

Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club

Policies for All Activities

September 1, 2006

The Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club (CONC) was formed as a Registered Society to foster the enjoyment of the outdoors. CONC is a member of the Federation of BC Naturalists (FBCN), which provides guidance and services for CONC and other naturalists' clubs in BC. There are several interest groups within CONC, including hiking, birding, botany, and conservation. The following policies have been developed to ensure CONC activities are delivered as safely as possible.

It is the policy of CONC to:

1. facilitate organized activities in areas of interest, including hiking, birding, botany, and conservation as noted above, for its members. **The safety and wellbeing of all participants during activities is paramount at all times.**
2. require each person joining CONC to sign a Waiver of Legal Rights, including the right to make a claim for damages with respect to CONC activities and absolve CONC and its representatives from liability. The activities inherently have significant potential risk which **must be assumed by the individual participant**, as it is impossible to protect everyone at all times.
3. use the **Registration and Waiver** form for each activity at all times, as prescribed by FBCN. This form clearly indicates that each participant waives certain legal rights, including the right to make a claim for damages with respect to the activity and absolves CONC and its representatives from liability. A copy of this form is included at the end of this document.
4. provide liability insurance for claims related to bodily injury or property damage, when such claims are made against the Club, or one or more of its directors, officers, members, designated volunteers and employees.
5. provide Activity Leaders for each activity. If a scheduled Activity Leader does not show up to lead the activity, the activity is cancelled unless another Activity Leader is in attendance and he/she agrees to lead the activity. Question – should we use he/she, she/he, or they?
6. require a parent (or legal guardian) of participating individuals under 19 years of age to read, understand, and sign the **Registration and Waiver** form on their behalf.

7. rate hikes (and possibly other activities) according to the ratings shown below.

Cumulative Elevation Gain:

- A Less than 300 m (1,000 ft.)
- B 300 to 600 m (2,000 ft.)
- C 600 to 900 m (3,000 ft.)

Distance Walked:

- 1 up to 10 km. (6 mi)
- 2 10 to 20 km. (12 mi)
- 3 20 to 30 km. (18 mi)

Trail Conditions:

- a Good trail, sometimes sidewalks or road
- b Rough trail
- c Rough trail, possible scrambling or bushwhacking

Thus a hike like Little White would be ranked C2b while the Mission Creek Greenway would be A1a. Note that steep trails have the first character B or C and the second character is usually 1. Of course, all trails may have short steep sections.

These ratings will be listed in the published Hike Schedule and communicated to participants in each activity. Participants are expected to use their own judgement as to their ability to handle the stated conditions. If there are questions about the ranking, the participant should ask.

8. allow no pets on any CONC activity.

9. require participants to follow directions of the Activity Leader at all times.

10. require all participants to inform the Activity Leader of medical problems (including allergies) before the activity, as well as any problems you may be encountering during the activity.

11. expect participants to be properly equipped, in good physical condition, and to contact the Activity Leader at least a day in advance if there are any questions about the activity. Participants whose preparation is questionable are strongly encouraged not to participate until a later time. Participants who insist on joining the activity will be informed by the Activity Leader that he/she does so at his/her own risk.

12. encourage members to carpool to destinations to minimize impact on the environment.

13. carry a blanket non-owned vehicle insurance policy to protect carpool drivers while participating in club activities.

14. encourage new participants but recognize they may warrant additional attention.

15. develop a general contingency plan for dealing with emergency situations.

CENTRAL OKANAGAN NATURALISTS' CLUB

P.O. Box 21128, Orchard Park P.O., Kelowna, B.C., V1Y 9N8

REGISTRATION AND WAIVER

This document affects your legal rights. Please read it carefully

Signature of this agreement is a condition of participation in the activity described below. By signing this agreement you will waive certain legal rights, including the right to make a claim for damages with respect to this activity and you will absolve CENTRAL OKANAGAN NATURALISTS' CLUB (the Club) and its representatives from liability. Participants who are not members of the Club and/or the Federation of BC Naturalists (FBCN) will be eligible for liability coverage under the FBCN insurance scheme for a maximum of two field trips.

ASSUMPTION OF RISK, RELEASE OF LIABILITY AND WAIVER OF CLAIMS

Assumption of Risk

I am aware that certain activities of the Club, including field trips, nature tours and summer camp, involve risks and may result in personal injury, death, property damage, expense or related loss, including loss of income. These risks include negligence on the part of the Club, its directors, officers, members, employees and volunteers who organize or lead activities, described herein as "the Club and its representatives".

I freely accept and fully assume all such risks and the possibility of personal injury, death, property damage, expense and related loss, including loss of income, resulting from my participation in such activities.

Release of Liability and Waiver of Claims

In consideration of the Club accepting my application to participate in the activity described as _____, for which the designated leader is _____, on _____, 20____, I agree as follows:

1. To waive any and all claims that I, or my heirs, may have in the future against the Club and its representatives with respect to this activity.
2. To release the Club and its representatives from any and all liability for any personal injury, death, property damage, expense and related loss, including loss of income, which I may suffer as a result of my participation in this activity, due to any cause whatsoever, including negligence, breach of contract or breach of any statutory duty of care.

	Name	Phone	Signature*	Emergency Contact	Phone
1					
2					
3					

* If the named participant is under 19, this agreement must be signed by a parent or guardian. Club representatives should note that a waiver signed on behalf of a minor may not be upheld.

I have read this agreement and I understand it. I am aware that by signing this document I am waiving certain rights which I may have with respect to the Club.

ASSUMPTION OF RISK, RELEASE OF LIABILITY AND WAIVER OF CLAIMS

	Name	Phone	Signature*	Emergency Contact	Phone
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Risk Assessment

September 1, 2006

While it is expected that Club activities will be enjoyed without incident, it must be recognized there are significant risks involved in those activities. The risks come from the participants themselves, the travel between the meeting place and the activity, and the environment. Activity Leaders assess and deal with these risks.

(1) Participants

Activities are inherently risky and participants should guide themselves accordingly. At no time should a participant impair his/her judgement through substance abuse.

New participants pose an unknown level of risk. CONC Activity Leaders and members do not know the abilities of the new participant, and the new participants may not fully appreciate what the activity may involve. All new participants must read the **Information for New Members and Participants**.

(2) Travel

Carpooling is recommended for travel. Drivers should be experienced and have good driving records. All passengers must feel comfortable with the ability of their driver. If a passenger has any qualms about the ability of the driver, the passenger should request travel in another vehicle or arrange his/her own transportation.

(3) The Environment

Enjoying the wilderness environment is risky and, while measures can be taken to mitigate risk, in the end the onus is on all participants to guide themselves so as to reduce that risk.

Each activity is rated as to level of difficulty. Participants must assess their own abilities and only undertake those activities with which they are comfortable.

Every activity rating is based on a route planned by the Activity Leader. However, any activity can become more risky if the behaviour of the participants is risky, or if the group does not follow the intended route. Every activity exposes participants to risk, but common sense can significantly reduce these risks. Some suggestions for reducing risk are listed below. However, this list cannot be exhaustive as circumstances change and participants must exercise their own good judgement.

- Stay back from the edges of cliffs where possible.
- Negotiate steep slopes carefully, on established paths when available.
- Change the route if the consequences of slipping on a slippery slope are significant.

- Stay back from rivers, lakes, and streams if they are dangerous or it is cold.
- Stay off snow and ice where possible. They can be slippery, particularly on a steep slope.
- If you are going through an area where rocks can be dislodged, ensure no one is below who may be hit. A person dislodging a stone must immediately call out “Rock!” to warn others.
- Respect wildlife. Wild animals can be dangerous.
- Covering your arms and legs and using DEET may deter insects.
- Avoid confrontation with farm animals.
- If you are caught in a thunderstorm, consider turning back, or find a hollow and crouch on your pack. Leave your metal hiking poles a good distance from you!
- Be prepared for changes of weather. Raingear and a change of clothing are always appropriate things to carry.
- Follow the Activity Leader at all times.

(4) Leadership

The primary considerations during CONC activities are the safety and wellbeing of participants, the conservation of the area visited, and the wellbeing of its flora and fauna. All Activity Leaders plan with these considerations in mind. However, individual participants are responsible for guiding themselves according to the risk. Any route can have significant potential risk if participants do not behave in a safe manner.

The Activity Leader must have a meeting at the assembly point to review the course of the activity, review the activity rating, provide an expected time for the activity, identify any risks, and advise the participants what he/she expects them to do to reduce or eliminate the risks identified. If there is more than one assembly point, the Activity Leader will time the meeting so that all participants are briefed.

Having communicated the above information, the Activity Leader’s responsibilities are to indicate a route he/she believes to be safe, to maintain a comfortable pace, and to return all participants to the starting point. Question – this applies mostly to hike leaders. What about leaders of other activities?

Activity Leaders must adhere to policies of the Club.

Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club

Information for New Members and Participants

September 1, 2006

We are pleased to have you consider joining in our activities. Notice that **our activities all have some element of risk. By participating in a CONC activity, you are accepting that risk.** In addition, as a new participant, you add a new dimension of risk to our activities.

Since you have not attended our activities in the past, you may not fully comprehend what you are undertaking. Nor do the CONC Activity Leaders and members participating in the activity have any idea of your abilities and behaviour patterns.

This lack of understanding, combined with the inherent risk of the outing, presents increased risk to everyone involved. As a result, you must guide yourself appropriately and assume the responsibility of advising the Activity Leader of medical problems (including allergies) before the activity, as well as any problems you may be having during the activity.

You must be in good physical condition and properly equipped. If not, you are strongly encouraged not to participate until you are. If you insist, then you do so at your own risk.

What should you bring with you on a hike or other activity? The FBCN has a booklet, "Pocket Field Trip Guide for Naturalist Clubs", which includes an equipment list in Appendix B. There is much other useful information in this booklet.

Many sites on the Internet have suggestions of what you should bring.

- Mountain Equipment Co-op (MEC, based in Vancouver) has some general ideas. Go to www.mec.ca and click Learn. Then enter "hiking daytrips" (with or without quotation marks) in the search information box.
- MEC has a list of their 10 (actually 13) essentials, things they feel you should bring with you. Enter the phrase "survival essentials" in the search information box.
- Recreational Equipment, Inc (REI, based in Seattle) has a large collection of advice, available at www.rei.com/online/store/LearnShareArticlesList?categoryId=Camping. (Or choose Expert Advice from their home page, www.rei.com, and then Camping/Hiking.) They include a list of 14 (they call it 10 plus) essentials.
- The Mountaineers, an outdoors group based in Seattle (www.mountaineers.org), have a lot of information on hiking, maps, bears, *etc.* They even have a list of 10 essentials that actually contains 10 items. From their home page, click Outdoor essentials.

Should you not have Internet access, a club member who does will assist you in finding these websites.

All participants must read and sign the **Registration and Waiver** form.

Follow the Activity Leader at all times.

Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club

Information for Activity Leaders

September 1, 2006

Activity Leaders are highly valued as they are key to the enjoyment of club activities. Without them, there would be no club.

Before taking on the role of Activity Leader, you should fully understand the following expectations the Club has for Activity Leaders and the responsibilities which go with those expectations.

- a. Participant safety is of paramount importance
- b. You should have experience in the type of activity you will be leading, and you should know the area over which the activity will be conducted unless the activity is clearly identified as exploratory.
- c. All participants must sign the **Registration and Waiver Form**. Any participants refusing to sign are not allowed to participate in the activity. At the end of the activity, you should return the form to the CONC director responsible for hikes.
- d. You must have a meeting at the assembly point to review the course of the activity, review the activity rating, provide an expected time for the activity, identify any risks, and advise the participants what he/she expects them to do to reduce or eliminate the risks identified. If there is more than one assembly point, you will have to time the meeting so that all participants are briefed.
- e. Keep the group together. You must take measures to ensure participants are not lost. At appropriate times, you must take a count to ensure all participants are present.
- f. You should appoint a person to stay at the end of the group (the Sweep) for the duration of the activity to watch for problems. The Sweep is to report forward to you in the event of problems. This will necessitate the agreement to communicate by whistle, *etc.* in the event of problems.
- g. All new participants are to read the **Information for New Members and Participants**. You should discuss the **Information for New Members and Participants** with any new member or participant. You should strongly urge new participants not to participate if you have concerns about their preparedness. If new participants insist on participating, they are to be advised they are participating at their own risk. This warning should be made in the presence of others.
- h. You **are not responsible** for providing a first aid kit for the group. Each participant is responsible for providing his/her own well-equipped kit.

- i. You may wish to ensure there is a cellphone on each activity. However, it is recognised that cellphone reception may or may not be available when it is needed. Walkie-talkies may be useful in communicating between the Leader and the Sweep.
- j. A GPS unit may be useful for navigation as well as for providing a record of the route covered.
- k. You must be knowledgeable of the Club's general contingency plan for dealing with emergency situations.
- l. In the event of a serious injury (such as a broken bone, or soft tissue injury such as the eye, *i.e.* not the normal cuts and scrapes), you should make a written report to the Club President or Secretary within three (3) days of the incident. The report is to include:
 - the date and time of the incident,
 - the name of the injured person,
 - a description of the injury,
 - the cause of the injury,
 - the comments of the injured person,
 - what was done to assist the injured person,
 - who was involved in the assistance,
 - the outcome of the situation,
 - a list of witnesses to the event, and
 - a list of the names of those on the activity.

You should attach the original Registration and Waiver Form for the activity to this report.

- k. You must be knowledgeable on the insurance coverage for the Club and how it determines policies of the Club. Details of the insurance coverage are available from the Club President. You must also be aware of the implications the role of Activity Leader may have for yourself personally. In particular, note that you may be personally financially liable if an adverse outcome happens due to your negligence during the activity. However, you should also be aware there has never been a liability claim against the FBCN and, if such a claim were to be made, the Club's insurance is there to cover it.
- l. While you are not required to take first aid courses, such courses (and subsequent recertification) are highly recommended and will be paid for by the Club.

Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club

Summary – Responsibilities of Participants and Leaders on CONC Activities

September 1, 2006

Participant Responsibilities

- Arrive at meeting place on time.
- Sign a waiver for each activity.
- Have appropriate clothing and equipment (including a first aid kit.)
- Be prepared to spend all day in the activity if necessary.
- Inform the Activity Leader of any special medical conditions, pre-existing or arising during the Activity.
- Follow the leader.
- Stay with the group. If anyone needs to turn back, either the whole group turns back or a minimum of three people go back.
- Be aware of your space. Do not cause difficulties for yourself or for others.
- Avoid causing environmental damage.

Leader Responsibilities

- Inform all participants of the details of the activity, including risk.
- Collect waivers from all participants. Return them to the director responsible for the type of activity.
- Spend time with new participants before and during the activity.
- Do not lose participants. The 10% rule is a myth!
- Lead the hike with attention to safety.
- Know the Club's general contingency plan for dealing with emergency situations and write a report on any serious accident.