

These include the practices listed on the assessment, but if your site is incorporating planet-friendly practices that are not listed, please still include them in your assessment, as this is not an exhaustive list.

We recognize that these practices are not accessible to all sites, and there may be barriers related to cost, infrastructure, or other resources that make a practice out of reach. The assessment is designed for a site to still achieve designation without needing to incorporate any of these additional practices, but we encourage it where feasible.

1

The site has implemented at least one sustainability measure. This could include recycling or composting for visitors, renewable energy use in site infrastructure, single-use plastic mitigation in concessions, dark sky preservation, etc.

2

The site has implemented at least two sustainability measures. These could include recycling or composting for visitors, renewable energy use in site infrastructure, single-use plastic mitigation in concessions, dark sky preservation, etc.



4

The site has implemented at least four sustainability measures. These could include recycling or composting for visitors, renewable energy use in site infrastructure, single-use plastic mitigation in concessions, dark sky preservation, etc.

3

The site has implemented at least three sustainability measures. These could include recycling or composting for visitors, renewable energy use in site infrastructure, single-use plastic mitigation in concessions, dark sky preservation, etc.

