Administrative Aspects of Leading Hikes with the AMC Southeastern Mass. Chapter Hiking Committee

Note: During the COVID19 period, all administrative procedures are supplemented or replaced by AMC rubrics. Please see Volunteer Led Activities Relaunch Rubric

This document summarizes information in the AMC Leader Handbook, and the recently updated AMC Leadership Requirements and Guidelines, and consolidates the information and appropriate hyperlinks in one place, and is written with COVID19 rubric in mind.

1) Planning and Listing SEM Hikes on the AMC trip listing system

Once recognized as an SEM Hiking leader, the Chapter Chair will provide that leader with permission to generate trip listings for the AMC online activities database (ACTDB). While this is a little intimidating at first, it's not so bad once you get the hang of it. Here's the link to the online guide.

The review steps to get a hike posted are as follows:

1. Enter your trip into the system
2. System forwards the trip to the Hiking Chair or Vice Chair for review
3. If approved it is forwarded to the Chapter Chair or Vice Chair for approval
4. If approved it goes live

If not approved at either step 2 or 3 it is returned to you for updating.

Please note that once a trip listing has been posted on the online system, it is very difficult to make modifications. This often involves having to first cancel the trip and then submitting a new listing for review and approval all over again. When you initially list the trip, the system will indicate its status as "Open." System will update to closed when it is full. Other changes require approver intervention.

It's a good idea to participate in the Hiking Committee's quarterly hike planning meetings where proposed hikes and dates fit into an overall hiking schedule that offers "something for everyone," with minimum scheduling conflicts. The quarterly planning meetings also provide a great opportunity for leaders and potential co-leaders to connect. We try to arrange for at least one of these quarterly meetings to be a face-to-face meeting (rather than a tele-conference), sometimes in a more-or-less centrally located restaurant or other venue.

The planning meetings are held the first Wednesday of the month in March, June, September, and December.

Otherwise be sure to check the current Hike offerings online to assess possible conflicts or overlaps in scheduling.

2) Screening and registering hike participants

Currently all hikes require registration, and the designated registrar for that hike (can be either the leader or one of the co-leaders) may screen potential participants via either email, telephone, casual discussions with other leaders, or a combination of all three.

Although probably a bit overkill for easier hikes, here's a handy checklist you can use to help you perform this screening. For most hikes, you can usually screen potential candidates by just asking them a few simple questions, such as: "Have you hiked with the AMC before?" "What hikes you have done recently?" (rather than at some undetermined point in the past…), and "What is your general physical condition?" It's also often a good idea to ask if the candidate has basic equipment such as appropriate (non-cotton) hiking duds, rain gear, well-broken in hiking boots, and good wool hiking socks. Based on their answers to these basic questions, you can usually determine whether or not you need to delve deeper into their recent experience, skill level, physical condition, or equipment.

If the registrar (possibly after conferring with other leaders/co-leaders) determines that the individual being screened is not up for this particular hike, they should recommend one or more alternate hikes that may be more appropriate for the individual's experience/fitness/capability level (and thus more enjoyable). Please always remember to be polite and respectful.

If you still have openings for the hike a week or two in advance, you have the option of sending a Short Notice Email on the SEM Short Notice Email List (SNEL) System to stimulate additional interest.

3) Preparing the "info sheet"

A week or two prior to the date of the scheduled hike, the trip leader (or designated co-leader under the leader's supervision) prepares and sends a comprehensive information ("info") sheet to all registered participants. The info sheet should include contact information for the leaders, a brief description of the hike, meeting time and location (with detailed directions to the trailhead), carpooling suggestions, and a checklist of what to wear and bring. Here is a sample info sheet, although many leaders also include additional information and/or a trail map with the route highlighted.

4) AMC Trip Sign In/Waiver Form

The AMC requires us to have all hike participants including co-leaders read and sign an electronic waiver sheet before participating in an official hike or other AMC activity. This is now part of the online registration process and is not done at the trailhead or start of the activity itself. In addition to protecting the club (and our leaders) from legal liability, it serves several other purposes. These include providing an accurate roster of all hike participants (including co-leaders but not the leader) and capturing contact names and phone numbers in case of an emergency.   The waiver includes specific language for COVID19 conditions. The hike leader or designated co-leader is responsible for making sure all participants complete the waiver sheet online. This can be verified by checking the registration listing for your activity as part of approving each participant. A roster of participants should be printed from the online list, and carried by the leader on the hike. Note there are different formats for printing the roster and simplest may be html if your browser formatting looks ok, but other formats are available (pdf etc.)

5) Post-activity reports

There are no official post-activity reports needed unless there is an incident. The roster does not need to be sent to AMC. Optional updates after leading a hike include sending pictures to the communication chair (if participants agree to allow pictures to be distributed) for possible use in social media for the chapter or in a subsequent Breeze newsletter.

Revised 12/28/2020 by Paul Brookes (Hiking Chair)