

Organizing Your Crew

Yes, Philmont is about big blue skies, fantastic vistas and wonderful backcountry program. But in order to take it all in your crew must be trained to operate like a Swiss watch. It is important to be able to execute the necessary tasks with efficiency so the crew can get to what Philmont is all about - fun, excitement, and the best outdoor experience most will ever have.

Daily tasks, such as health, hygiene, camp setup, clean up, navigation and cooking, need to be taken care with excellence and speed. Hence the crew must be organized and trained around a plan. There are many ways to make it happen - what follows is but one example, assuming you are working with nine Scouts and three advisors, the recommended crew size;. The plan is made up of assignments about equal in difficulty and time. It can be made to work for crews using a duty roster either of rotating or fixed assignments throughout the trek - the pros and cons of rotating versus fixed assignments are reviewed at [Rotating vs. Permanent Crew Assignments](#).

Crew Chief (or Crew Leader, one youth crew member): The Crew Chief, or Crew Leader, is a youth member elected by the youth members of the crew. The success of the trek is absolutely dependent on the Crew Chief. The Crew Chief provides leadership for the crew members and is **accountable** for all crew activity. The Crew Chief supports all crew members in executing their assignments. The Chief makes certain the crew is healthy, clean, safe, and eating good food. The Chief also makes certain the crew accurately navigates the backcountry of Northern New Mexico, and is on time and on schedule. And most of all, the Chief establishes a social environment that guarantees all crew members an exciting and fun adventure. In the language of Scouting, the Crew Chief is a "Servant Leader".

Note carefully the use of the word "**accountable**" as opposed to "**responsible**." The "**responsible**" crew member has the duty to accomplish a task (see below). The Crew Chief who is "**accountable**" provides the leadership to make certain the task is completed by the "**responsible**" members. The crew counts on the "**a-count-able**" person to know all is well.

Cooks (two youth members): The cooks are **responsible** for preparing all crew meals in the backcountry. Most breakfasts and all lunches are cold - the cooks simply distribute them to each crew member. All suppers have an entrée that must be rehydrated - the cooks boil the necessary water, prepare the ingredients, and distribute the meal when ready. They must set an example of cleanliness at all times.

Fire and Water Team (three youth members): This team is **responsible** for the maintenance of the crew's water and stoves. This means knowing where to get water at all

times. This means guaranteeing the crew is carrying enough crew water when going into dry camps. This means having water available for the cooks when the cooks are ready to cook the evening meal. The Fire and Water Team is **responsible** for the crew stoves, and fires them up when the cooks are ready. Thus, the team must work closely with the cooks. The Fire and Water Team also is **responsible** for having water ready and heated for the Clean-Up Team after the evening meal.

Important note: the Advisor assigned to stove safety and maintenance must be present when the Fire and Water Team is lighting or working with the stoves...at all times.

The Clean-up Team (two youth members): This team is **responsible** for crew sanitation. Their most important duty is to guarantee that the crew cooking utensils and each crew member's eating utensils are sterile before meals - the method for doing this will be reviewed in a coming Watchu Gram. The Clean-up Team is also **responsible** for crew clean up after meals, the Yum Yum Bag (more about this later), disposal of waste liquids, and packing out all crew waste. Many a crew has been forced back to base camp because of illness caused by an unsanitary approach to these important crew obligations.

Finally, the Clean-up Team is **accountable** for camp site cleanliness and camp site policing upon leaving in the morning (for which the entire crew is **responsible**.) A side benefit of this morning policing is not leaving crew equipment or personal belongings behind.

Chaplain Aide (one youth member): There will be more about this assignment in a coming Watchu Gram, as well as an in-depth description of the role of the Chaplain Aide in the package you receive from Philmont in March. Also, your Philmont Ranger and a Philmont Chaplain will go over the detailed reflection and meditation process called "Thorns and Roses" used at Philmont and conducted by the Chaplain Aide. When executed properly, this assignment adds a beautiful and spiritual dimension to a trek. At check-in, each crew member will be issued a wonderful booklet titled "Eagles Soaring High", designed by the Philmont Chaplains to support the mission of the Chaplain Aide.

The Chaplain Aide also assumes the role of assistant to the Crew Chief. In this role the Chaplain Aide assists the Chief in executing the **accountabilities** of crew leadership.

Navigator (two youth members): No, you did not count incorrectly. This job can be covered by any crew member except the Crew Chief in addition to another assignment (it can not be the Crew Chief, since he or she is the final arbiter when the navigators are stumped.) This is a fun and very important assignment for a well-prepared pathfinder. The crew needs to have, or train, two youth members who can read a map and use a compass ... flawlessly. The Crew Chief should also be an excellent pathfinder - hopefully getting lost will not be included as an element of your Philmont adventure. If your trek takes you to the Valle Vidal (Carson National Forest), the navigators should also have GPS

knowledge. Many crews going into the Valle bring their own GPS unit, and in certain Valle Vidal circumstances Philmont will provide GPS training for the crew.

Advisors (three adults): The advisors are **responsible** for the preparation and training of the crew. Most importantly, the advisors are **accountable** for the health and safety of the crew. These duties are ongoing from the first gathering of your crew until your return home.

No later than the time of your arrival at the airport, the Crew Chief will have assumed leadership of the crew. From then until return, advisors stand back and let the Scouts make it happen. Advisors only intervene if the crew's health and safety are threatened. You trained 'em, they can do it! Once at Philmont, the advisors are the crew's guests. For example, to emphasize this role, many crews vote to serve their advisors first at meals.

In your supporting role you may wish to carry the crew's first aid kit, the stoves, and the fuel - items which need a little extra care to insure safety. The Scouts will carry the remaining crew equipment and food. Food and fuel are never carried in the same pack.

Finally, it is strongly advised that each advisor focus on one main aspect of crew development. The "Lead (or Contact) Advisor" should act as mentor to the Crew Chief and Chaplain Aide. A second advisor, called the "Health and Safety Advisor", should be the mentor to the Fire and Water Team, the cooks, and the Clean-up Team. And the third advisor, called the "Trail and Team Advisor", mentors to those scouts executing those duties and operations not otherwise covered, especially the Navigators.

This is only one of many possible ways to put the crew together. It is presented here to give you an idea of the required tasks and how the crew can be organized to make a great trek happen.