

## **River Camp 2023**

### **Community Standards and Behavioral Policies**

#### **General Expectations**

River Camp is unique in that it is somewhere between a summer camp, a school program and a job. The experience doesn't fit neatly into any one of the categories but requires some habits and standards from each of them. Each activity will have more detailed safety and conduct expectations but the following should help form a general idea of how the team will operate.

- Participants shall treat everyone with kindness and respect.
- Participants shall wear PFDs at all times when in a canoe or kayak. PFDs may also be required at other times when on boats as advised by a boat operator. Participants shall follow hiking safety systems, which shall be taught by River Camp staff. Participants will properly use seatbelts in vehicles.
- Participants shall follow all safety instructions deemed appropriate and necessary by River Camp program staff.
- Participants shall follow Leave No Trace protocols. Leave No Trace will be discussed in detail as part of the program.
- Participants will remain with the group while on trips and shall stay within the designated boundaries established by trip leaders.
- Participants will carry their fair share in terms of the work associated with expeditions and outdoor activities. This includes, but is not limited to, participating on chore crews, being responsible for personal gear, working cooperatively with team members, and sharing in other tasks as needed for the safe and effective function of the group. Sometimes this means doing more than what you perceive to be your fair share of the work.
- Participants shall follow all posted rules and regulations pertaining to wilderness areas.
- Participants will treat tools, supplies and equipment carefully in use and in storage. In a wilderness context, broken tools, equipment, and gear can have serious safety consequences, and at the very least, can compromise the experience of all participants.
- Participants will take responsibility for adequate self-care. Examples of self-care include proper hydration, application of sunscreen, appropriate clothing choices, proper nutrition, and personal hygiene, getting enough sleep and asking for (and giving!) help when needed.

- Participants will show the utmost respect toward guests and professionals who have given their time for the benefit of this program.

### **Couple's Behavior and Exclusive Relationships**

Crew members are expected to avoid overly exclusive relationships while they are participants in the program. This policy applies to romantic and non-romantic connections. Friendships and crushes are natural and normal and we can support participants in managing them in the group context. Participants are expected to refrain from sexual activity at camp. To support healthy and open relationships among all participants, we encourage each person to actively get to know, work with, and spend time with all other participants in the program.

### **Dress Code**

Participants are encouraged to use sound judgment and reflect respect for themselves and others in dress and grooming. Appropriate clothing is a much broader concept than just covering all private areas of the body. In this program we will be active and outside so "appropriate" also includes protocols of safety and sanitation.

We are representatives of Cobscook Institute and Downeast Salmon Federation. As we invite guests into our cabin and travel throughout the community, it is important that our dress presents us as the professional, mature group we aspire to be.

In keeping with the goals of River Camp, the following norms on dress shall be expected:

1. Long pants and closed-toed shoes are required for many working situations. Feet must be covered when building or maintaining a fire.
2. Long hair must be tied back during food prep and work. No one likes to find hairs in their food or on their dishes. Loose hair can obstruct vision or compromise safety while working with tools and while paddling.
3. All clothing will be free of language or images that promote illegal activities or behavior. Gang insignia, racial slurs and other epithets are prohibited. This also applies to language or images that a reasonable person would consider sexually indecent or harassing.
4. Clothing may not be revealing (for example, tops that reveal midriff or cleavage; clothing that exposes underwear or private body parts; and skirts and shorts that do not at least come to mid -thigh). We understand that standards are different for swimwear, but it still must cover all private body parts, and must stay on without constant adjustment.

### **Communication with Home**

We understand that it can be challenging to be away from home and family, however, teens are gaining independence and will need to gain coping skills as well. As part of our effort to build a cohesive group and our policy against electronics, except for emergency situations, crew members will not be allowed to make phone calls or use e-mail. This may seem harsh but, but it also offers a rare opportunity in this day and age, and most participants are better able to triumph over homesickness when they can experience their adventure without constantly being

reminded about where they *aren't*. Personal visitors are not allowed during the program, but there will be a celebration at the end that we hope many friends and family members attend.

Families and crew members are encouraged to write letters frequently, and they will be delivered regularly. Pictures, newspaper clippings, stickers and song lyrics are all great ways to delight your teen, and many short letters are more exciting to get than one long one. Please refrain from delivering bad news by letter. Care packages are fine, but please leave out baked goods or candy because of storage concerns. Trust us, they will be getting lots of yummy things to eat!

River Camp staff will contact families as soon as possible if there are concerns or emergencies. In the event that there is an emergency or concern coming from the home, please contact Kara McCrimmon, Cobscook Experiential Programs director, directly at 207-263-8393 (cell) or 207-733-2233 ext. 312 (office) directly. It is vitally important that bad news from home be delivered carefully so that the staff are equipped to deal with any implications and the student will be in a good place to receive the news.

### **Electronic Devices**

Part of this unique experience is the freedom to explore nature and build relationships outside of the technological realm. We want our crew to be fully immersed in the here-and-now. Few opportunities exist in the modern world to completely unplug, and many people hold those times in their fondest memories. **Therefore, RIVER CAMP prohibits all electronic devices except for cameras.** Exceptions are also made for small electronic instrument tuners.

This includes but is not limited to: cell phones, iPods/mp3 players, tablet computers, hand held video games, laser pointers, and radios. Most places where the program takes place do not have cell phone service, but this also applies if the crew is in town for any reason.

Cameras are allowed when used in a way that does not violate another person's privacy in any way. Camera devices may not be used in a restroom or any other place where people have a reasonable expectation of privacy. If any of the above expectations of electronics usage are not met, the device will be confiscated.

Some people have a camera that is part of another device. While we prefer stand-alone cameras, we understand that people want to take pictures and we will work together to make a plan with any individual who brings a multi-function device.

### **Valuables**

Valuables and large sums of money should not be brought to the River Camp. There is no use for them in the woods.

### **Self-Care**

It is important that participants take care of themselves. Staff will provide guidance (i.e. detailed packing lists, reminders and suggestions during camp) and it is important that participants take

these suggestions for their own safety and for the safety of the group. There are personal and environmental considerations related to personal hygiene that must be learned and followed throughout the program. Eating and drinking regularly, bringing extra layers and appropriate clothing, and getting enough sleep help the entire group to stay safe, warm and healthy. Participants are expected to ask for (and give!) help when they need it.

### **Smoking**

In accordance with Maine State Law, participants under 21 years of age may not possess tobacco products including snuff (dip) or chewing tobacco. All participants make the commitment to not bring any tobacco into the program. It is illegal and against the interests of self-care and group well-being, therefore it can be grounds for removal from the crew. Participants are permitted, with permission of parent/guardian, to bring smoking cessation products (nicotine patches/gum) with them on expeditions. Staff will carry and administer the products in accordance with prescription or instructions on original packaging. Crew members are encouraged to discuss tobacco use pro-actively and openly with staff so they can receive adequate support.

### **Illegal Substances and Alcohol**

Use or possession of alcohol or illegal substances is against the program commitments, in addition to being dangerous and unhealthy. Making the choice to use or bring these items is choosing to leave the program early and without the Honorarium.

### **Discipline**

For safety and academic reasons, Cobscook Institute staff reserve the right to suspend or remove a participant from the program at any time. Participants are invited to work together to create a positive and productive learning community. Maintaining the expectations in the Commitment Contract is one of the ways that each student can contribute to a healthy community. If participants break one of the commitments in the Commitment Contract, or otherwise choose to engage in an act that results in harm to another member of the group, the following describes how River Camp works with participants, families, and the community to address harmful acts.

River Camp strives to maintain an open and proactive approach to discipline that recognizes the humanity of every program participant and leader. Program staff will first address disciplinary issues from the perspective of a learning experience. Ultimately, the resolution of any destructive or inappropriate behavior must serve to bring the group closer together to ensure their continued success. Within the context of safety and the law, we will be firm, fair and consistent, and humane to bring about a respectful and fully functioning community.

### **Knives**

The nature of this program requires that crew members use an array of sharp and potentially dangerous tools. In addition, participants are allowed to possess a personal pocketknife. Like with all tools, safe behavior is expected with a pocketknife, but there are a few additional rules and guidelines.

- Knives with locking blades are preferred because they are generally safer.
- Multi-tool type knives are often useful.
- Knives must not be used as nail clippers or for other personal grooming.
- Recreational whittling is prohibited because of the potential for injury. (We have specialized tools for carving projects.)
- Knives must be used in good lighting conditions.
- Like with any other potentially dangerous equipment, "It's a TOOL, not a TOY, NEVER a WEAPON!"

Possession of a knife is a privilege, not a right. If a participant is misusing a knife (playing with it, having it open while on the bus or in a moving vehicle, leaving it in unsafe places, etc.), it will be confiscated and returned at the discretion of program staff.

### **Language**

Vulgar or profane language does not fit within our expectations of respect and will not be tolerated. Crew members must understand that some topics are perfectly fine when only the crew is present but would not be appropriate when guests are around. Special attention must be paid to avoid racist, sexist, homophobic or other offensive language.

### **Fishing**

Crew members may fish within the constraints of the law during their free time. For safety, a hat and/or glasses must be worn while fishing. All hooks must have their barbs bent down and treble hooks are not allowed because they are especially difficult to remove from people if they become embedded. Only one person may fish from a boat at a time, but they may have others in the boat who are not fishing. (And they can take turns.) Fishing must be separate from swimming. Removal of non-native fish is encouraged.

### **Driving**

Even though many crew members will probably be licensed drivers, driving is not allowed during River Camp. There is no room for any extra vehicles, so all participants must be dropped off at the beginning of the program.

### **Weapons, Violence and Safety**

Cobscok Institute and DSF believe that participants and staff are entitled to learn and work in an environment free of violence, threats and disruptive behavior. Crew members are expected to conduct themselves with respect for themselves and others and in accordance with the Commitment Contract.

### **Criteria for Dismissal from River Camp**

We hope and believe that everyone will be a great fit for River Camp, but we need to draw clear lines about unacceptable behavior. The following will result in immediate dismissal from the program program without Honorarium:

- Use or possession of drugs, alcohol or tobacco
- Violence toward crew members, staff or guests
- Possession of guns or other weapons.
- Stealing or intentional destruction of property

Repeated incidents of other kinds may also be grounds for dismissal without Honorarium.

Medical evacuation, family emergencies or other circumstances could cause a crew member to have to leave earlier than the end of the program and in those situations a partial Honorarium could be discussed.