



2024 Interagency Wilderness Ranger Academy

Field and Skills Course Descriptions

During the application process you will have an opportunity to identify your prioritized ranking for field sessions on Wednesday afternoon and skills sessions on Thursday and Friday. Below you will find brief descriptions of each class. You will be notified of the specific courses you are enrolled in 2 weeks in advance of academy.

CONCURRENT FIELD SESSIONS (Wednesday, June 5 (afternoon))

Trail Maintenance Fundamentals *(1/2 day)*

The goal of this workshop is to build basic knowledge in trail assessment and maintenance solutions. We will discuss Best Management Practices for trail maintenance, teach participants how to read the landscape, and break down the assessment process to identify root causes of trail failures.

The objective of this workshop is to identify and discuss key concepts for effective trail maintenance and encourage future learning.

The target audience is trail and land managers, trail partner groups, and trail volunteers who have minimal experience. Attendees should bring sturdy shoes with ankle protection, long sleeve shirts, pants, gloves, eye protection, and a hard hat. Tools will be provided.

Campsite Naturalization, Campsite Inventory and Solitude Monitoring *(1/2 day)*

This hands-on course will focus on a combination of solitude and campsite data collection and restoration techniques for campsites in wilderness. Data collection methods and examples will be covered as they pertain to Wilderness Stewardship Performance (WSP) and assisting in making management decisions.

We will discuss campsite restoration techniques including how to break up and disperse fire rings, and iceberg rocks into inappropriate tent pads, and naturalize sites. Participants must provide their own personal protective equipment including hardhat, work gloves, eye protection, long sleeve shirt, long pants, and boots.



Working Safely with Pack Stock (1/2 day)

This course will be an introduction to working safely around pack and saddle animals and will cover equine behavior, and the differences between horses and mules. Students will learn how to safely approach, lead, and tie up animals. The class will include discussions about how stock can be used in wilderness and considerations when working with volunteers who have their own stock.

Participants will learn about equipment used for packing and be introduced to building a load for a pack animal. You will learn how to tie a box hitch and will be given time to practice with several different types of objects and tools. Class will conclude with a discussion on how to prepare gear, tools, and supplies to be packed in as well as a discussion about camping with stock.

Communication Tools for Making Visitor Contacts (1/2 day)

One of the best tools a Wilderness Ranger has to alter a visitor's behavior is communication. An educational approach can be more effective than a strictly enforcement-based approach. Positive and effective communication that contains educational elements can often change a visitor's behavior for the better, but too often we default to the Authority of Agency, leaving the visitor with a negative experience with the Wilderness Ranger and the agency as a whole. So how do we make our default an educational approach when making contact with a visitor?

This session will provide an in-depth examination to the Authority of the Resource and include practical tools, techniques, and skills, with scenarios for making effective and productive visitor contacts. Discussion will include the difference between a land ethic, Leave No Trace ethics, guidelines, rules, policy, regulations, and law as they pertain to initiating and making public contacts in the field. The intent of the session is to develop an understanding to the difference between the Authority of the Resource and the Authority of the Agency, and to provide tools for the how and when to apply them when making visitor contacts.

This session builds on Tuesday's presentation by Dr. David Rolloff, "Making Safe and Effective Public Contacts." The goal of the session is to instill confidence in Wilderness Rangers by providing practical and effective communication tools, skills, and techniques for making positive and educational visitor contacts in the field.

Wilderness Field Leadership (1/2 day)

Strong teams and competent leaders can transform any organization. This session will focus on teaching emerging field leaders some basic theory of crew dynamics and strategies for management to create cohesive and high functioning groups. Discussion will include learning and leadership styles, and individual and group development. Additionally, this session will cover practical tools including Leader's Intent, Field Briefings, and After Action Reviews that provide a foundation for leadership. Participants should be prepared with a pencil and notebook, and a chair is recommended.



Wild and Scenic Rivers and other Special Designations (1/2 day)

This session focuses on the overlap of Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSRs) and wilderness. Half of California's 26 WSRs flow through wilderness areas, and 24 wilderness areas in the state contain WSRs – numbers likely to increase with new designations in the future. Traveling to sites along the Owens River Headwaters WSR, you will learn about river management and what you can do to protect the free flow, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values of WSRs where you work.

This session will also introduce other types of special areas you may encounter in wilderness – such as eligible and suitable rivers, national scenic and historic trails, research natural areas, etc. – and decode commonly confused terms such as recommended wilderness, potential wilderness areas, and wilderness study areas.

SKILLS COURSES (Thursday, June 6 – Friday, June 7)

Leave No Trace Level 1 (2 days)

A Leave No Trace Level 1 Instructor Course (previously known as Trainer Educator) is a modified version of a Leave No Trace Level 2 Instructor Course (previously known as Master Educator). The Level 1 Instructor Course is shorter and less comprehensive than a Level 2 Instructor Course. Like the Level 2 Instructor Courses, Level 1 Instructor Courses emphasize skills and techniques essential to Leave No Trace minimum impact ethics and education. The ~16-hour course will be in a setting where the skills can be learned, taught and practiced with their peers.

The LNT curriculum focuses on techniques for learning and teaching minimum-impact outdoor ethics. The 7 principles of LNT:

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimize campfire impacts
- Respect wildlife
- Be considerate of other visitors

Each participant will be assigned to practice teach to class peers at least one of the seven principles.



Crosscut Saw Certification *(2-day class)*

The crosscut saw training and certification course is primarily geared to providing new sawyers with bucking certification at the A or B level. Each participant must provide their own Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). This includes hardhat, work gloves, eye protection, long sleeve shirt, long pants, and boots. Please try to ensure that all enrollees from your unit have enough tools to split into fully equipped groups of 3, including saws, axes, wedges, and all other necessary gear. While some tools can be provided by other units and shared, it is advantageous for trainees to use the tools in training that they will be using to do their jobs. If you do not have all tools, please bring what you can so that we have enough for a successful training. Accommodation of experienced sawyers hoping to upgrade to C certification and sawyers requiring recertification will be dependent on need and available trainers. These sawyers would be expected to be involved in demonstrating skills to other participants and should plan to arrive with appropriate gear and tools needed for leading a small logout crew.

Note: Current First Aid/CPR certification is not required to participate in initial crosscut training, but any crosscut certification achieved at the Ranger Academy (or anywhere else) is not valid without current First Aid/CPR certification. Anyone expecting to instruct crosscut or upgrade their certification from a B to a C at the academy must have current First Aid/CPR certification.

Wilderness First Aid *(2 days)*

This 18-hour class includes the complete Wilderness First Aid curriculum covering patient assessment, traumatic injury, and environmental illness/injury. The class will include several field scenarios, so be prepared to work outside on both days.

Introduction to Basic Horsemanship and Pack Stock Safety *(2 days)*

The focus of this class will be to learn how to safely work around riding and pack animals. Basic stock handling and packing techniques will be demonstrated and there will be plenty of hands-on practice working with the animals, leading, tying, brushing, saddling, and riding animals, as well as building loads, and tying hitches. Students will have time to practice with both pack barrels and live pack animals.

Topics to be covered in this class will include:

- Staying safe while working with riding animals
- Basic Riding Skills
- Introduction to pack stock
- selection of gear and equipment
- Building pack loads
- Tying the box hitch
- How to safely pack trail tools



Introduction to Backcountry Navigation *(2 days)*

This course will offer an exploration into backcountry navigation methods and principles. Rangers will engage in discussions and activities to gain experience with using maps, compasses, and orienteering. This course will include a local day trip with participants returning to base camp at the end of the day. Please bring your compass if you have one; there will be some units available to borrow for the day. The Backcountry Navigation course will be a long day, so please be prepared with lunch and have plenty of water. A chair and clipboard are also recommended for comfort throughout the day but are not required.

Course Objectives

- Read a topo map and understand different mapping grids
- Understand how to read and use a compass
- Orient maps
- Take map and field bearings
- Find their pace
- Navigate using a field bearing

Advanced Wilderness Trail Maintenance *(2 days)*

This two day course focuses on more technical trail work skills and methods. Topics will include drainage techniques and water bar construction, trail tread repair and maintenance, and eliminating braided trails/social trails. Rock work techniques will be covered such as check steps, stairs, and water crossings. The use of a grip hoist for moving large rocks and down logs will be introduced and practiced. Overall trail design with the use of a clinometer and flagging for layout will be covered. Equestrian considerations for trails will also be talked about. This will be a hands-on class with travel to a trailhead and field site for on trail examples and practice. Participants must provide their own personal protective equipment including hardhat, work gloves, eye protection, long sleeve shirt, long pants, and boots.