

SIERRA CLUB, Hawai`i Chapter
HIGH SCHOOL HIKERS PROGRAM

HOW TO ORGANIZE AND OPERATE
A HIGH SCHOOL HIKERS GROUP

THE HIGH SCHOOL HIKERS 'HOW TO' BOOKLET

How to Organize and Operate a High School Hikers Group

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HIGH SCHOOL HIKERS PROGRAM

Welcome to the High School Hikers Program (HSHP) of the Sierra Club. We invite your participation in this program and have designed this booklet as a way of sharing our knowledge and experiences to make it easier for you to get a High School Hikers group started in your school.

The High School Hikers Program is an official Activity Section of the Sierra Club, Hawai'i Chapter. The HSH program was started in January 1971 with the inspiration and leadership of Lorin Gill, and was the first such program organized in the Sierra club. The program has stimulated the growth and interest of many students over the years, some of whom have chosen professional careers in science, resource management and environmental protection. Many others continue to enjoy the recreational activities or volunteer to help on committees or become Sierra Club outing leaders.

As stated in the HSHP By-laws 1.2, "The purpose of the High School Hikers Program shall be to promote among high school students knowledge, understanding and appreciation of Hawaii's unique environments through guided hikes, trips and camps."

STRUCTURE OF THE ORGANIZATION

The HSHP is made up of representatives from all participating school groups. An executive committee of at least five is selected from among the leaders-in-charge for a two-year term, with officers selected and business conducted according to the HSHP By-laws.

The Hawai'i Chapter of the Sierra Club is made up of five Groups and two Activity Sections. The Groups are Honolulu (O`ahu), Kauai, Maui, West Hawai'i and Moku Loa (East Hawai'i). Besides the HSHP, the other Activity Section is the Hawai'i Service Trip Program (HSTP). Each Group and Activity Section is governed by an executive committee elected according to their by-laws, and has a vote on the Chapter executive committee. Hawai'i Chapter is one of the 57 Chapters in the Sierra Club which covers all of the United States and Canada.

The Sierra Club is one organization with over 600,000 members governed by a Board of Directors, which establishes Club-wide policies. The Club is headquartered in San Francisco, has a lobbying office in Washington, D.C. and various field offices. John Muir founded the Sierra Club in 1892.

The Hawai'i Chapter maintains an office with part time staff. If you need to reach other leaders or obtain information, please leave a detailed message at the office so the appropriate person can respond.

HSH activities are conducted according to the Chapter Outing Policies, as well as all Sierra Club Outing Policies as set up by the Board of Directors. The liability insurance policy purchased by the Sierra Club covers all Sierra Club outing leaders acting in an official and authorized manner on behalf of any entity within the Club. Many of the procedures outlined here and in the Chapter Outing Policy are designed to both facilitate the leaders being provided liability coverage under the insurance policy, as well as insuring that all activities conducted under the Sierra Club name are carried out in an environmentally and individually safe manner. We are proud to be a part of one of the most effective grassroots environmental organizations in the country.

STARTING A HIGH SCHOOL HIKERS GROUP

Each HSH group is based in a school and has its own adult advisors and outing leaders. The students organize and direct club activities, but the adults always have final responsibility for and should be in attendance at all activities. Some groups are officially sanctioned school clubs, while others meet at the school facilities, but are not associated formally with the school. Some activities may be scheduled jointly with other school groups, or are scheduled by the HSHP, such as the annual ecology camp.

STEP 1. LOCATE ADULT LEADERS: Every HSH group must have a core group of adults to act as advisors and outing leaders. School faculty members may be either advisors or both advisors and leaders. Some faculty members may be willing to assist as advisors but not take on the responsibility of being the hike leader, while others may want to assist with transportation and hiking and not deal with the necessary School paperwork. The local Sierra Club Group may be able to provide certified outing leaders temporarily until additional people can be recruited and trained as hike leaders. With one or two faculty members willing to organize the activities, non-school people may be enlisted to be hike leaders. Additional resource people may be used to enhance the outings and activities. Contacting parents may help locate possible hike leaders as well as provide transportation.

The adults willing to participate should get together to discuss the necessary organizational and logistic concerns. It is helpful to meet with an experienced HSH leader or Sierra Club Group outing leader. Points to be discussed and explore include: general school guidelines, policies and restrictions for student activities, required aspects of all school clubs (i.e. school generated permission forms vs. Sierra Club permission forms), school rules governing transporting students, club fee policies or allowable fund raising activities, etc. By researching and discussing these concerns among the adults prior to meeting with the students, a decision can be made as to whether the group should become an officially sanctioned school club or an outside Sponsored activity which meets on school premises. Such discussion helps insure that all the leaders are clear about their responsibilities and can anticipate and deal with student questions about things such as students driving other students.

STEP 2. CONTACT THE SCHOOL: Talk with the school principal and other administrators about the HSHP, and your desire to start a club. Share information about the program in other schools, and point out that as a legitimate and responsible organization, the Sierra Club's HSHP will provide a learning experience for the students which will enhance their education.

STEP 3. CONTACT THE SIERRA CLUB: Establish contact with the HSHP through the Sierra Club Executive Committee and keep them informed of your organizational activities. SC Chapter office phone is 538-6616. Invite an experienced Sierra Club hike leader to meet with the adults as you organize your club. Later, invite both adult leaders and students and/or former students from other schools to assist or share experiences.

STEP 4. ON CAMPUS PUBLICITY: Use available methods to inform students of the informational and organizational meetings. These methods may include posters, bulletin board notices, school newspapers, public announcements, and word-of-mouth among interested students. Approaching teachers to make announcements in their classes, especially environmental science or biology classes, is helpful and the teachers may be able to identify particular students who may be interested in the program.

STEP 5. HOLD STUDENT INFORMATIONAL MEETING: The first meeting is to present information (not decision making). A guest speaker from the Sierra Club, or a well known naturalist (perhaps utilizing slides) can encourage student ideas on the possibilities of a club as well as an understanding of the purpose of the HSHP. A roster of those students in attendance can be taken, but this should not be construed as a commitment to joining. Let them know when the next meeting will be and

that decisions will be made at that second meeting about the outings and how the club will be organized.

STEP 6. HOLD STUDENT ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING: The second meeting begins discussion on how to organize the school club, what activities to plan and completing the necessary forms for participation. The students can discuss how to select officers, what type of club they want (within the boundaries already researched by the advisors) and the establishment of dues or fees. The first activity should be planned as soon as possible to maintain interest and enthusiasm.

DISTRIBUTE THE PARENT PERMISSION FORM which you have elected to use - either the one used by your school or the one developed by the -HSHP - and the Sierra Club Authorization for Medical Treatment form (see sample). A permission form and authorization for medical treatment must be signed by a parent or guardian and returned before a student can participate in the activities off campus. The hike leader should also have a copy of the signed forms for use in any emergency before taking students on any activity. The school advisor should keep the originals. A list of the students and emergency numbers should be made available to all adult leaders on the day of the activity.

It is helpful for the parents to receive a PARENT INFORMATION sheet or introductory letter about the Sierra Club High School Hikers Program, which includes the names and home phone numbers of the adult leaders.

A useful way to collect information from each student is to distribute index cards for the students to complete, with name, address, phone, date of birth, grade level, driver's license and perhaps hikes they have already taken or would like to take. The index cards can be used to create the group roster.

After the school group is organized, send a roster of participants to the HSHP executive committee, along with the necessary fee of \$1.00 per member.

STEP 7. PLAN THE FIRST OUTING: The first outing should be fairly easy and interesting - perhaps a hike on a trail that is not too difficult. In choosing the first several outings, the adults need to be selective to insure that the hike is not beyond the students' abilities or preparedness (mental as well as physical), or require specialized equipment.

List on a blackboard or provide a handout which identifies the equipment that each student will need to bring on the hike. This should include: daypack, water, lunch, adequate shoes, head cover, rain gear, sunscreen, etc. Stress that equipment does not need to be expensive, and that water and proper footgear are required. Discuss the specifics of each item, i.e. a water bottle needs to be plastic or metal, not glass which could break. If you are planning an outing that is likely to be hot, be specific about how much water they will need. Make sure that they do not substitute an 8 oz. can of soda for a quart of water! Remember that if you are an experienced hiker, you may have forgotten what it was like on your first few hikes. Do not assume that the students know these things, even if they say they have been hiking before.

Discuss how the outings will be conducted and share the list of do's and don'ts of the activity (see attachment) before the first outing. This should be done with all new members before their first outing. It is unfair to expect students to know things without being told, or to expect them to learn only by observing others. Again, things that experienced leaders take for granted should be explained, i.e. what to do when there is no toilet along the trail.

TRANSPORTATION: Arrange for transportation to and from the trailhead with enough drivers and cars to transport everyone safely without overcrowding. Set up a method of notification if there is a last

minute change of plans. It is important for drivers not to have to wait for someone who has decided to cancel out of the hike. Check with your school rules regarding transportation.

If the activity is subject to problematic weather (i.e. stream hike with heavy rain conditions), plan a back up at the same time so that students can be prepared for a switch and not be frustrated by a cancellation.

It is always important to include the positive as well as the negative, so while preparing the students for all the things they need to know for safety, also include information that will assist their enjoyment of the outing. Mention an unusual plant or the possible sighting of birds or a unique geological feature or the great swimming hole.

Each outing conducted as part of the HSHP must have a designated hike leader (certified as a Sierra Club outing leader and approved by the HSHP executive committee) and the club's school advisor (at least two adults). If the hike leader is also the school advisor, find another adult to help out. No activity should be conducted with only one adult. Adults assisting can be other faculty members, club advisors, other Sierra Club leaders, or parents.

STEP 8. ONGOING ACTIVITIES: As soon as the group is able, at the beginning of the school year, prepare a tentative schedule of activities for the school year. To avoid congestion on the trails, try to coordinate your schedule with those published by other organizations such as the Hawai'i Trail and Mountain Club and other Sierra Club groups (check the Sierra Club Chapter Newsletter, Malama I Ka Honua).

Some groups may decide to join other schools for a particular activity. Such joint activities must be coordinated by the school advisors involved as well as any hike leaders.

The spring break is often used for major off-island camping trips by some school groups. Fundraisers are useful to help defray the costs of such an activity.

Two HSHP annual programs in which all member schools are involved are the FALL WORKSHOP which is usually held on the first or second Saturday of October, and the ECOLOGY CAMP which is held in February. The Fall Workshop is usually held from 9am to 2pm and consists of a variety of 3/4-hour workshops. This is open to all schools and other high school organizations which may have an interest in the HSH program. The Ecology Camp is held over a three-day holiday weekend and features a theme, resource people, activities and lots of interaction among the students from all HSHP participating schools. Each school is limited to a set number of participants and all member schools are encouraged to participate.

As soon as the schedule for the school year is completed, each HSHP club must submit this schedule of all hikes planned for the school year for publication in the "Malama" (Sierra Club, Hawai'i • newsletter) and/or the HSH Newsletter. Each outing should include the date, place, certified hike leader. This notification is required to provide liability coverage under the Sierra Club to both the Club and certified hike leaders.

After the activity, complete the ACTIVITY REPORT (see attachment). Keep a copy of these reports on file. One copy may be required for submittal to the HSHP Executive Committee.

Some leaders also like to obtain feedback from the students regarding the outing - either by discussing it afterwards or by using something like a HIKERS EVALUATION FORM (see attachment).

Encourage the students to write about their experiences. Articles can be published in the school

newspapers and in the HSH Newsletter or the Malama I Ka Honua (Sierra Club, Hawai'i Chapter Newsletter). Take pictures of students on hikes and activities. Help them prepare a scrapbook of their activities. Submit pictures to the HSH Newsletter and the Malama with short captions about the outing. A bulletin board display may also be a way to share their fun and experiences with others.

Non-hiking social and service activities can be planned, such as a picnic, litter campaign pickup or earth day events.

STEP 9. MONEY: School groups may decide to conduct fundraising events such as cash washes, bake sales, etc. to cover expenses or purchase equipment. School rules and policies should be considered in planning these events.

The HSHP allots annual dues of \$1.00 per student. These dues are kept in the HSHP general treasury to help defray any administrative costs. Your individual club treasury may elect to collect an additional nominal amount to help fund your group's activities.

The Sierra Club is a non-profit organization, but donations are not tax deductible. There is, however, the Sierra Club **Foundation** which is separate and serves as a tax-deductible vehicle for funds for primarily educational purposes. The High School Hikers Program has an account with the Foundation. Those groups or individuals expressing an interest in making a tax-deductible donation are encouraged to use the Foundation account. Contact the Treasurer of the HSHP executive committee for information and assistance in making such a contribution. Due to the administrative time and steps involved, this account is not convenient for handling small amounts for withdrawal purposes. The HSHP Executive Committee makes the decision for use of the funds.

STEP 10. IN CASE OF ACCIDENT: Should there be an accident, follow the procedures outlined in the Chapter Outing Policies and use your emergency care procedures learned in the Standard Red Cross First Aid course. The Medical Treatment Authorization and consent Form should be utilized to obtain emergency medical treatment as soon as possible. Following the accident, complete the Sierra Club Accident or Illness Report form and mail to the San Francisco office.

behalf of the Club in an official manner, i.e. the Hike/outing Leader leading an outing sponsored by an entity (HSHP) of the Sierra Club. It is not an accident policy to insure against loss from injuries, but a policy insuring against liability for negligence.

CERTIFICATION OF HIKE/OUTING LEADERS

Adults who are authorized to lead hiking/outing activities for the High School Hikers Program are recognized Sierra Club OUTING LEADERS and may be referred to as hike leaders. Outing leaders must meet the requirements of the Sierra Club and follow all established Club policies.

The HSHP will arrange for new leaders to participate in leader training either provided by HSHP or by the Sierra Club group on their island. Each certified leader should have a copy of both the Outing Leader's Handbook (aka Little Red Book), and the Hawai'i Chapter Outing Policies, which explains the Club's policies and guidelines for conducting safe activities.

The following is the HSHP, Sierra Club, Hawai'i Chapter Outing Leader' 5 Certification Requirements:

ALL LEADERS:

1. Must be a current member of the Sierra Club.
2. Must be currently certified - Red Cross First Aid.
3. Must be a legal adult (18 years or older).
4. Must take an Outings Policy & Procedures (Sierra Club) class every year.
5. Must take one Interpretive Class (Sierra Club, Hawai'i Chapter) per year. *
6. Must be approved by the HSHP Executive Committee.

NEW LEADERS:

1. Must take six Mandatory Interpretive Classes: *
 - a. Environmental issues
 - b. Wilderness well being
 - c. Hawaiiana - pronunciation of Hawaiian words
 - d. Leadership skills
 - e. Natural history (i.e. botany, geology, astronomy, stream life, marine animals, etc.)
2. Must train with a current certified leader on two outings/hikes before leading or being an assistant leader on any outing.

* The HSHP Ecology Camp and/or Fall Workshop may be substituted.

All Outing Leaders are expected to be proficient at the level they are going to lead. This includes basic trail safety, route finding and handling emergency situations. Leaders should be in adequate physical and mental health to lead the activity. All activities are to be conducted within the Sierra Club guidelines for appropriateness, which means that leaders are responsible for the behavior of all participants. The environmental impact of all activities should be evaluated and minimized.

The Sierra Club's liability insurance covers members acting on behalf of the club in an official manner, i.e. the Hike/Outing Leader leading an outing sponsored by an entity (HSHP) of the Sierra Club. It is not an accident policy to insure against loss from injuries, but a policy insuring against liability for negligence.

LEADER GUIDELINES

The following is a brief list of things to be conscious of when conducting HSHP activities. It is not complete, and leaders should refer to the outing Leaders Handbook, Chapter Outing Policies and other reference material for information on conducting safe activities.

1. Know your trail. Sierra Club leaders never take a group out on a trail which they have not researched nor hiked. If you do not know the trail, locate someone who can serve as a guide/resource person who does know the trail.
2. Gauge the pace of the group. Do not let the fastest hikers set the pace at the expense of slower students who will lag further and further behind. Keep the group together.
3. Take regular breaks. It is good to let the students know in advance that there will be breaks for everyone. For example, set the first break a half hour from the start of the hike and check on how everyone is doing. The next break could be 40 or 50 minutes later, depending on the trail conditions and the condition of the group.
4. Always know who is in the front as point person or lead, and who is in the rear as "trail sweep". Always count heads at the beginning to know how many people are on the trip, and then recheck at breaks or lunch.

PARTICIPANT DO'S AND DON'TS

Students participating in the HSHP of the Sierra Club are asked to observe the following:

1. Act in a manner that will bring honor, respect and pride to your school and the Sierra Club.
2. Let your parents or guardians know where you will be hiking. Give them the trail name, location and leader's names.
3. Report on time at the designated meeting place. Groups will not wait more than an allotted time for latecomers.
4. Listen carefully and follow the instructions of the Hike/outing Leaders at all times.
5. Bring water and food on every outing. Water containers need to be unbreakable. It is important to drink water when physically active. Food should be for lunch or trail snacks.
6. Use a daypack to carry the items you are bringing with you. This keeps your hands free which is important for safety and makes hiking more comfortable.
7. It is wise to always bring a light jacket or rain poncho. If you expect rain, be prepared with suitable rain gear. It is also nice to have a set of dry clothes waiting in the car on the trip when you know it will be wet.
8. Wear sturdy, comfortable **shoes**. Hiking or jogging shoes with good treads work well. Reef tabs are good in muddy areas and some coastal trails. **Slip-ons and sandals are out**. "Take care of your feet and they will take care of you".
9. Treat the flora (plants) and fauna (animals) with respect at all times. The Sierra Club is an environmental and conservation organization. Every effort should be made to minimize human impact on the natural environment.
10. Pick up trash along the trail. Leave the place better than you found it and help keep our trails clean and beautiful. Do not leave litter - carry out everything you bring in.
11. stay on the trail at all times. Do not take short cuts, especially on switchbacks, as this contributes to trail erosion.
12. Do not stray from the group. If you must leave the trail for any reason, let someone know and have him or her wait for you to return to the trail. Do not hike alone as a bad slip could leave you stranded without someone to help you.
13. Do not explore side trails, particularly where they could lead to someone's marijuana patch.
14. Do not bring radios or pets on hikes. Enjoy the natural surroundings.
15. Please DO ask questions on the hike about plants, geology, history, or whatever else interests you about the hike.
16. Approach hiking gradually. Begin with easier trails, gradually trying more ambitious and challenging trails as you gain experience.

17. Thank the drivers, leaders and other people supporting your group.