

LEAVE NO TRACE

The Leave No Trace initiative has gained momentum as more people become aware of the importance of protecting the environment and natural areas in it. Anyone who enjoys camping and hiking has a responsibility to leave the areas they visit looking as if they were never there at all. Most people understand the importance of picking up litter and not disturbing natural spaces. However, it's possible to do harm to the environment even without knowing that you're having a negative impact. Learn how to enjoy the outdoors without causing harm to your natural surroundings. Whether you frequent campgrounds or you're more of a day visitor to hiking trails, you can take simple steps to preserve nature.

Note: Newcastle Trails agrees with the goals of Leave No Trace. **Litter** can be a problem, especially bags of dog poop; carry it out for proper disposal. **Rocks** should not be removed, except for hazardous rocks on the trail. Small painted rocks may be "posed" or exchanged. **Plants** should not be picked, but in Newcastle it's OK to remove encroaching vegetation or invasive weeds (blackberries, holly, ivy, etc.). For large-scale weed removal, contact the City at volunteer@newcastlewa.gov and let them know your plans; they have forms to send you.

What Is "Leave No Trace?"

Leave No Trace principles are a guide for people who visit natural areas. These principles apply to both "frontcountry" areas that are accessible by car and "backcountry" areas that require hiking to reach.

- Plan and prepare before you go.
- Spend time on durable surfaces only (designated trails and campgrounds).
- Dispose of all waste properly.
- Do not disturb things you find.
- Minimize the impacts of campfires.
- Respect the wildlife.
- Be considerate of others.

How to Hike and Leave No Trace

Even if you only visit an area for a day trip, it's still important to use these principles. Ideally, you'll only take photos and memories with you when you leave and no one arriving after you will be able to tell you were there.

- Learn about the area before you go so you know the type of terrain you might be hiking in and what type of weather to expect.
- Walk single-file on designated trails, and don't take shortcuts that will harm the landscape. Walk through mud puddles instead of around them, or you might widen the hiking trail. And don't trample plants.

- Don't leave any trash behind, including biodegradable items such as apple cores and banana peels. If you find others' trash while you're hiking, pick it up.
- Don't move rocks or pick plants.
- Don't approach animals, and never feed them human food. If you have a pet with you, keep it restrained.
- Be respectful of other trail users, keeping your voice down. Obey all posted trail rules, including yielding the right of way when necessary. Wear earth-tone colors to minimize your visual impact.