

The Back Country Traveler

By Ellen Knapp

What is minimal impact and why should we care about it?

Does it really matter if we cut switch backs? Does it really matter if we wash our dishes in the river or lake? Does it really matter if we build a table at our campsite? Does it really matter if we stuff our TP under a rock? Does it really matter if we clean out our horse trailer at the trailhead parking lot?

We have about 1.2 million visitors to our own Idaho Sawtooths annually. We have over 300 million visitors to our National Parks annually. We have over 1 billion visitors to our National Forests annually. Even if only 1 percent of the visitors cut switchbacks, washed dishes in the rivers and lakes and left their TP under rocks, it would be very obvious to the rest of us visitors.

I bet many of us love to feel that sense of being the first person to lay eyes on a beautiful valley or lake. While we know we probably aren't *really* the first one to experience the beauty, we do like to fantasize that we are. However, that feeling can be quickly dashed once we spot someone's pop can or sandwich wrapper or, worse yet, their TP stuffed under a rock.

Because visitations to our national lands have dramatically increased since the seventy's we now need to talk about how to visit these areas with the least amount of impact and evidence of our being there so that each of us can get that sense of 'being the first'.

So just what is The Back Country? Does it start once you pass the "Entering Wilderness" sign? Or does it start once you pass the "Entering Boise National Forest" sign? The back country is not that limiting; it is really just outside your door. It is the Eagle Foothills. It is the Gem Cycle Park. It is 'The Owyhees'. And it is the designated wildness areas.

Practicing minimal impact is not simply a recipe for visiting the back country. It is an attitude. It is a way of life. It is what you do when no one is watching. And it is for all of us users of the back country – hikers, back packers, hunters, horsemen, ATVers, skiers, river runners; to list just a few of us recreators.

Minimal impact is not an all or nothing concept. There are varying degrees. We all need to find out what will work for each of us; what we can live with; what we will automatically do when no one is watching. The goal of minimal impact is to employ methods to minimize the evidence of our passing so that others that follow can have that same feeling of 'being the first'. And in some cases, though increasingly rarely, we are fortunate enough to be the only ones that follow.

There are seven basic principles to cover when discussing methods to minimize the impact and evidence of our passing in the back country. 99.9% of our back country experience can be covered by these seven basic principles. They are:

1. Plan Ahead And Prepare
2. Travel And Camp On Durable Surfaces
3. Dispose Of Waste Properly
4. Leave What You Find

5. Minimize Campfire Impact
6. Respect Wildlife
7. Be Considerate Of Other Visitors

So you and your horse want to go somewhere.

A day ride, a weekend of riding from the trail head or a multi day pack trip, all have one thing in common. You need to Plan and Prepare.

Driving to a trailhead is different from driving to the local arena. Riding from the trailhead is different from riding at the local arena. What should you have in your trailer? What should you have in your saddle bags? In this month's installment, I'll talk about what is needed for a day ride from a trailhead.

First off, I need to PLAN where we are going for the day ride. I need to find a trail route on a map. I need to make sure the horses can travel the route I have selected from the map. How do I do this if I have never been there? I call the Ranger District for the area, I go on the Internet and look up road and trail conditions for the route, I read books that describe trails. If it is early in the season I need to be aware of fast moving creeks due to snow melt. We may not be able to cross. I also need to make sure that horses are permitted where I plan to go. Is the ride during our spring rainy season? While we may get the trailer into the trailhead, we may not be able to get it out. Also, if there are more riders in the group than just me, I need to consider their experience as well as their horses' experience. I need to plan a route that is doable by the least experienced rider and/or horse.

When I PREPARE my trailer for a day ride, I think about what my horse and I need for an entire day. What do I need to drive to the trailhead, what do I need at the trailhead, what do I need on the trail, what do I need when I return to the trailer, and what do I need for the drive home.

Before I leave for the trail head, I need to make sure my trailer tires are full, not just partially full. I need to make sure my truck has enough gas and that my truck is in good working order. I have a bag in my truck with tools. I make sure the trailer brakes and all my trailer lights are working.

I encourage you to have a Trailer Aid or Jiffy Jack for changing tandem trailer tires. Also make sure you have a lug wrench that will fit your trailer tire lug nuts. A few 6x6 sections of wood for added height when using a lift jack will facilitate the installation of the full spare tire. Don't forget a 6x6 or piece of log to keep the trailer from rolling when jacking it up. And, most of all, make sure you have a spare tire and your spare tire is inflated. Of course, one spare won't help much when you have multiple flats. At that point, all you can do is get a tow, drive carefully back to town, or send someone back to town to buy tires.

For a day ride, I feed my horse at home in the morning before I load him. Once I get to the trail head, I need (obviously) my saddle and its parts: saddle pad/blanket, front and rear cinches, breast collar, crupper; my headstall and reins, and various saddle bags. If I haven't already, I fly spray my horse. I also cover myself with sunscreen and fly spray.

Also in my trailer I have duct tape (a 1001 uses), a blanket for my horse, should I need him to stay warm while he dries out on the way home, a chair for sitting and socializing at the trailhead after the ride, a larger first aid kit including a first aid book, a compact leaf rake, a compact manure picker and large trash bags. These last three will be used when I talk about manure etiquette at the trail head. I carry an extra cinch, saddle pad, reins, and breast collar in my trailer, just in case I find something not repairable when saddling.

Inexperienced horses and sometimes even experienced horses won't drink 'foreign' water on the trail. What can you do? I bring water from home. It is as simple as filling a few 5 gallon plastic jugs. Granted, it may be an inconvenience, but I have personally have had a few horses become very dehydrated on a Saturday ride due to their lack of experience. Over time, horses can become 'experienced' and learn to drink the 'foreign' water.

In my various saddle bags I include water, lunch, maps, a copy of my insurance card, sunglasses, phone (knowing I may be out of range), a GPS or compass, a small first aid kit including a whistle, hoof pick, knife, pliers, wire cutter, folding compact saw, easy boot (fitted for the horse I am riding), baling twine (for all kinds of fixes), and a jacket and gloves for the weather. Those skilled in replacing a loose or lost shoe, and I am not one of them, bring a small shoeing kit. Of course, I need to remember to bring or wear the hat, boots, coat, and gloves I plan to ride in. And I need to have either the halter and lead rope or hobbles to contain my horse while I have lunch or do trail work.

I always use a breast collar with my horse. It helps to keep the saddle in place. It keeps it from sliding backwards or from turning. Cruppers are a good idea if your horse has less pronounced withers. It helps keep the saddle from sliding up on the horse's neck as well as from turning. Many folks use rear cinches. A rear cinch helps keep the saddle from tipping forward.

At the trailhead, I try to park away from the hikers to minimize any hiker/horse/car interactions. Plus, with trailers, we need more room to park and don't want to get parked in nor do we want to park others in. Now, let's talk about manure. It is a fact of life that hikers don't like manure; they step in it, their dogs eat it or their dogs roll in it. It is also a fact of life that horses produce manure, wherever and whenever. And we riders are used to manure. Both hikers and riders need to share the trailheads and the trails. We can be considerate of all the other users of the trailhead by being aware of our manure. We don't need to rake the manure out of our trailers onto the ground when we get to the trailhead. That is unsightly for all users, including fellow horsemen, of the trailhead. We do have options. We can leave it in the trailer and take it home, we can rake it into plastic garbage bags and take those home or deposit those in a trash can, or, for a little used trail head, we can disperse, in bushes and evergreens, the manure well away from the public area of the trailhead. I do the same with the deposits my horse makes while tied to the trailer; disperse it or put it in a plastic garbage bag. It not only helps our image as horsemen in the public's eye which goes a long way to preserving our equestrian access to places, but it is common sense in preserving what we have for our own future use and for others' future use.

Before hitting the trail, if there is a sign in sheet, I make sure to register. We want to record all use of our trails by horsemen, to help maintain and preserve our access to them.

Once I return to the trail head, I want to make sure my horse has water. I offer him a bucket of the home water I have brought. I may unsaddle him and brush him if the drive home is 'long'. If he has his long winter hair and is wet I will blanket him. He should be dry by the time I arrive home and turn him out. I will certainly check his feet for stones and loose shoes. If he has been on the trail all day AND drinking well I may offer some hay, before loading him, to keep his gut moving for the drive home. I offer the hay in a hay bag tied to the trailer side. I don't like hay nets. I can't seem tie them up high enough to prevent a horse from getting its foot caught. I don't want to give my horse hay if he hasn't drunk all day and especially if he is somewhat dehydrated. That can lead to colic. To tell how dehydrated he is, pinch an inch of skin on his neck, let go and see how long it takes to snap back and unwrinkle. If he is hydrated I will only get to say the 'one' of 'one onethousand'. If I can count to 'two onethousand', he is pretty dehydrated.

I like to wait until I am ready to leave before I load my horse. Tied to the side of the trailer, he can move about some and stretch out to pee at his convenience. Once loaded, I don't tie my horse. I have a slant load trailer, with partition gates. I remove the lead rope and let my horse stand in his slot. I know this is personal preference and experience. I'll leave the choice to tie or not to each of you.

Planning and preparation considerations when camping overnight with your stock, either at the trail head or in the back country.

Pack stock groups must be even more conscientious about Minimizing Impact, since the animals tend to produce greater impact than backpackers and llama packers. The foot of a horse or mule generates about 1500 pounds per square inch. Horseshoes intensify this pressure and the shearing effect on soil and vegetation. The goal is to minimize the number of stock I need to take. Using lightweight and compact gear will help reduce the number of stock needed, as will proper planning and preparation ahead of time.

What do I consider when planning?

- I determine the purpose of the outing. Is it a fun ride, fishing, hunting, trail maintenance, or something else?
- I need to determine where I am going, when I am going, and how long I will stay.
- If I am planning for a group I need to consider the level of ages and experience – both rider and stock- of the group and then plan to the LOWEST level. That helps ensure a safe and fun time for all.
- I have to consider the potential weather conditions. I have encountered snow storms in the mountains in August.
- I get out my maps and go over the routes and potential camping areas as well as determine alternative routes and campsites.
- I have to gain knowledge of the area by either doing Web searches or talking with the agency responsible for the area I plan to visit. I need to know, at a minimum, if stock is permitted where I plan to go, if grazing is permitted, what other restrictions

there might be – like campfires or group size, do I have to consider bears, how heavily is the area used?

- I need to check for trail conditions and whether stock is allowed. Some areas are closed to pack animals due to overuse or because the environments are fragile.
- I plan the meals focusing on dried and dehydrated foods to reduce the weight of the food. An excellent source of easily dehydrated food recipes is Easy Dehydrated Gourmet Meals by Marybeth Conger and Reba Hendrix. I repackage food into reusable containers or plastic bags. This reduces the amount of I have to deal with in the backcountry. Carefully planned meals also reduce waste from leftovers and minimize the amount of extra food carried.
- I make an equipment list. I use lightweight gear, like the backpackers do, such as compact stoves and nylon tents and sleeping gear, to reduce the number of horses required.
- I also decide how I will contain my stock for overnight and for feeding/grazing.

Once I have planned where and when I am going I need to prepare for the trip. What are some things I do when preparing for a trip?

- First and foremost I get myself and my stock in shape. I take only experienced stock. The trip is NOT the place to train my inexperienced riding or packing animal.
- I make sure the worming and vaccinations are up-to-date to help minimize any health issues.
- I practice at home the containment methods I plan to use. At the backcountry camp is not the time to find out my horse goes ballistic in hobbles.
- I fit any new gear on my stock and try out my panniers and practice the hitches.
- I get new shoes on my stock. I've had too many 'OK-looking' shoes come off when on the trail. I don't take a shoeing kit because I don't know how to replace a shoe. If you take a kit, make sure you know how to use it. I use easyboots instead. But I make sure I have easyboots fitted for each animal – both front and rear hooves. If you take easyboots, make sure you have fitted them properly.
- I begin feeding my stock the food they will be eating on the trip 3 days before leaving. I am careful to introduce the new food slowly, so as not to cause colic. And I want to make sure they will eat it. We all have to use weed free hay at both the trail head and in the backcountry. Feeding 3 days prior to leaving ensures all the weed seeds have been passed out of the horse's digestive tract..
- I make sure everything has all its parts, works, and is in good repair. Setting up camp is not the time to discover that I have left the tent poles home. In the dark is not the time to discover I have no clue how to get my new stove to work.
- I make sure I know how to use my GPS or my compass. Even if I know the trails well, I always bring a map in case I have to take an unplanned route.
- I prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies. I carry a folding saw for trail clearing. I make sure my first aid kit is complete and that I know how to use everything in it. I include a card listing normal human and equine vital signs.
- Finally I get all my gear together that I plan to pack and weigh it. Does it match with the number of stock I plan to take? Hopefully, I have planned well enough that it does.

Good planning and preparation greatly increases my chance of having a great and safe experience in the backcountry. It also helps me reduce the number of stock I take so I can spend more time enjoying my experience rather than tending to stock. Next month

I'll take about stock containment methods for use at the trail head and in the backcountry.

Stock Considerations

As I said last time, we stock folks must be even more conscientious about Minimizing Impact, since our animals tend to produce greater impact than backpackers and llama packers. This month, I'm going to address stock considerations at the trail head, on the trail and in the backcountry. Last month I talked about the need to pay special attention to planning where we will be going with our animals. Once there we need to pay special attention to our camp location and our confining of our animals.

At the Trail Head

We all have seen the large piles of dried manure in the parking area of the trailhead. Many folks rake the manure out of their trailers once they unload their stock. There are good reasons for doing this. One very valid reason is decreasing the number of flies that will breed in your trailer and subsequently bug your stock once you put them back in. However, this practice gives us stock users a bad image. While we may be immune to manure, other trailhead users aren't. And, really, seeing piles of manure from trailers at trailheads is just unsightly for ALL of us trailhead users.

Instead of simply raking the manure onto the ground, if the trail head is heavily used, bag the manure in garbage bags. Toss the garbage bags in the dumpster – if there is one – or take them home and dispose of them with your trash. If the trail head is less used and there are brushy areas where folks do not camp or walk, broadly disperse the manure in this area. This way it is not seen and encountered by other users, it dries quickly, and doesn't result in flies. Both of these methods require planning and extra work. I carry an apple picker with a short handle in my tack room and garbage bags as well.

Travel On The Trail

Now let's talk about on the trail, whether a day ride or traveling to our camp. It goes without saying (but I'll say it anyway) we need to stay on the established trail. We want to ride over 'durable' surfaces. A durable surface is rock, dirt, sand. If we are traveling cross country, we want to all concentrate our travel on those durable surfaces. But what about grassy, flowery areas and meadows?

If there is a trail, of course, stay on it. If not, we don't want to create one or even give the impression of one that others may wish to follow. We want to all riders to branch out, disperse the use and not follow one another. If we follow each other, we will create a trail. A good idea, if there are pack strings is to untie the string and let each rider lead a pack animal or two. That will really reduce the chance of creating a trail across the unused area.

Rest Breaks On The Trail

When we stock users want to stop on the trail, we need to choose a site off the trail so others don't have to go around us. We need to make sure the site is large enough for all of our stock and that it is not in a bad location - like halfway up a steep hill. Ideally, we want the location to be a durable surface - rock or sand.

We can tie to trees for short periods, like for lunch. Make sure the tree is not dead. Not a good idea to tie to anything dead. An ideal diameter is 8". Wrap the lead rope

around the trunk twice before tying the knot. This will prevent most of the damage the rope can do to the bark. I like to tie high and short so as not even provide a chance for 'grazing'. I have found that my horses will try find all the favorite nibblins and will wind themselves around the tree in search of the treasured greenery.

An alternative is to hobble your stock to allow for grazing while you lunch. We need to watch that our stock is well mannered and doesn't paw around the tress. If our stock acts up, we need to deal with them. Pawing around and pulling on trees can result in tree death. When we are ready to hit the trail, it is a good idea to kick apart any manure piles left by our stock; that increases decomposition and minimizes later users' encounters with our manure. We should also refill any areas that our stock pawed.

Selecting a Campsite

When selecting a campsite, we first need to consider our stock. Our campsite should be able to accommodate all of our animals without any damage to the area. We need to make sure there is enough high line space for all our animals. As we ride into a potential campsite, we also need to decide whether there is enough feed for everyone.

Stock In Camp

Our stock should spend the shortest amount of time possible in the camp core; enough to load and unload. We can tie to trees, but only for those short periods of time to unload and load the pack gear and saddles. And realistically, since they have been working all day, we want to get them out grazing as soon as possible to maximize their food intact before highlining them for the night. A good method when tying to trees is to wrap the lead rope around the trunk twice before tying the knot. This will prevent most of the damage the rope can do to the tree bark.

Stock Containment

In the back country, I recommend that all stock be highlined at night. At the trail head, you can contain your stock in portable hot wire corrals. At the trail head, it has been my experience that stock will not travel very far, if at all, if they escape the hot wire. Their trailer and ride to REAL home is right there. In the back country, however, stock may travel all the way to the trail head and their trailer if they escape the hot wire.

When not highlined for the night or tied for loading and unloading, stock should be grazing (assuming we are in a area that permits grazing) and held by the least constraining method possible. I will cover each containment method presented from generally lesser to greater degrees of impact. A good rule of thumb is the more the confinement, the more concentration of impact. But, well fed, well watered stock, unbugged by bugs will be more content and less apt to paw, dig or dance no matter what grazing restraint is used. And, I as emphasized last month, PRACTICE these containment methods at home first.

Another recommendation, to minimize our stock use impact on the area and to help the area recover more quickly from our use is to break apart or widely disperse the manure piles our stock invariably has left. This both increases the deterioration and decreases the evidence of our passing by non-stock users of the same area.

Hobbles

Loose grazing with hobbles is actually the best method to minimize impact. Horses, confined only by their own herd-bound instincts cause the least impact. Every group of horses has a few members which lack the courage or the ambition to leave the rest of the bunch. When we identify the leaders and restrain them, the followers will stay put with the leaders. A good idea is to place a bell on the leader. That allows us to keep track of the leader while we have kicked back at the campsite. While we hear the bell, all is good. Once we don't we need to check on the stock.

Temporary Corrals

Portable electric fencing (hot wire) is a popular method for restraining grazing animals. As no trees are required, it is ideal for use in open areas or the desert. It is light-weight, versatile and easy to set up and move. We definitely need to make sure our stock respects the fence before the trip. In the back country, when used for grazing, the corral should be as large as possible to prevent over-trampling of the area. The corral needs to be moved periodically to prevent overgrazing of the area. A good rule of thumb is to move the corral when 50% of the area has been grazed.

It is not a good idea to construct new corrals and hitchrails from logs or poles. These create a lasting impact; such as trees cut down for use as poles, damage to standing trees from nails, lashings and ax cuts, and pole corrals left standing after camp is broken.

When using a hot wire corral at the trail head for confinement, I have learned that the larger the area, the more time and effort I spend in cleanup. Since I use the hot wire as my trail head containment method and feed supplemental feed, I have learned, to minimize impact and cleanup, to make the corral on the most durable ground I can find and as small as possible for the number of stock I am containing.

Pickets

A picketed horse requires good feed. We need to choose the site carefully and make sure it is free of obstacles. We should pack in the picket pins and not cut trees to make them. We really need to monitor the grazing impact and move the pins frequently to prevent overgrazing and trampling. That can be as frequent as every few hours. A good rule of thumb is that it is past time to move the picket when we can see a circle beginning to show. Picketing two horses is usually better than picketing only one. A single horse can get anxious if left alone and may paw the ground or injure itself. Picketing a "leader" may help keep the hobbled horses in the general vicinity. Most horses require a little time to learn how to be picketed. We really need to teach picketing at home under close supervision. Remember, picketing horses can be very hard on soil and vegetation and is not allowed by land management agencies in some areas where meadow plants are not robust enough to withstand the repeated trampling of hooves and the rubbing of the picket line.

Highlines

This is the preferred low-impact method for restraining stock in the back country camp, and, for many, the trail head camp. It is a secure method of keeping the stock during the night. When choosing a highline site, we need to find an area of dry, hardened ground. A rocky spot is not a good idea since the stock will paw up rocks all night and that is then hard to naturalize when we break camp. Also, we need to consider that if the area also catches enough breeze to discourage insects, there will be less pawing and stomping. Insect repellent can also help to create quiet, comfortable stock.

The preferred highline rope is one that doesn't stretch; such as a 1/2" diameter, poly Dacron. A good length is about 80 feet. To set up a highline, stretch the rope at least above horse-head high between two live trees at least 8" in diameter. To ensure that the highline does not girdle trees, use wide nylon "tree saver" straps or use several loops of a lash rope to spread the constricting force. Saddle pads can be used for additional bark padding when using rope. Using the collapsible rake, rake away any duff, sticks, and pinecones. This makes cleanup and naturalizing easier when breaking camp.

Tie the lead ropes at greater than horse-length intervals along the highline, beginning with a horse length interval away from tree trunks. There are a variety of pre-made highline 'knot eliminators' available for purchase as well. Use these or tie loops in the highline at appropriate intervals. The lead ropes should not be able to slide along the highline; this will prevent horses from getting tangled with each other. And the lead ropes should not be long enough to allow the stock to get a foot over. Additionally, there should be no long loops in the lead ropes which a horse could step over or wrap around its neck. I prefer to tie my animals 'short'; long enough that they can rest, but not long enough that they can graze. This prevents anyone from getting a foot over the rope and causing injury.

Horses properly tied to a highline have freedom of movement yet are in little danger of getting hurt, and the highline prevents horses from damaging the root systems around trees. In a no grazing area or at the trail head, we can hang feed bags from the highline. That greatly minimizes the feed waste.

We can naturalize the highline area when breaking camp. Use the collapsible rake to rake up the manure onto a mantle, carry it away from camp and disperse the manure widely. That both aids in decomposition and removes the manure sight from those who will use the site after us. Then we can rake back the forest duff that we moved aside before highlining our stock, to naturalize the area for those that follow, both stock users and non-stock users.

Supplemental Feed

In some areas, forage is limited; in others, grazing may be restricted by regulation. Grazing an area to fifty percent is often the maximum utilization guideline. Using supplemental feed can reduce grazing time. Also, a small ration of supplemental feed can also be used as a "bribe" to remind horses that camp is *HOME*.

Plan to take enough feed where stock are allowed but grazing is not. Processed and pelletized feed is a good source of nutrition. It is more concentrated than hay and thus

will help keep weight and bulk to a minimum. But, remember, the more stock we take the more stock we need to take to feed the stock we take. We should always want to minimize the number of stock we take into an area.

The seeds of many weeds and non-native species can be found in unprocessed feed, like hay, which can grow and then compete with native plants. All areas in Idaho require that we take certified weed free hay and grains, both to the trail head and into the back country. We need to feed that certified hay 3 days prior to our trip to prevent the transport of weeds our stocks' manure. It also allows us to ensure that our stock will eat the feed that we bring. As I mentioned above, we can hang a feed bag from our highline to minimize feed wastage, allowing us to tie shorter to minimize the chance of injury and to ease cleanup when breaking camp.

Breaking Camp

We should take the extra time to naturalize an area that has been impacted by our pack animals. It's a good idea to scatter the manure piles deposited during the grazing; this aids decomposition, discourages flies, and is courteous to the other users that will follow us, both stock and non-stock users. We can use our collapsible rake to fill areas dug up by our animals' hooves. It is a good idea to remove, and widely disperse, excess hay and straw; they do not deteriorate and leave an unsightly mess.

A Final Word

We should always keep an eye out for problems with our confined stock. If a rope is long enough for a horse to nibble at the ground, it is long enough for him to step over it. A horse in trouble can do irreparable damage both to itself and the environment.

Disposal of Waste

This month I'm going to address a less than suitable dinner table subject, but one none the less, we cannot get away from – disposal of waste. Waste happens, it's a consequence of living. So what can we do to minimize our waste and evidence of our waste by others? By waste, I am including human, cooking, hunting and fishing, washing and stock. I have addressed stock waste management in previous articles.

Human Waste

We are fortunate here in Idaho, despite the 1.2 M visitations per year to just the Sawtooth Recreation Area, we do not receive the usage that some other states, like California, receive. However, even here, haven't you somewhere, come across a 'Charmin Lily' or two? You know, the toilet paper (commonly known as TP) stuffed, but still visible, under a rock. Or even worse, left laying on the ground behind a bush. How do you feel when you see a Charmin lily? Disgusted and unsanitary are two words that come to my mind. As you might have noticed, TP doesn't disintegrate as readily as we might have assumed.

We have 3 options for dealing with human waste: digging a cathole, digging a latrine, or packing it out. Each has its appropriate time for use.

Catholes are appropriate for use by a small group, in an area of low usage pressure. Only a trowel or your boot heel (if the ground is soft) are required to make a cathole. Locate your cathole about 70 adult steps from water, the trail and camp, which you would naturally do anyway to ensure privacy. Choose a place that someone is unlikely to find, which again you would do anyway to ensure privacy. Using the trowel or your boot heel, dig a small hole about 6-8" deep. Once done with your business, refill the hole, cover it with rocks to deter critters, and naturalize the area. If staying more than one overnight, disperse the cathole sites; which again would naturally happen to ensure privacy.

All feminine hygiene products should be packed out. Put it in a baggie and put the baggie in the camp garbage that is to be packed out. A minimal impact recommendation is to pack your TP out in the camp trash as well. The TP doesn't disintegrate as readily as we might think. But it is not recommended that you burn your TP for many reasons: it is not sanitary, it doesn't burn completely, and there is the potential for starting a forest fire since the fire heat can travel through ground.

Latrines are a good option if you have a larger group, if you are establishing a base camp, if you have children, or if you are in an area of high usage pressure. Latrines may be dug or concentrated in a portable container. In heavily used areas with minimal campsites, like river corridors; you do have to pack the human waste out. Use the same care in selecting the site as you do for a personal cathole. When digging a latrine, make it 6-8" deep and long enough for the group or the days of stay. After each use, cover the waste with a shovelful of dirt to decrease the flies, the smell, and any critter visitations. Don't make the latrine huge; when full, cover the latrine and move its location as necessary. Cover and naturalize the latrine area when you are done.

Urine has little effect and causes a minimal health threat. Urinate well away from camps and trails. Urine attracts wildlife whose diets may be salt-deficient and the animals some times may defoliate plants to consume the salt. It is best to urinate on rocks and bare ground. However, it could cause an odor and attract insects if everyone does it in nearly the same place in heavily used areas with minimal campsites, like river corridors. In this case, check with the local agency for appropriate disposal. Such appropriate disposal may be to urinate in the large volume river flow itself.

Cooking Waste

Wash dishes away from bodies of water and minimize the amount of soap used. Biodegradable soap is not mandatory since we are not washing in or near the body of water. It has been determined that dumping the wash water well away from both camp and the body of water will allow the soap in the water to filter out naturally. Before dumping the wash water and the rinse water, use a small sieve or cheesecloth (this is a two person operation) to filter the water. Put all the food scraps in a baggie and pack them out. We need to pack out all the food scraps, even small pieces, as they will draw critters to the camp site creating camp pests. Burning the scraps is not an option since we cannot build a hot enough fire to cook all the scraps completely. I am sure everyone has seen birds and critters pecking and picking at the remains in a campfire ring.

Portable scrim cloth, set up in the high usage areas such as the kitchen, will trap all the small kitchen waste while preserving the underlying soil, and minimize foot traffic wear. The use of scrim prevents leaving small particles of trash that attract rodent and insect

pests to the site. As a side note, when I first learned of scrim, in true skeptic fashion, I thought its use was on the far outside edge of minimal impact fanatic; until I saw it in use with a group of 10 folks where we camped for 2 days. The ground was talcum powder dry. That would have resulted in many crunchy meals were it not for the use of the scrim, which kept the dust at bay in the high use area of the kitchen. And it kept my feet mud free when washing dishes or when I came into the kitchen area with dew-damp boots. This proof alone was sufficient to push me into a being a considerer. But, when we pulled up the scrim, after 2 days of many feet tromping in the kitchen, and not a single pine needle was broken, I became a believer in the use of scrim cloth.

Hunting and Fishing Waste

When considering disposal methods, consider how the fishing or hunting remains will look in an high use area, such as a camp, trail head or near a trail. The smells can draw flies. The waste can attract critters that should not interact with humans. And it may ruin the opportunity for those sportsmen that follow. A good idea is to move away from trail, the trail head, or the camp, and bury the waste. In some cases, especially in high usage areas, it is best to pack out the waste.

Washing

Soaps and lotions, even though biodegradable can alter the chemistry of streams and lakes. For that reason, it is recommended that you wash about 70 adult steps away from the shoreline. For this, the solar showers are great. If you don't have one or have not had time to set it up, use a collapsible feed/water bag for hair washing and a sponge bath. Another option is to use waterless soap.

General Camp Waste

Since we have already packed it in; it is best to pack it out. Enough said.