

Nawakwa Outdoor Association of New York, Inc. (NOANY)

Hikes and Outings Committee: Policy for Becoming a Hike Leader

[Note: Hikes can be grouped as either informal or publicized (official). Informal hikes are organized and led on a spontaneous basis among members and are of varying lengths. Such hikes are not published and are not qualifying, and the leaders of such do not fall under these policy guidelines. Publicized hikes are official club sponsored events and can be either qualifying or non-qualifying. Qualifying hikes need to be posted to the website/Trail Marker, be five or more miles in length, and be led by an approved hike leader as per these guidelines. Non-qualifying hikes, which are also published and led by an approved hike leader, can be walks, excursions, or hikes of any kind. Published qualifying and non-qualifying hikes are 'official' and leaders of both must be approved as per these guidelines. [Note: Published/posted means that the hike is listed in the Trail Marker under the 'Hikes and Outings' heading or posted on the website under the 'Come Hike With Us' heading.]

Hiking, whether by yourself or with a group of friends, is one of the core outdoor activities of the club and one of the reasons why a person is attracted to the Nawakwa Outdoor Association.

Our Hikes and Outings Committee helps to organize and publish year-round hikes for the members as well as train future hike leaders. Taking part in a published hike, or becoming a hike leader oneself, continues this core hiking activity. Such published hikes are official club-sponsored events and are led by a qualified and approved leader.

The following procedures outline the requirements for becoming an NOANY Hike Leader:

1. All hike leaders and leader-trainees for NOANY must be members in good standing.
2. On the path to becoming an official leader:
 - a. Leader-trainees must be given a copy (written or digital) of the Nawakwa Outdoor Association Guidelines for Hike Leaders.
 - b. Leader-trainees must additionally review the guidelines (in person, by phone, or by video conference) with an approved leader and be given the opportunity to ask questions. Multiple trainees may review the guidelines with a leader simultaneously, via a Zoom meeting, for example.

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- c. The potential Hike Leader must
 - i. Take part (as an individual trainee co-leader) in one hike led by an experienced NOANY hike leader.
 - ii. Plan a local hike (in Harriman State Park, along the East Hudson, or in northern New Jersey, for example) and lead it, with an existing hike leader assisting as co-leader as necessary.
3. Before completed training, the trainee is to have taken a basic First Aid Course, as per these Guidelines.
4. The training-leader should take note of the trainee's ability to follow the club's Guidelines for leading hikes. When the trainee is ready, the Hikes and Outings Committee Chair will provide a written report to the Nawakwa Board, with a recommendation regarding the trainee's readiness to lead official hikes independently.
5. The Board may approve a trainee to lead hikes independently following a single such hike or may request that the trainee lead additional hikes accompanied by an experienced leader before giving its approval.
6. The Board is under no obligation to approve a trainee as a hike leader after any number of accompanied events.
7. Once a trainee has been approved as a hike leader, he or she should lead at least three NOANY club hikes before being eligible to act themselves as a trainer to prospective hike leader trainees.

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Guidelines for Hike Leaders

Planning an Official Hike

In planning an official, published hike, a leader must consider, among other things, (1) the location of the event and any directions to the trailhead or meeting place, as needed, (2) the route, (3) the season of the year and the weather to be expected, (4) the maximum number of participants desired, (5) the physical abilities and outdoor skills that will be required of participants in order to complete the event safely, (6) the trip length and terrain and approximate duration, and (7) any particular equipment that would be needed. A decision should be made as to each of these factors prior to writing up a description of the hike and sending it the Hikes and Outing Committee for approval and publication to the Trail Marker and Website.

The leader should always be familiar with the area and the trails being used, carry a map of the area, and carry basic first aid equipment as suitable to the trip.

Posting Hikes for NOANY

1. After planning the hike, the write-up about it should first be submitted to the Hikes and Outings Committee Chair for approval.
2. Once approved, the write-up would be submitted by the Committee Chair to the Trail Marker editor for inclusion in the Trail Marker and to the Webmaster for posting on the website. Notices for publication in the Trail Marker are always due by a certain date, usually ten days before the month of publication. The Trail Marker is published bi-monthly from April through September, and every three-months from October through March.
3. Hike write-ups should include approximate number of miles, a description of the terrain and elevation to be covered, the difficulty and the expected pace appropriate to the difficulty of the hike. All participants should be reminded of the need for proper footwear, bringing lunch, water, rain gear etc. Any necessary equipment, such as micro-spikes in winter, should be noted. The leader may list the specific meeting time and place or may choose to give that information only to those who register for the event.
4. Prior to the hike and as participants are registering, the leader should be available to answer reasonable questions posed by email or phone.

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Screening Participants

When a person registers, repeat the description of the hike. If you do not know the person and their abilities, ask them about their hiking experiences and ensure that they have the proper gear, food, water, clothing, etc. that are needed. The leader must tactfully refuse to register those persons who do not have or cannot acquire the physical ability, outdoor skills, or equipment necessary to complete the planned outing safely. While refusing to register an interested person is an unpleasant task, it is necessary to protect the unqualified from the consequences of their own over-enthusiasm and to ensure that the outing will be safe and enjoyable for those who are registered.

Cancellation

Immediately prior to the hike, the leader must determine if the weather forecast is suitable and make the go/no go decision. If the leader decides to cancel the hike, he or she must contact the registered participants in advance to inform them of the decision; if contact with all cannot be made, the leader must be at the meeting place at the appointed time, when possible, to inform participants of the cancellation.

Gathering for the Hike

1. Before the start of the hike, all participants must sign the NOANY Liability Waiver.
2. The trip leader should count the number of participants at the start of the hike, periodically throughout the hike, and again at the end to account for everyone.
3. As long as the COVID pandemic continues, remind participants of the need to maintain a physical distance from one another and to put on a mask if that distance cannot be maintained.
4. A trail "sweep" should be designated for the hike and the participants of the trip should be kept between the trip leader and the sweep who is always at the end of the group.
5. Although a difficult thing to do after everyone has gathered for the start, should a participant come ill prepared or does not have the required gear, it is a leader's right and responsibility to tell the individual that they will not be able to join the hike and to state the reason (e.g., your hike write-up said, "crampons required," and they showed up without any).

On the Hike

1. Once a hike starts, the route, pace, and activities must be so arranged and conducted as to ensure the safety of the participant with the lowest level of physical ability and outdoor skills.
2. Throughout the hike, be aware of the group, the terrain, and the weather and modify your plans accordingly.
3. Don't go too fast. At the start, stop after 15-20 minutes or so for a water break and separation (explaining what that is, if necessary).
4. Keep the group together by stopping at junctions and stream crossings to wait for the sweep. At each stop, take a count and make sure that everyone is ok.

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5. Each hiker should remain in sight of the person following. If you see the group splitting into a "fast" and "slow" group, consider your options for closing the gap, such as slowing the pace overall or making more stops. The leader is responsible for keeping the group together.
6. Always keep safety in mind and remain flexible. Change plans or turn back if needed. If one of the participants becomes ill, end the hike and return to the starting point.

After the Hike

1. After the hike, please be sure to scan and email the Liability Waiver form to the Hikes and Outings Chair.
2. If the hike was a Qualifying event, the leader should write a short description of how well the Applicant did and forward this information to the Board of Directors and Membership Chair.
3. If there was a serious accident or incident during the hike, fill out and send the Accident/Incident report to the Hikes and Outings Chair who in turn will notify the Chapter Chair and the Board of Directors of the accident/incident.

First Aid Training

Potential Hike Leaders, before completing their training, should have taken a basic First Aid course. The following on-line course is recommended for a basic First Aid training:
eCPRcertification.com.

If you have another First Aid course you would like to take or are able to take an in-person training, please make this request known.

Please Note:

1. The Board has agreed to reimburse expenses for these courses. Hike Leader trainees must first get approval for such courses and reimbursement before signing up.
2. Most courses provide a two-year certificate, after which leaders will need to be re-certified.
3. Anyone with qualifications beyond a standard First Aid training (for example, from their work) would be exempt from having to take the First Aid course.
4. NOANY will purchase for each Hike Leader a standard First Aid kit for use when leading such club events. These will be provided as each trainee is close to finishing up their qualifications (so that the kits would be current).

***Thank you for volunteering to become a
Hike Leader for NOANY!***