



## GUIDELINES FOR WOMEN OUTDOORS TRIPS

### Why Guidelines...a philosophical statement

A Women Outdoors' experience is a shared experience. Both the trip leader and the participant have certain levels of responsibility and both need to fully understand her role. The leader's role includes carrying the major responsibility for maximizing the safety and welfare of the group and promoting a quality experience for all involved. Accidents are as much a result of group dynamics as external factors. Each participant is responsible for preparing herself appropriately for the specific trip, heeding the trip leader's directions, and accepting responsibility for her own actions and attitudes while on the trip. Each woman holds significant potential for contributing toward a positive and rewarding experience for all.

The **Guidelines for Women Outdoors Trips** have been developed to provide information and guidance for leaders, participants and Regional Contacts. Women who aspire to lead should seek training and/or insure that their skills are appropriate for the leadership role they intend to assume. As an organization, Women Outdoors is committed to assisting interested women gain needed skills.

**What is a Women Outdoors Trip** - any outdoor activity from bird watching to rock climbing. In order for a trip to qualify as a Women Outdoors trip:

- o the leader must be a current and active member of Women Outdoors;
- o the trip must be open to all interested Women Outdoors members who meet the skill level required;
- o the trip must be announced in a Women Outdoors publications or at a Women Outdoors event;
- o the leader must have informed the Regional Contact about the specifics of the trip; and,
- o the leader and participants must be familiar with the **Women Outdoors Guidelines for Women Outdoors Trips**.

### Guidelines...

A Woman Outdoors trip can be an exciting opportunity to learn new skills, enjoy the beauty of our natural world and share a meaningful experience with women who have similar interests. In order to insure that both you and other members of you group have a safe and rewarding trip, we strongly encourage you to read and adhere to the following recommendations that pertain to your role during a Women Outdoors trip. By definition, an accident is something you don't expect to happen.

## **Participant Guidelines**

- Participants are encouraged but not required to be members of Women Outdoors. Members often have first priority on trips that have a limited enrollment and/or can participate at a lower trip fee.
- Prepare for your trip by following the directions and recommendations made by your trip leader such as: achieving the physical conditioning necessary for the trip, bringing the proper equipment, the necessary food, water, etc.
- Leave information about your trip location and itinerary with a friend or family.
- Share any medical concerns or needs with the trip leader and accurately portray your skill level to the trip leader.
- Understand and accept responsibility for your own safety and the safety of others by acting prudently and exercising good judgment.
- Be aware of your own limits: take responsibility to do only what you feel competent doing on a trip and take the initiative to express your discomfort when necessary.
- Work cooperatively with the trip leader and others as part of your group.
- Become aware of and use sound environmental practices.

## **Trip Leader Guidelines**

- All Women Outdoors trip leaders must be current members of Women Outdoors, Inc.
- First experience the activity you are leading as a participant so that you understand the participant's perspective and the skills required. This will better enable you to represent the trip to the participants.
- Be sure that you have the appropriate knowledge and skill level for the trip that you are leading.
- Promote group cooperation and foster good communication among participants.
- Gather the appropriate resources (maps, compass, etc – see list the end of the Guidelines).
- Be knowledgeable of and practice the basic safety procedures appropriate to the trip you are leading, e.g. water safety, mountaineering, etc.
- Seek out activities and experiences to develop or enhance your outdoor leadership skills.

## **Before the trip...**

- Notify the Regional Contact that you are planning a Women Outdoors trip.
- If appropriate, have a co-leader or assistant leader on the trip.
- Advertise the trip in a Women Outdoors publication or announce it at a Women Outdoors event.
- Accurately communicate the level of difficulty of the trip or activity to all potential participants.
- Give accurate information to participants as to what to expect on the trip, as well as what necessary equipment, clothing and food to bring.
- Know the physical capabilities, medical and emotional needs and skill levels of the participants prior to the trip.

- o Be honest in communicating your skills, limitations and expectations to participants and ask that they reciprocate.
- o Consider having a pre-trip planning meeting with all participants so that you may share information about the details of the trip.
- o Develop and emergency procedure plan specific to the trip and communicate that plan to the co-leader and/or participants prior to the trip; be able to follow through on the plan; leave a copy of the plan along with details of trip route, logistics and expected time of return with a non-participant and/or ranger (forest, park or wilderness). Carry a list of emergency phone numbers and a cell phone or change for making emergency calls.
- o Know the Women Outdoors emergency publicity and accident reporting system and policy for talking with the media. (This information is available from your Regional Contact or any Women Outdoors board member.)
- o Obtain timely and accurate information on the conditions where you are going, and on weather forecasts and other characteristics of the area.
- o Get assumption of risk forms, emergency procedures and accident report forms from your Regional Contact prior to your trip.
- o Require all participants to read, discuss, and sign the assumption of risk statement.
- o Recognize that as a prudent leader you must carry a first aid kit appropriate to the trip and either personally have the appropriate first aid training or have a designated person with that training on the trip.
- o Make sure that the group has the appropriate equipment for the activities planned. If this is a beginner's trip, you may want to check each individual's gear as the group packs.

### **During the trip...**

- o Recognize that you are responsible for the safety of the group you lead.
- o Exercise good judgment especially under pressure, and encourage good judgment on the part of the women you lead.
- o Teach, practice and encourage sound environmental ethics and low-impact use of the wilderness.
- o Be able to draw on your personal strengths and those of the participants in stressful and/or emergency situations, should they arise; the leader can make a major contribution to the positive attitude of the group in difficult emotional and environmental circumstances.

### **After the trip...**

- o As a follow-up to any experience, a final group trip review/evaluation/discussion will provide information that may be helpful in planning your next trip.
  - Recognize that any trip may be a challenge to a participant on some level. Therefore, a post-trip group discussion is important to give all participants an opportunity to air their feelings before ending the experience
  - Have participants fill out an anonymous trip evaluation and give suggestions for improving future trips.
- o Give the assumption of risk statements to your Regional Contact who will keep them on file.

## Leadership skills enhancement...goals for the future

- Strive to balance people skills and technical skills. Seek to develop skills in the area with which you felt most uncomfortable. Develop advanced skill in the activities you would like to lead.
- Take advantage of Women Outdoors leadership training.
- Read accident reports from various outdoor programs to learn how accidents occur and how you might prevent accidents in similar situations.
- Acquire and maintain Advanced First Aid skills.
- Acquire and maintain Advanced life saving or Water Safety Instructor certification if you lead or would like to lead water-based activities.
- Learn how to handle wilderness emergencies, e.g. emergency shelter and bivouacking techniques.
- Learn basic weather principles.
- Teach skills to others on trips that you lead.
- Give Women Outdoors workshops if you have valuable skills you can share.