

# **RATC HIKE LEADER GUIDELINES**

## ***1. We Have a Responsibility:***

Hiking is a healthful and pleasant activity. Club members and guests enjoy meeting and conversing with their fellow hikers on hikes. The Club and its hike leaders have a duty to the hikers to act responsibly and with care in leading hikes.

Hike leaders need to be prepared. They should have a first aid kit, map, compass, whistle and a flashlight or headlamp. Occasionally a hike will return after dark even though it was not planned. A cell phone can also be taken.

Hike leaders need to know the hike, how to get there, where to park cars, how to do the shuttle and think about emergency situations that might arise. If it has been lengthy period since the hike leader last hiked the hike route, the hike leader should scout the route to determine trail accessibility and condition.

Hike leaders have the authority to limit the number of hikers, if necessary. Hikes in officially designated wilderness areas should be limited to ten hikers.

## ***2. The hike goes on, if at all possible:***

If a leader cannot make the hike, it is his/her responsibility to obtain a qualified substitute. The Hike Master can assist if needed. The hike leader(s), in case of bad weather, may cancel a hike. In addition, the hike leader can change the hike from the printed description if trail conditions have changed (e.g. high water), particularly if hiker safety will be jeopardized.

## ***3. The hike meeting place:***

The hike leader(s) may select the meeting place for a hike, but an assumed location will be used to calculate the carpool fee if location is not determined when the schedule is made. It must be determined before the first hiker calls asking for the location.

## ***4. Hiker Readiness:***

The location of the meeting place is intentionally omitted from the Blazer so the hike leaders have the opportunity to talk with the prospective hikers and gather some information. Ask leading questions; be interested in their hiking activities. This is the best time to help the prospective hikers decide if this hike is for them and make sure they know how to be properly prepared (water, food, clothing, footwear, etc.).

## ***5. Gather some information:***

The leader(s) can make a list of the names and phone numbers so they can call back in the case of a change in plans and also have an approximate head count.

## ***6. Greet, Brief, Count, and Qualify the hikers:***



Leaders (who will identify themselves as such) will greet all hikers, members and guests alike, and make sure every one is introduced to each other. Get every one going on the hike to sign the official sign-up sheet (name, phone number, and emergency contact). Know how many hikers are present.

The leader needs to observe the equipment and advise or reject poorly prepared persons (high heels, sandals, insufficient clothing for cold weather, no water/food). Also check whether there are any medical problems (bee sting allergies, leg or foot problems/injuries) among the members of the group. The leader has the authority to exclude someone from the hike if, in the opinion of the leader, the prospective hiker is not physically capable of completing the hike or is not properly clothed and equipped for the hike.

Leaders will give an overview of the hike route (possibly supplemented with maps or trail description handouts), mention unusual or significant features, and indicate generally the rest stops and lunch break. Now is the time to state that this is a group activity and that the group is expected to follow the leaders' directions.

### ***7. Organize the Car Pool:***

When cars are required, the leader will explain car pool trip cost sharing to the group, give clear instructions to all drivers, including exact route and destination. Verify that everyone has a ride. Cars should try to stay together and behind the leader. A designated regrouping place should be agreed upon for long or complicated drives.

Any special arrangements must be discussed at this time. For example, if there are faster hikers who wish to complete the hike and drive away before the rest of the group, the hike leader may allow them to do so only after determining there will be enough cars to transport everyone back to the beginning trailhead or meeting place.

### ***8. Maintain One group with no lost "souls":***

The leader and assistant leader will decide who will lead and who will sweep (the person stationed at the end of the group). All hikers must stay behind the lead hiker and the sweep will bring up the rear. The hiking pace should be controlled by the leader to keep all hikers within a reasonable distance behind the leader.

The lead hiker should stop at prudent intervals for rest, trail breaks, and water stops. The hike leader will stop and wait for everyone to arrive when the sweep is too far in the rear or at points where the group could become separated (intersections, hazards, or confusing places). It must also be made very clear to each person electing to go ahead that they are no longer considered a part of the RATC hike and RATC and the hike leaders no longer have any responsibility for their safety, well-being or transportation.

### ***9. RATC wants New Members and Hike Leaders***

Are there any prospective members or hike leaders in the group? Talk to the guests and offer them a schedule and a membership application. Look for prospective hike leaders. Let the Hike Master know your recommendations.

## **10. Do the paper work**

**The hike leaders need to mail or email the hike report to the Blazer Editor while it is fresh in their minds and update the hike leader package with your additions and corrections and return it to the Hike Master.**

## **11. *Follow Up***

**It would be a friendly gesture if the leaders called some of the guests to invite them back to join future hikes .**

