

Alaska Mountain and Wilderness Huts Association

Guiding Principles

rev. 3/00

The bylaws of the Alaska Mountain and Wilderness Huts Association require the board of directors to create, follow, and annually review a set of “guiding principles.” This is it.

The Camaraderie Principle. Distinguish the hut system by consciously designing the huts to bring people together for positive social interaction.

The “Transformation” Principle. Create an atmosphere that encourages personal transformation, positive change, personal growth.

The Affordability Principle. Without sacrificing the experience, provide service at the lowest possible cost to hut users. Make a special effort to serve those who cannot afford the experience at its normal cost.

The “Don't Sell Out” Principle. In the realistic quest for balancing income and expense, do not allow the lure of money to divert the organization from its broader mission.

The “People” Principle. Ensure that the hut experience—including hut development, use, and administration—serves to better the lives of volunteers, employees, members, and guests. Cultivate opportunities for personal growth and development. Work for the huts association should enhance rather than detract from the personal lives of volunteers and employees.

The Solution Principle. Make sure, on balance, that any hut location and all operating systems are more part of the solution than they are part of the problem of environmental or cultural degradation.

The Neophytes Principle. Make the effort necessary to provide the hut experience to those who do not know the backcountry.

The Model Principle. Strive always to be a model of sustainable recreation and tourism for Alaska using the eight principles of “ecotourism” defined by the Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association (attached) as general guidance.

The Conservation Principle. Provide facilities and programs using “appropriate technology” and policies that conserve natural resources. Use these elements as educational tools.

The Business Principle. Operate with fiscal responsibility and sound business practices; don't allow non-profit status to be an excuse to do otherwise. Pay competitive wages. Work diligently to ensure that user fees can fund everyday operations. Be equally diligent to secure donations for capital and special programs whenever needed.

The Aesthetics Principle. Strive for aesthetics that blend with the natural environment. Allow each hut, and hut system, its own character; avoid cookie-cutter facilities.

The “Small” Principle. Keep backcountry group sizes low and all operations at a personal, human scale. Consider expansion to other sites over expansion of the size of an existing operation, and then only if it satisfies the mission.

The “Local Knowledge” Principle. Involve local residents and those who know an area, to gain the value of their knowledge.

The Principles Principle. Take these principles as guidance and not as strict criteria. Avoid hamstringing the organization by idealism or by using these principles to muffle discussion.

The Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association

Ecotourism Guidelines

AWRTA encourages each business to creatively develop its own program for implementing these voluntary guidelines:

One: Businesses seek environmentally sustainable economic growth while minimizing visitor impacts on wildlands, wildlife, Native cultures, and local communities by offering literature, briefings, leading by example, taking corrective action or other appropriate means.

Two: Travel modes and facilities used maintain a low impact on the natural environment; tour use is sustainable over time without significantly altering the resource or negatively affecting the experience.

Three: Businesses provide direct benefits to the local economy and local inhabitants thereby providing an incentive for local support and preservation of wild areas and wildlife habitat.

Four: Businesses seek appropriate means to minimize their effects on the environment in all phases of their operations including office practices.

Five: Businesses ensure that managers, staff and contract employees know and participate in all aspects of company policy to prevent impacts on the environment, Native cultures, and local communities.

Six: There is an educational emphasis and purposeful desire for travelers to learn about the natural and cultural history of the places they visit.

Seven: There is a formula for the business and guests to contribute to local non-profit efforts for environmental protection.

Eight: The travel is in the spirit of appreciation, participation, and sensitivity. At some point, a tour group becomes too large to be considered "ecotourism."

- Adopted by the membership 4/95

For further information about the Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association, contact:

AWRTA

P.O. Box 22827, Juneau, AK 99802

Phone: 907-463-3038

Fax: 907.835.3280

email: awrta@alaska.net