

# **PATC HIKE LEADERS HANDBOOK**



**Updated September 2019**



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By The  
PATC Hikes Committee

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## OVERVIEW

### **PATC Hikes Program**

One of the stated purposes of PATC is "to support and encourage the...proper recreational use of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and other trails...." This is done partly through the sponsorship of hikes on the trails in PATC's area and on trails in other areas. Hikes can range from short, close-in day hikes to longer multi-day backpacking excursions. The PATC council sets general hiking policy, and the hikes committee monitors day-to-day activities and reports to council periodically on the status of the program. This Hike Leader Handbook covers club policies regarding hikes sponsored by PATC.

Hikes can be for physical conditioning, social interaction, nature walks, history lessons, to reach a viewpoint, or any of a number of purposes. The club encourages a wide variety of hikes, and provides training and support to hike leaders.

An "official" PATC hike is one that is advertised on the PATC hikes program meetup site or in writing, either in the Forecast section of the PATC web pages, the Potomac Appalachian newsletter, or on a chapter meetup site or newsletter. PATC has an umbrella insurance policy that covers leaders of official hikes for liability. This insurance coverage only applies to official hikes; all club hikes must be advertised as described above.

### **Qualifying Hike Leaders**

A PATC hike leader must be a member of the club and have been qualified as a hiker leader. Qualification has different requirements depending on an individual's past hike leading experience.

- All new leaders must complete the two-day hike leader training course given by Trail Patrol who does PATC's non - trail work training arm, and post and lead two hikes in which they are mentored by a qualified PATC leader.
- Individuals with prior hike leading experience with PATC, who have lead at least three PATC-sponsored hikes in the last year may become qualified by reading the Hike Leaders Handbook and emailing the hike Chair they have done so..
- Individuals with significant prior hike leading experience with groups other than PATC (six sponsored hikes, that is hikes scheduled by an organized hiking club, e.g., Sierra Club, NVHC, Wanderbirds, in past two years), may be qualified as a PATC leader by reading the Hike Leaders Handbook and co-leading one hike with a qualified PATC leader.

The rationale for requiring PATC training even for those who have led extensively for other hiking clubs is that while each club may have a sound training program, there can be

important differences in what is included in the pre-hike safety talk. In a way, it all comes down to branding - when one signs up for a PATC hike, a person should know what to expect.

In appreciation for their commitment to the PATC hikes program and the time and effort being a qualified leader entails, each hike leader will be given two PATC maps or one PATC guidebook, upon request, for each year that they lead.

### **Active Hike Leader Requirements**

It is desired hike Leaders as a minimum lead two hikes a year though not required. If a Hike Leader does not lead a hike and submit it for two years or participate in Hike Leaders Training they will be dropped from the Hike Leader list

## STANDARD PROCEDURES

The goal of every hike leader should be to make every hiker safe and comfortable and enhance their enjoyment of the out-of-doors. To achieve this goal requires that each hike leader implement a set of procedures and/or policies designed to promote hiker safety and prevent problems that impinge on that safety. Thanks to the Northern Virginia Hiking Club (NVHC) for making the NVHC training manual available to PATC. The NHVC suggests the following framework for insuring a safe and comfortable hiking experience:

- Recognize unsafe and uncomfortable situations;
- Prevent the occurrence of these situations;
- Prepare for their occurrences anyway;
- Respond to the situations appropriately when they do occur.

Two of the most frequently encountered situations that impinge on safety are the hiker who is unprepared and hiker who becomes lost. Each of these situations and procedures for avoiding them are described below and in the section of this handbook describing the stages in planning a hike.

### **Strategies for Assuring Hikers Are Prepared**

Individuals choose to hike for many reasons, and one of aims of a hike leader should be to help each person select the hike that fits best with his or her interests and physical capabilities. The first step in accomplishing this aim is to provide a thorough description of the planned hike - the nature of the terrain (e.g., will there be steep and/or rocky sections, how many stream crossings will there be), the number of miles, the amount of elevation gain, and the pace of the hike, as well as the natural sites and the flora and fauna one can expect to see along the trail.

A 5-mile hike on a flat paved surface and a 5-mile hike with 2,300 feet of elevation gain are very different hikes. Several hike rating systems are used by local hiking groups, but one of the most informative ones and the one adopted by PATC was developed by NVHC. This system uses distance and elevation gain to determine the rating. The difficulty ratings range from A through D, with 400 feet of climbing considered equivalent to one mile of linear distance. The ratings are:

- A-Difficult (more than 13 miles)
- B-Moderately Difficult (more than 10 to 13 miles)
- C-Moderate (more than 7 to 10 miles)
- D-Easy (less than 7 miles)

In addition to difficulty ratings, another important piece of information to adequately describe a hike to potential hikers is the pace of the hike. The pace averages both the speed when moving and the time when the hike is stopped (e.g., time spent at trail junctions

waiting for the hike to reassemble) but excludes the time stopped for lunch, (usually half an hour). The paces below are estimates; in reality, the hike moves at the pace of the slowest hiker and the pace may also be impacted by conditions on the trail, e.g., the amount of elevation, slowdowns across the trail. A good number to use when estimating the duration of a hike, including both moving and waiting time on the trail, is 2 miles/hour. Estimated paces for each level hike are:

- more than 2.75 to 3.5 miles per hour (fast)
- more than 2.25 to 2.75 miles per hour (moderately fast)
- more than 1.75 to 2.25 miles per hour (moderate)
- 1.25 to 1.75 miles per hour (easy)

Note: Difficulty ratings and pace ratings are not necessarily correlated; they are two very informative but somewhat independent descriptors of a hike.

Policies about allowing children and pets on a hike should be clearly articulated and included in the hike description. The information about the hike should be sufficient for parents to determine, with input from the hike leader, whether the hike is appropriate for their child.

With regard to children, the following general rules apply:

- Children under 18 must be accompanied by a responsible adult.
- Both the child and their parent or legal guardian must sign and acknowledge the liability disclaimer on the sign-in sheet.
- Parents should call the hike leader in advance to verify that the hike is appropriate for children.

With regard to pets:

Hikers who want to bring a pet on a hike should contact the hike leader in advance to ask if pets will be allowed on the hike. Pets are not permitted on some trails; and further, the hike leader has the discretion of whether or not to permit a pet on a club hike even if allowed in the park where the hike will take place. If the pet becomes a problem on the hike, the hike leader can terminate the participation of the owner and pet.

If pets are allowed, they:

- must be well behaved and kept under control at all times;
- must be current on rabies vaccination and wear identification;

- must be on leash according to the rules of the managing agency (hike leaders may require more stringent leashing at their discretion); and
- owner must obey pooper scooper laws;
- and must bring water for their pet.

The hike leader may ask hikers with pets to position themselves at the front or back of the hike; and should remind owners to be respectful of fellow hikers who may be uncomfortable around pets. Pet owners should be prepared to drive and should only bring their pet on shuttle hikes if confident another driver will welcome their pet.

### **Strategies for Keeping the Group Together and Avoiding Lost Hikers**

Laying out and following standard procedures aimed at keeping the group of hikers together can minimize the chance that a hiker will become lost. It is important that these procedures be discussed at the beginning of the hike and that the participants agree to follow them. The following procedures are adapted from those suggested by Philip Werner (SectionHiker.com, December 8, 2015).

- The hike leader is responsible for the hike and should maintain control of the hike at all times.
- Under some circumstances, the hike leader may designate another hiker as the lead hiker. Such circumstances might include the leader wanting to assist a new hiker out for the first time.
- All hikers should stay behind the lead hiker and ahead of the sweep; no hiker is to go ahead of the lead hiker without explicit permission to do so.
- One hiker should be designated as sweep (last person) in the group. This person should be a strong hiker who can provide assistance to slower hikers if needed.
- The lead hiker should stop at all trail junctions and stream crossings and wait for the hikers to reassemble.
- The lead hiker should stop at designated landmarks for a head count and review the current location, so hikers know where they are.
- At all stops, the leader should give the last hiker a few minutes for a drink of water and avoid setting off just as this person(s) catches up. The leader should ask if any hiker is not ready before starting again, giving every hiker a chance to speak up.
- If anyone steps off the trail for any reason, e.g., to take a comfort stop, they should tell a fellow hiker and leave their backpack on the trail perpendicular to where they



stepped off. This will alert the sweep that someone has taken a powder, and to wait for the hiker to return to the trail.

- As a safety measure, the leader and the sweep should both carry whistles, compasses, and first aid packs. (Such items are recommended for all hikers.)
- All hikers should keep the hiker in front of them in sight.
- The leader should consider providing a copy of the hike map to all hikers; review the route on the map at the trailhead before the hike starts; and call out significant landmarks or tricky turns along the route.
- The leader should have a time line for the hike in mind that anticipates when the hike should reach key points on the hike route and includes a time to turn around even if the hike objective has not been reached.

The preceding section on Standard Procedures describes many of the parameters of PATC hikes. The following section describes the steps in planning a hike that will be offered by PATC.

## PLANNING A HIKE

Careful planning is the most important ingredient in insuring a successful hike. The planning process involves many steps to insure that the hike unfolds smoothly and safely. The first is deciding the details of the desired hike (e.g., when, where, and for whom this hike is intended); making an all-important trip, maybe more than one, to scout the route and record the details of the terrain, and so forth; writing up the hike to post on the website; laying out the details of what is to happen at the designated meeting spot and at the trailhead; describing how the hike will be run; and enumerating the post-hike responsibilities of the leader.

A helpful step involves asking questions from the perspective of a participant as well as a leader: "If I were a participant, what would I want to know?" "How do I want this trip to work?" "As the leader, what do I want the participants to know?" The payoff for the attention given to the planning process is that participants will have a good experience and will want to come out for another hike.

### **The Planning Process**

#### **Deciding on the details**

The hardest part of planning a hike is deciding on the details, especially the first one or two decisions. However, once those first decisions are made, many, if not most, of the other details will flow naturally from them. Say, for example, the aim is to lead a D-level hike, that is, about 5 miles with limited elevation gain. There are a number of resources to help in finding an appropriate hike: reviewing PATC maps and guidebooks or guidebooks published by other groups; using some of the internet resources that are available such as [hikingupward.com](http://www.patc.net), [midatlantichikes.com](http://www.patc.net), or PATC hikes of the month on the PATC website ([http://www.patc.net/PATC/PATC Trails/Hike/Hikes of the Month.aspx](http://www.patc.net/PATC/PATC%20Trails/Hike/Hikes%20of%20the%20Month.aspx)); or asking other leaders for suggestions.

In deciding where to go, take into account weather conditions, number of daylight hours, and other such factors that vary seasonally and could impinge on hiking conditions (e.g., ice on the trail, an early sunset).

In addition to deciding on the route for the hike, there are a number of other details, many of which will be predetermine by the route chosen. Among them are whether the hike is on state or federal land and whether any permits are needed from the land management agency. Permit information is usually located on the park's website.

#### **The date and time of the hike:**

Most group hikes happen on the weekend because that's when most people are available. But many people like hikes during the week after work, especially urban hikes that include a visit to a local pub or watering place. PATC also has a large contingent of hikers who have

free time during the day (e.g., retirees, stay at home parents), and in fact has three organized week-day outing programs. During the week, hikes that are easy to get to and avoid rush hour traffic are most popular; save long drives for the weekends.

### **Configuration of the hike:**

There are three basic hike configurations, each with its advantages and disadvantages.

**Loop or circuit hike:** The hike route starts and ends at the same point. The advantage of a loop hike is that there are few if any repeats. The disadvantage of a loop hike is the limited number of options for them compared to other configurations. There are, however, several PATC hiking guides that are devoted to loop or circuit hikes.

**Linear hike:** The hike route starts and ends at different points, and may or may not use more than one trail. The advantage of a linear hike is that the options for this configuration are almost unlimited. The disadvantage is that a car shuttle, which requires significant logistical preplanning, is required.

**Out-and-back hike:** The hike route follows a route out for a specified number of miles or to a specified point and then returns along the same route. The advantage of an out-and-back is the high degree of flexibility and adaptability to meet the requirements of a varied group of hikers. The disadvantage is that the route repeats itself completely (although most hikers agree that the route looks entirely different out and back).

**Frying pan or lariat hike:** The hike route starts and ends with an out-and-back segment with a loop or circuit segment in the middle.

Other elements closely related to hike configuration are distance and strenuousness. Refer to the section on Standard Procedures for a description of the hike rating scale based on number of miles and elevation gain.

### **Scouting the hike route**

The next crucial, not to be skipped, step is to scout the hike, EVEN IF it is a well-known hike. Details of the terrain, intersecting trails, and other salient features that might not have been meaningful other times on the trail will become apparent. Trail conditions can change even over a short period of time. Pay special attention to options for cutting the hike short and the shortest exit routes. Note the county in which the hike is located and the emergency numbers for that county. Also make careful note of the driving directions to reach the trailhead including the GPS coordinates if available, the number of parking spaces, and whether a car shuttle is needed. (Many of the hike resources noted above include driving directions and they may also be available from hike leaders who have led the same hike in the past.)

Scouting the hike will provide accurate information about many important aspects of the hike:

- The level of difficulty, including number of miles, pace, amount of elevation gain, nature of terrain (e.g., type of surface [natural or paved], rockiness, steepness of climbs, number of stream crossings), and notable features of the area (e.g., predominant wildflowers, special views or points of interest);
- The number and location of hiker collection points (e.g., a specific metro stop, spot along route to trailhead, and the trailhead itself) that are needed can be determined, and included in the website description;
- For hikes requiring a car shuttle, logistics of how it will work can be worked out, and conveyed to hikers before leaving the meeting location;
- Transit time from meeting place (or central location if no meeting place is planned) and trailhead; Make sure the transit time gets people to the meeting place or trailhead at the appointed departure time (NO grace period!).
- Detailed directions to the trailhead (can participants leave their cars there?);
- Written turn by turn directions can be developed and GPS coordinates identified;
- The number of people that will be allowed on the hike and whether or not children and dogs are allowed. Some parks have regulations about how large a group may be. Leave No Trace and PATC guidelines suggest no more than 25 people in a group, including the leader(s). In addition to potentially being more damaging to the trail, groups larger than 25 tend to be less enjoyable for hikers and the leader. The recommended group size for backcountry hikes and hikes in wilderness areas are even less. Another reason for limiting the number of hikers who may sign up for the hike is to lessen the likelihood that there will be a wide disparity in hiking ability, which leads to a wide separation of the group during the hike.

### **Writing Up the Hike Description for the Website**

The write-up is a commercial for the hike and also an opportunity to make sure that all of the details of a successful hike have been considered. The description should give people a good idea about what they can expect on the hike.

- Provide enough details that potential hikers can make a good guess as to whether the advertised hike is appropriate for them. Suggest the level of prior hiking experience needed, e.g., number of miles, pace. Invite people with additional questions to pose them on meetup.

- The amount of fluid (2 liters, more in hot weather) and snacks as well as the equipment and clothing each hiker should carry with them (e.g., a headlamp if hike might run late, ice walkers or other traction gear if there is the possibility of ice on the trail). Suggest the kind of footwear needed (e.g., substantial hiking boots, trail runners). Remind hikers to dress in layers, especially in cold weather (wool or synthetics, not cotton), and to bring gloves or mittens, ear muffs, hat, rain gear, and so on as indicated by the weather report. These details can also be repeated in the safety message on the sign-up sheet.
- Meeting time and place. Most hikes meet at well-known parking lots, often metro or commuter lots, to form car pools. In Northern Virginia, these include the commuter lot in Centreville, Woodbridge, Sterling W&OD Bike Trail Parking Lot, Vienna and East Falls Church Metro; or in Maryland, Grosvenor and Shady Grove Metro lots, and Carderock. The meeting times are usually 8 or 9 a.m. Both time and place are determined by the hike leader and the location of the hike. Starting times for D hikes can be later. The leader should ask hikers to arrive 15 minutes before the specified departure time to sign in and to form car pools, so that the hike may promptly depart the meeting location.

### **Leading the Hike**

After the plans for an upcoming hike have been carefully thought through and a detailed description has been posted on the website, the leader's focus turns to insuring that the hike runs smoothly and safely for all of the participants, from the time of their arrival at the meeting spot at the beginning of the hike to their return to that spot at the end of the hike.

### **Before the hike**

Once a hike is announced, a first step in insuring a successful hike is to answer prospective hiker phone calls and meetup questions. These calls, emails, or contacts through meetup are an opportunity to screen potential participants to help them decide if they are capable of handling the hike that is proposed. If the description is well written, most people will be able to screen themselves. In some cases, these pre-hike contacts might lead to a suggestion that a hike at either a higher or lower difficulty level might be more appropriate. Be wary of promising that the hike will end by a specific time; even with careful planning, there are many things that may delay the end of a hike, e.g., an injured or lost hiker, a slower pace than expected. When the hike will end and hikers will return to their cars, based on the length and pace of the hike and the driving time, can be estimated but not guaranteed.

There are several documents the leader will need to have prepared to hand out to the hikers and other tasks for the leader to complete before the hike.

- Prepare a set of detailed written driving directions to the trailhead for each driver. Determine the carpool fee - the amount each hiker should give to the driver to reimburse them for driving.

- It is the leader's decision whether to provide each hiker with a copy of the hike map with the name and location of the hike and the route marked in color. An alternative is to put a link to the hike map on the meet-up site for hikers who want a map to download prior to the hike.
- File a Trip Plan with significant other or responsible person who will not be on the hike.
- Keep track of the weather forecast before the hike and get the current weather forecast the day of the hike. Keep the names and contact information for those who sign up so that any updates including weather changes that might impact the hike or cause it to be cancelled can be passed on.
- Complete the information on the sign-in sheet including the emergency phone number for location of the hike (e.g., SNP).

### **The day of the hike – at the meeting location**

The hikers should arrive at the meeting location at least 15 minutes before the start of the hike; the leader should arrive at least 15 minutes early, but 30 minutes early is even better to sign hikers in and make up carpools. There are a number of tasks to be completed here.

- Ensure that each hiker signs in as they arrive and that the information entered is complete with signature and emergency number. Before leaving the meeting location, take a head count and make sure the number matches the number of people on the sign-in sheet.
- Distribute detailed driving directions.
- Remind hikers of the preparations they need to have made to go on the hike (included as part of the description of the hike). Do not allow anyone who is unprepared to go on the hike. The list of preparations included in the description is repeated on the sign-up sheet under "Safety Message."
- Check with new hikers to assure they have the necessary items – water or other fluids, snacks, proper shoes, etc. Assess whether everyone appears to measure up to the level of difficulty of the hike. If someone does not, this is the time to inform them that they will not be participating. (The hike leader always has the authority to make this judgment.)
- Request that hikers let the leader know privately if they know of any potential medical or physical issues, e.g., diabetes, knee problems, that could interfere with their ability to complete the hike.

- Go over the driving directions, parking at trailhead, car pool fee, and park entry fee; suggest a “regrouping” spot along the way for gas, a bathroom break, picking up additional snacks and water if needed. Suggest a caravan if any drivers are unsure of the directions.
- Arrange car pools; assume four people per car and at least one extra for car shuttles. Drivers must volunteer to drive, and riders must then make their own arrangements with the drivers. (The hike leader, for reasons of liability, cannot assign drivers or riders.)
- Make certain each driver has the driving instructions. Try to balance the number of people in each car, and if possible, have someone in each car with a park pass if the hike is in SNP or another federal or state park with an entrance fee.
- Give an estimate of when it is expected that the hike to return to the meeting location; always err on giving a later time and remind hikers this is an estimate, not a promise.

### **The day of the hike – at the trailhead**

- Have everyone introduce themselves.
- If there are hikers meeting the hike here who were not at the meeting location, make sure they sign in.
- Describe the trail (distance, elevation change, hike rating, terrain, stream crossings, rock scrambles, view points, and other special features); and the hike (pace, regrouping points, bailout points, places of interest, and special instructions such as the signs to be used, if any, to mark the trail). Maps, if they are being made available, are distributed at the trailhead.
- Assign a sweep even for small groups. The sweep should be reliable and should preferably know the trail well. The sweep should never leave anyone behind; caution hikers to stay behind the lead hiker and ahead of the sweep, and to leave their pack on the trail if they must go off it for any reason so the sweep will not pass them by. Leader and sweep should both carry a first aid kit.
- Indicate how long the hike will be on the trail, including lunch, breaks, and views; and where and when lunch stop will be.

### **The day of the hike – on the trail**

- Bringing along a cell phone if one is available is a good idea, but be mindful that cell phones frequently do not work in remote areas of the trail and should not be relied upon as a primary method of contact. Take sign-in sheet along and periodically take

a head count. Place sign-up sheet inside a ziplock brought for this purpose (perhaps with the hike map) to keep it from getting wet and destroyed.

- Wait at each trail junction even if only a few yards from the previous junction - every trail junction is important! Another alternative is to use a mark to indicate the right trail. If marks are used, clearly explain the marking convention to all hikers at the beginning of the hike and use the mark consistently. Watch out for false trails!
- Do not let people go ahead or go back by themselves. If someone needs to return the cars, if possible, the leader should communicate directly with this person and understand what the person plans to do when they get back to the car. If it is not the leader that talks to the person then someone else should have a clear, detailed understanding of what the person plans to do.
- Monitor the group and their needs; encourage people to make it known if a problem develops, even if they think it is minor. Check with the sweep from time to time; trail junctions and significant stream crossings provide a good time to do this. Encourage people to drink plenty of water - more than they think they need - remind them to drink whenever the group stops.
- The leader should be prepared for emergencies; both the sweep and the leader should carry a first aid kit with which to take care of minor cuts and scrapes, blisters, bee stings, and so on. Know the ten essentials and carry them.
- It is the leader's responsibility to keep the group together and to find lost hikers. Do not adjourn the hike until everyone has been accounted for.
- In the case of an accident or altercation involving any member of the group, the leader should fill out the PATC incident report form, follow up on the incident to be sure everyone is OK, and send the form to ATC headquarters as soon as possible.
- If someone gets lost or injured and needing rescue, alert authorities by dialing 911 and explaining the problem. (The hike leader should know what jurisdictions the hike will pass through, and should prepare emergency procedures in advance, including knowing who to call.

### **The day of the hike – at the end of the hike**

At the end of the hike, the leader should:

- offer nonmembers a chance to join the club; to further that cause, distribute club brochures/application blanks to those who want them;
- do a final head count to make certain no one has been left behind on the trail;



- assess everyone's condition and ensure drivers are safe to drive;
- make sure no driver leaves without every hiker who was in their car upon arrival;
- record hike notes for future use, including the time to complete hike, speed of hikers, driving, any unique observations, weather conditions, and so forth.
- complete the required paperwork and submit it, including the trail report forms, the sign-up sheet, and signed waivers to PATC headquarters; be sure to write the date of the hike, leader's name and phone number, and the hike length in miles. (The hike sign-up sheet and liability waiver form, and the incident report form are available for download as pdf files using the indicated links on the meet-up site.)

### **A Few Additional Details**

If a PATC hike is co-sponsored with another hiking club, PATC's sign-up sheet/waiver form should be used.

If the trail or any section of it was in bad shape and it is one of the trails maintained by PATC, report the problem(s) to [trails@patc.net](mailto:trails@patc.net), using the trail condition report.

There is no charge for PATC hikes, but the club requests that all riders reimburse the driver for reasonable costs. The hike leader determines the carpool costs in advance of the hike using the table below.

Price/Gallon Cents per Mile

- \$4.00/\$0.07
- \$3.75 - \$3.50/\$0.06
- \$2.75 - \$3.25/\$0.05
- \$2.25 - \$2.50/\$0.04
- \$1.50 - \$2.00/\$0.03

A hike leader may elect to reproduce a portion of a PATC map under certain conditions. The leader should use the current copy of the most recent edition of the PATC map and reproduce only the specific portion of the map that the group will be hiking. An inset identifying the specific map and giving credit to PATC (see below), and a bar scale and a north arrow should be included on the reproduced section of the map.

PATC Map\_, Edition\_\_

Photocopy made with permission of: Potomac Appalachian Trail Club  
118 Park St., Vienna, VA 22180

PATC Maps may be purchased at PATC headquarters store (open 11:30-1:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, and Wednesday evening 6:00-8:00 p.m.); from PATC's on-line store at [www.patc.net/store](http://www.patc.net/store); by mail order; or by calling 703/242-0315, ext 103.

## APPENDIX I

### PERSONAL EQUIPMENT AND 10 ESSENTIALS

#### Personal Equipment/Basic Principles

1. **Avoid cotton.** Cotton absorbs water (either from sweat or precipitation), keeps it close to the skin, and is slow to dry, all of which increases the risk of hypothermia, the chance for blisters, and discomfort. Synthetic materials, wool, and silk do not absorb water, dry quickly, and will provide warmth and padding even when wet.
2. **Dress in layers.** Adding and removing layers of clothing allows for appropriate adjustments as weather conditions and levels of exertion change.
  - a. **Skin layer.** Traps insulating air against the skin for warmth and wicks moisture away from the skin toward the outer clothing.
  - b. **Insulation layer.** Keeps heat inside and cold outside, and absorbs moisture from the skin and releases it to the outside.
  - c. **Shell or protection layer.** Blocks wind and water.

#### **Footwear:**

1. **Hiking Boots.** Boots with good ankle support are highly recommended. Waterproofing of some sort is also recommended.
2. **Socks.** Generally, it is best to wear two pairs of socks:
  - a. thin, wicking liner socks worn next to the skin to wick moisture away; and over them.
  - b. thicker synthetic or wool socks that provide padding and warmth. The logic of two-sock system is that any friction (primary cause of blisters) inside the boot will occur between the liner socks and the outer socks, rather than the sock and the foot. However, some thick socks claim not to require liner socks.

#### **Clothing:**

Consider treating hiking clothes with an anti-tick solution or purchasing pre-treated clothes.

3. **Shirt.** This may be a synthetic material or, in winter, wool. Synthetics wick moisture away well, and both synthetics and wool provide warmth even when wet. In general -

except, possibly, on hot, dry summer days - cotton shirts are not recommended because they retain moisture, do not dry quickly and do not retain heat when wet.

4. **Pants.** These may be synthetic or wool, but not cotton.
5. **Rain Jacket.** In the mid-Atlantic region, the weather is never entirely predictable; rain is always possible. A rain jacket may also serve as a windbreaker. The best materials are waterproof and windproof yet “breathe,” allowing the transfer of moisture from the skin.
6. **Head Protection.** Head gear should protect against sun; provide warmth and protection from the rain, and in the winter, head protection is essential for keeping warm.

#### **Other Essential Clothing:**

Depending on the time of year or other conditions, the following items may be needed:

7. **Gloves.** In addition to providing warmth during the cold, gloves should keep hands dry during rain and snow. They are also useful if rock scrambling is planned.
8. **Rain Pants.** Like the rain jacket, the best materials are waterproof and windproof, yet “breathe,” allowing the transfer of moisture from the skin.
9. **Long underwear (shirt and pants).** Silk, wool, synthetics, or a combination of some of those are used to create a material that retains heat while wicking away moisture from sweat.

#### **Other items to consider:**

10. Gaiters are available in ankle length to knee length; they protect boots from the invasion of small rocks, snow, rain, stream water during shallow crossings, and a multitude of other irritants and dangers as well as providing extra protection from critters when walking through high grassy areas.
11. Trekking poles add stability and transfer impact from legs to shoulders.

#### **The 10 Essentials**

The following list is a guideline for what to carry, not a list of absolutes. The emphasis in this list is on “essentials.” What else is carried should be determined by specific hiking conditions and personal needs.

Each person should carry their own 10 essential kit in case they get separated from the group. The 10 essentials should be kept together in one small bag that can be easily taken along if or when the pack is left for any reason.

The original 10 essentials list was developed by the Seattle Mountaineering Club (“The Mountaineers”) in the 1950s to deal with the specific conditions encountered in high-elevation mountains of the Northwest. The list below is adapted from the original to meet the conditions for most PATC hikes.

### **The 10 Essentials**

- 1. Map and compass** (and know how to use them); GPS if one is available
- 2. Water** (including purifier and/or purification tablets); electrolytes
- 3. Emergency Food** (high in protein)
- 4. Personal First Aid Kit**, with emphasis on “personal”: includes personal medication, a first aid book, toilet paper in plastic bags; trowel; SAM splint; Bivy sack or space blanket
- 5. Flashlight** and/or headlamp (including spare bulb and batteries)
- 6. Extra clothing:**
  - (a) Rain/wind/sun protection
  - (b) extra socks in plastic bag
  - (c) extra shoe laces
  - (d) hat; gloves
- 7. Pocket knife or multi-purpose tool; duct tape**
- 8. Waterproof matches/lighter in plastic bag (and fire starter)**
- 9. Plastic bags** (2 33-gallon, 2 small) or emergency blankets
- 10. Signaling device** (whistle, mirror, flares, radio or telephone)

### **And More...**

- 1. Sun glasses and sunscreen**
- 2. Pencil and paper**
- 3. Insect repellent**

## **APPENDIX II**

### **LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLES**

The PATC has adopted the following Leave No Trace Principles for all activities:

- 1) Plan Ahead and Prepare.
- 2) Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces.
- 3) Dispose of Waste Properly.
- 4) Leave What You Find.
- 5) Minimize Campfire Impacts.
- 6) Respect Wildlife.
- 7) Be Considerate of Other Visitors.

## APPENDIX III

### Insurance

Each leader should carefully vet the planned hike before announcing it and adding it to the hike schedule; take steps at several points before the hike, including at the trailhead, to assure that hikers are well prepared for the hike they have chosen; and follow well thought-out procedures during the hike to keep the group safe and together. Even so, things can go wrong from something as small as a sprained ankle to a serious injury or death of a hiker. No one wants to assume that the worst will happen, but things happen and it's important to be protected.

PATC hike leaders are covered by the club's liability insurance when involved in official PATC hike leading activities. If individuals also lead for groups other than PATC, they may want to consider personal liability insurance.

Liability insurance protects the purchaser (the "insured") from the risks of liabilities imposed by lawsuits and similar claims. It protects the insured in the event he or she is sued for claims that come within the coverage of the insurance policy.

Liability insurance is designed to offer specific protection against third party insurance claims, i.e., payment is not typically made to the insured, but rather to someone suffering loss who is not a party to the insurance contract. In general, damage caused intentionally as well as contractual liability are not covered under liability insurance policies. When a claim is made, the insurance carrier has the duty (and right) to defend the insured.

### Liability Waivers

A liability waiver is a legal document that a person who participates in an activity may sign to acknowledge the risks involved in his or her participation. By doing so, the company attempts to remove legal liability from the business or person responsible for the activity. The enforceability of such a waiver depends on state law, a jury, and the language of the waiver.

The hike leader must have all participants sign a waiver before starting the hike. A sign-in sheet that includes a liability waiver is attached to this training document. Leaders must insure that all hike participants sign the waiver before starting the hike. [Download and print out the Hike Signup Sheet and Liability Waiver](#), from the Hike Leader WEB page.