

Wildland Fire Staff Ride Guide



Mann Gulch, Montana



LEADERSHIP TOOLBOX REFERENCE
Staff Ride Workbook
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Preface

The intent of this Guide is to provide information that will facilitate an increase in the use of staff rides within the wildland fire community. Staff rides are excellent learning events, with a focus on the professional development of leaders. This Guide contains information about the various phases and potential objectives of a wildland fire staff ride. It also includes information that will be required by leaders and organizers of wildland fire staff rides pertaining to planning and preparation as well as logistics and safety. Case studies of staff rides that have occurred recently are included as examples.

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Publications

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I. BACKGROUND: WHY CONDUCT A STAFF RIDE?

A staff ride is a planned learning event that has been used effectively by various branches of the U.S. military since the early 1900's. The common purpose shared by staff rides is to further the development of leaders. Military staff rides typically discuss leadership, decision making, tactics and strategy. Staff rides on wildland fires discuss the same issues in a different context. The systematic study of wildland fire sites can help wildland firefighters and managers see how leaders' decisions and followers' behaviors influence tactical outcomes on fires, how terrain and weather influence both fire and human behavior on fires, and how technology, tactics and organization interact in a wildland fire setting at any complexity level. When these personal observations are combined with curiosity and diligence, the groundwork is laid for a lifetime of learning that produces leaders who are mentally prepared for wildland firefighting.

II. DEFINITION: WHAT IS A STAFF RIDE?

A staff ride consists of systematic preliminary study of a selected fire or other emergency operation, an extensive visit to the actual site(s) associated with the fire, and an opportunity to integrate the lessons derived from the study and visit. It envisions maximum student involvement before arrival at the site to guarantee **thoughtful analysis and discussion**. A staff ride thus links a historical event, systematic preliminary study, and actual terrain to produce fire analysis in three dimensions. It consists of three distinct phases: preliminary study, field study, and integration.

Staff rides should not be confused with simple visits to fire sites or with other hypothetical or virtual exercises. In the military, when terrain and hypothetical scenarios (but not history) are used as teaching vehicles, it is called a "Tactical Exercise Without Troops." Further, a visit to the site of a battle – or fire – involving little or no preliminary systematic study on the part of the student is a "historical tour," not a staff ride. Historical tours can stimulate thought and discussion, but are limited by the lack of student preparation and involvement.

There is a caution here for firefighters and managers attempting to conduct wildland fire staff rides. Many wildland fires are not well documented, especially the "success stories." Typically the wildland fires with the most documentation (i.e., the most material available for the Preliminary Study Phase of a staff ride) are our failures or tragedy fires. In the world of wildland fire, there usually has to be a death, fire shelter deployment or huge loss of property, with an ensuing investigation and media interest, in order for much written material to exist for study. Because of this lack of written pre-study materials, wildland firefighters will be tempted to shortcut the preliminary study phase of staff rides. If this is done, the event will not be a staff ride, will not obtain the results a good staff ride can obtain, and should not be called a staff ride.

III. PURPOSES AND OBJECTIVES: WHAT CAN A WILDLAND FIRE STAFF RIDE ACCOMPLISH?

The staff ride is a unique technique for conveying the lessons of the past to present day leaders. While the sole purpose of a staff ride is to further the professional development of leaders, it may be designed to achieve one or many objectives. Depending on the fire selected, the staff ride can illuminate any principle or lesson at any chosen level. Because its mixture of classroom and field study facilitates student involvement, it ensures that any educational benefits are more likely to be retained by participants.

The goals of staff rides have varied from the specific testing of operational concepts to the general enhancement of professional and analytical skills. All staff rides, however, have one idea in common: to place students on an actual piece of terrain, confront them with an operational situation, and stimulate them to reach conclusions or derive lessons from the experience.

The professional development of wildland fire leaders can be accomplished in many ways through the use of the staff ride. Topics ranging from small unit tactics to fire behavior to principles of communication can be addressed through staff rides. Because staff rides involve a high level of personal commitment and involvement for all participants, the learning that occurs on staff rides can be deeper and more meaningful for adult learners than classroom lectures.

Specific objectives for a wildland fire staff ride might be:

- To expose fire personnel to the dynamics of wildland fire, especially those factors which interact to produce accidents and disasters.
- To provide case studies in the application of fire management principles associated with logistical support, planning and operations.
- To provide case studies in the human factors of wildland fire, including leadership, cohesion, and communications at any level desired.
- To review high risk, low frequency situations and actions.
- To study/review key decision gates leading to fire management actions.
- To show the effects of weather, slope, topography and fuels upon fire management actions and their implementation.

- To encourage potential fire managers and leaders to study their profession through the use of fire history.
- To kindle or reinforce an interest in the heritage of the wildland fire agencies.

A well-planned and executed staff ride can accomplish a number of the above objectives at the same time. If you are the person in charge of organizing and conducting a staff ride, you will need to decide upon specific objectives for your staff ride and make them known to all participants well in advance of the event.

Aside from the wildland fire-related objectives of a staff ride, if you are the leader of a staff ride you should have some objectives of your own. First, you need to stimulate active discussions among participants. The development of group awareness and knowledge cannot occur without discussion. Your role will be that of facilitator: getting the discussion going, keeping it on track, asking provocative questions and opening up new subjects for consideration when appropriate. You'll need to make sure that all of the participants on a staff ride are involved in the discussions, not just a few extroverts.

IV. KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL STAFF RIDES

There are three keys to successful staff rides. The first is that students are active participants in the educational process: in the exchange of information, in the formulation of thought, and in the collective analysis of the operation. The second is that there must be a complete integration of the Preliminary Study phase and the Field Study portion of the course. Without the integration, the Preliminary Study phase is just an independent academic analysis, and the Field Study portion is just a historical tour. While either one is sufficient to derive lessons, the two activities integrated together generate optimal understanding and analytical thought. The third key is that the staff ride must be well planned, with logistical and safety considerations taken into account and leaders designated.

Another thing that should be taken into account when conducting staff rides is local sensitivities. The staff ride leader and all participants must understand that they will be treading on hallowed ground: firefighters gave their lives here. In some cases the topic of the fire may still be very sensitive to local agency employees, the media, and local communities. Many wildland fire fatalities occurred under circumstances that remain controversial to this day. It is highly recommended that advance notice be given to local jurisdictional agencies when staff rides are being scheduled to occur on their land. In some cases, they may want to have a local representative on hand for the staff ride, which in turn can enhance the success of the staff ride by adding a participant with in-depth local knowledge.

V. CONDUCT OF THE STAFF RIDE

Staff rides are generally broken down into three phases: preliminary study, field study, and integration. Students and faculty are highly encouraged to conduct the Integration Phase in an informal manner to the extent possible.

A. Preliminary Study Phase

The purpose of this phase is to prepare the student for the visit to the site of the selected fire and is critical to the success of the Field Study Phase.

Preliminary study is most often completed as an individual assignment. No written product is required, but the more detailed the study, the greater the benefit for the individual and for the group as a whole. At a minimum, during the Preliminary Study Phase the student must acquire the basic knowledge necessary for a general understanding of the selected fire. Generally, this basic knowledge should consist of:

- Fire behavior and weather during the fire
- Topography of the area
- Organization of the fire suppression forces
- Resources, tools and equipment used on the fire
- Local, regional and national fire situation at the time of the event
- General outline and chronology of significant events
- Biographical and personality data on significant leaders
- An analysis of the fire to determine, to the degree possible, significant factors in the historical outcome
- An interpretation of significant ramifications of the fire in terms of current wildland fire policy

If students want to take it a step further, they can advance beyond a general knowledge in their analysis and understanding by focusing additional study on particular leaders, units, functional areas, events, decisions, or phases of the fire.

If faculty want to ensure that all aspects of a fire are covered both during preliminary study and during the Field Study Phase, they can make specific assignments to individual participants. A very useful approach to get students actively involved here is to assign each student a specific subject to investigate more intensively than the general background

material. Students are then required to brief the group on that subject, either in a formal classroom setting or during the Field Study Phase. Useful subjects in this regard are specific leaders, specific units, critical events, or specific functional areas such as logistics, equipment or communications. By creating mini-experts on particular subtopics, this method virtually guarantees lively discussion and divergent viewpoints among participants. Once created in the Preliminary Study Phase, this involvement carries over into the Field Study Phase with decidedly positive results. For example, one person might be assigned the area of personal protective equipment, another might be assigned to study fuels, while yet another could be assigned to analyze the actions of a particular crew. Such assignments need to be coordinated so that all aspects of the fire are covered by the group as a whole. A caution here: Even when specific assignments are made, all participants still need to arrive at the field site with a general understanding of the entire event and its components.

Sources of Information for Preliminary Study

During the Preliminary Study Phase, students must be given access to the best sources that can be provided for them. As a minimum, an account (analytical, if possible) and a topographical map of the selected fire should be made available to all participants. Beyond these general materials, other relevant sources, such as fire reports, investigative reports, radio transcripts, personal accounts, media accounts, spot weather information, burn plans, Incident Action Plans and WFSAs should be provided if available.



Excellent reference photo of the South Canyon fire site, with points of interest added. Source: “Fire Behavior Associated with the 1994 South Canyon Fire on Storm King Mountain, Colorado”, September, 1998, USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station.

Sources are often referred to as “primary” or “secondary.” Primary sources are documents or video/film clips produced by participants or eyewitnesses. Included among primary sources are official documents such the ones mentioned above. Primary sources are the raw material from which historical events are reconstructed. Primary sources are important because they deliver the details that may have been omitted by writers of secondary source material. They may also provide a “view” without the bias of the writer of a secondary source.

Secondary sources are accounts of events produced by nonparticipants who received their information secondhand from primary sources or other secondary accounts. They are often in narrative format and many are analytical in nature. They not only present the historical facts, but they also consider why events may have unfolded in a certain way.

It is worth noting that complex events are very difficult to reconstruct after the fact. Trained investigators often state that their reconstruction of events is at best a close approximation of what really happened.

Eyewitness accounts frequently vary from one person to another on the same event, especially when the people involved are under a great deal of stress or in life-threatening situations. For this reason, all sources must be analyzed critically and care should be taken not to jump to the “easy conclusions” and point the hasty finger. Staff ride leaders are encouraged to emphasize to participants that analysis is important but a rush to judgment is almost always inappropriate.

B. Field Study Phase

If the Preliminary Study Phase has been systematic and thorough, the Field Study Phase will reinforce or modify intellectual perceptions of the fire and surrounding events. The Field Study Phase culminates all previous efforts by students to understand selected historical events, to analyze the significance of those events, and to derive relevant lessons for professional development. The importance of the Field Study Phase is that it is the most effective way to stimulate the student’s intellectual involvement and to ensure that any analytical conclusions reached at any point in the staff ride process are retained.

It is likely that all participants in a given staff ride will not know each other; many of them are probably meeting for the first time. A pre-event meeting, or dinner, the night before a staff ride, can serve to set the stage for participants. Leaders can introduce participants to each other, outline objectives and describe the schedule and logistics for the following day. This sort of “ice-breaking” event is highly recommended.



Paul Gleason gestures while making a point at the overlook at the site of the 1994 South Canyon Fire near Grand Junction, Colorado.

Specific items to consider while in the field at a fire site:

1. Plans, communications, events and decisions. Training aids may include after action reports, investigation reports, excerpts from incident plans, media reports, terrain and situation maps or sketches, and first-person accounts.
2. Individuals involved in the fire. This should go beyond a recitation of biography. Relate the individual and his or her background pertinent to the specific situation, event or decision. Be sure to discuss the role that the firefighting culture played in the event; for example, what assumptions might have been made by or about a person simply because they were a hotshot, smokejumper, helitack crewmember, or manager? The reading of brief and colorful vignettes drawn from primary sources is a good technique.
3. Lessons learned or discussion points. These should attempt to draw on some common threads:
 - “Commander’s intent” or incident objectives – how well were they articulated and communicated?
 - Human behavior at all levels of the organization and the influences upon it
 - Leadership and decision making at the tactical, operational and strategic levels
 - Command and control
 - Communication between leaders, subordinates and peers

Some other key considerations for people planning and implementing staff rides on wildland fires are logistics and safety. Logistics must be taken care of in terms of getting people to and from the site. Adequate time must be planned for good discussion at the key sites where significant events occurred. Participants will resent it, and learning will be adversely impacted, if they spend hours or even days preparing for the field study only to be rushed through a hasty or poorly planned field visit.

In terms of safety, wildland fire accident sites usually involve some or all of the following potential hazards, many of which were also present during the fire being studied: steep terrain, rolling rocks, exposure to the elements (e.g., lightning and/or hot weather), dehydration, flora and fauna (e.g., poison oak, bees, snakes and ticks), remote sites involving lengthy extraction times for injured personnel, and poor communications. Many

of these risks can be mitigated by briefing involved personnel on the local hazards in advance of the site visit and by providing a list of recommended field gear. See Appendix B for a generic recommended gear list.

Physical fitness and hydration of participants must be closely monitored. If the group is to remain together as a group, it can only move as fast as the least fit participant. Be realistic in the time you estimate will be needed at the site; it's better to plan too much time than too little. If the group is large and will be split into smaller independent groups, these groups can be assembled according to fitness levels, although that should not be the only consideration. The experience and knowledge level of each group member should be taken into account when splitting into smaller groups. It is good to have a mix of more- and less-experienced people in each group, as well as a mix of people with different backgrounds or from different levels of the organization. This may help to ensure a multi-faceted discussion.

All groups, regardless of size, need to have a leader who is pre-designated and known to all group members. Communications also need to be considered in advance: Does the area have cell phone coverage, or is some type of handheld radio communication the only option?

C. Integration Phase

The third and final phase is a formal or informal opportunity for students and faculty to “bring all the parts together” and reflect on the impressions and lessons learned. One approach that has been used for wildland fire staff rides has been a post-event dinner. It may make for a long day, by the time participants have returned from the field, cleaned up and assembled for dinner, but it is necessary to conduct the Integration Phase as close to the Field Study Phase as possible so that impressions are still fresh in participants' minds. Participants can mingle and discuss the field study informally over dinner; after dinner, a more formal discussion may be held. If group size permits, a “round-robin” of all participants can be conducted. Questions can be asked such as, “what is the single most important thing you concluded from today's study and how will you use those conclusions to improve the way you or your organization fights fire?” Participants can continue to learn from each other through this process.

VI. KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MILITARY AND WILDLAND FIRE STAFF RIDES

Since the practice of staff riding originated in military circles, it is important to understand the similarities and differences between the two types of staff rides.

One of the major differences between military staff rides and wildland fire staff rides is the amount of documentation available. Many military engagements, even ones occurring hundreds of years ago, are thoroughly documented. The U.S. military has exhaustive documentation for the engagements in which it has participated over the years, both defeats and victories.

In the world of wildland fire, however, we typically possess very little documentation. What we do have in the way of documentation is almost exclusively limited to our “defeats,” our tragedy fires where loss of life or significant loss of property and political fallout resulted. This is a major obstacle to the conduct of productive wildland fire staff rides: we have many events that warrant further study, yet most of these events suffer from anemic documentation that is suitable for the Preliminary Study Phase of a staff ride.

Another difference between military and wildland fire staff rides is the availability of survivors or eyewitnesses. For the U.S. military, the most recent battlefield sites in the United States date from the Civil War era (1861-1865) or the Indian wars of the late 1800’s, with the exception of the World War II battles fought in the Aleutian Islands of Alaska. In other words, no survivors or eyewitnesses are available to the U.S. military for engagements fought in the lower 48 states; going to the Aleutians is prohibitively expensive and difficult logistically.

Unlike military operations, survivors and eyewitnesses are available for a number of wildland fires in the U.S. for the purposes of staff rides. For example, people who spent time inside fire shelters at South Canyon, Thirtymile, or the Butte Fire are still employed by a variety of wildland fire agencies. Further, people who were involved in fire operations or in management roles are also available for those fires and for the Dude Fire, Cerro Grande and many more. Care should be exercised when involving survivors in staff rides, as the individuals have often experienced a great deal of trauma associated with the event and “reliving” it may be emotionally difficult.

APPENDIX A

Gettysburg Staff Ride

The photos below illustrate a joint staff ride conducted by the Marine Corps University and a group of wildland firefighters at Gettysburg National Military Park in April, 2002. Marine captains from the Amphibious Warfare School comprised the majority of trainees, which totaled about 200 people. Participants were split into groups of approximately a dozen people each, with a couple of firefighters assigned to each group. To prepare for the staff ride, each Marine was assigned a subject, event, location, leader or part of the battle to study in detail. The group traveled together to specific sites on the battlefield. At each stop, one or two of the Marines briefed the group on the pre-study they had conducted and offered some conclusions they had drawn from that study. This stimulated discussion among the group, with varying viewpoints offered. Wildland firefighter participants did not receive specific pre-study assignments but read extensively from a suggested reading list.



Staff Ride participants study a map and listen to a presentation at the site where Confederate General Longstreet's troops launched their assault on Federal positions on July 2, 1863.

Because the Gettysburg battlefield sprawls across several square miles, participants traveled either by motorized vehicle or bicycle. The battle itself raged for three consecutive days; this staff ride encompassed a day and a half on the battlefield, but could have been accomplished in more or less time.

As the Marines put it, the focus was not on “who shot John,” it was on leadership and decision making. In other words, while it was necessary to understand the basics of weapons and tactics employed during the battle, it was not necessary to focus on the

details of each attack, counterattack, breakthrough or heroic stand. What was important to focus on was how decisions were made and communicated on the battlefield – the same things that are important to understand on the fireground.



Marines and firefighters discuss events at Devil's Den, looking towards Little Round Top. Fierce fighting occurred in this area on July 2, 1863, with many examples of heroism, confusion, unclear communication and personal initiative.

Firefighters can learn leadership lessons from staff rides, even from ones at military battlefields where events that occurred 140 years ago are studied. Ambiguous instructions and objectives, lack of adequate intelligence, failure to act quickly, lack of situational awareness, over- or under-estimation of people's capabilities, failure to communicate clearly or at all, seizing the initiative – or not: Gettysburg holds dozens of leadership lessons. Do any of these problems and challenges sound familiar to experienced wildland firefighters?

Dude Fire Staff Ride

The Staff Ride

At its simplest level, a staff ride brings soldiers back to the scene of old battles, whether won or lost, to directly re-experience the strategy and tactics used on the battlefield. Custer's defeat at the Little Big Horn, Chief Joseph's skirmish at the Big Hole River in Montana, and the Civil War battles at Gettysburg and Antietam are staff rides regularly conducted today to train soldiers.

With the Dude Fire Staff Ride, we applied the framework of the military staff ride to a wildland fire that blew up outside of Payson, AZ, in June 1990, killing six firefighters. This staff ride was part of a national interagency fire behavior workshop in Phoenix, AZ, in March 1999.

The staff ride is not a lecture or field trip. The basic assumptions used in developing the Dude Fire Staff Ride were:

- There may be no one correct answer or chain of events leading up to the fatalities;
- Wildland fires are complex natural events that commonly defy honest attempts to think through and understand them;
- Hindsight often creates misperceptions of what actually occurred on a fire; and
- The root cause of the Dude Fire tragedy may never be fully known.

The lessons learned by participants in a staff ride are usually individual, personal, not easily categorized, and filled with emotion. The expectation is that individuals will form their own conclusions and then, after talking and listening to other participants, form a shared vision of what happened.

Before walking the old brushed-over firelines of the Dude Fire, staff ride participants were given the raw materials of the fire's history—shift plans, weather forecasts, fire behavior and fire danger predictions, maps, video footage, and photographs. The night before going to the actual fire site, students heard talks on the history of the staff ride from Glenn Robinson, author of *The Staff Ride*, a booklet that describes what a staff ride is and how it is put together. Dr. Dave Cleaves, of the USDA Forest Service's Washington Office fire research branch, spoke on decision-making. Dr. Karl Weick, an organizational psychologist at the University of Michigan who has studied how firefighters behaved during blowups on the Mann Gulch and South Canyon Fires, cautioned the participants not to come too quickly to conclusions about the causes of the fatalities. From the fire's historical artifacts and the talks, each individual began framing a mental picture of the reasons for the Dude Fire fatalities.

What's Next?

What's next for the staff ride? Following the Dude Fire Staff Ride, we evaluated this attempt to apply a military concept to wildland fire training, and we concluded that it was a success. We find support in the wildland fire community for utilizing this learning tool in the future. We believe that the wildland fire community should consider fully integrating this concept into training, whether outside the classroom, hands-on, or performance based.

Acknowledgements

The success of the Dude Fire Staff Ride was due to the hard work and determination of organizers and participants, and to their willingness to try a new method of organizational learning. Something clicked for everyone who participated, and the whole event—motivated by a team spirit—magically came together.

The 135 participants represented a diversity of occupations—hotshot superintendents, fire behavior researchers, staff ride experts, fire management officers, grunt firefighters, fatality investigators, meteorologists, claims adjusters, attorneys from the Office of General Counsel, survivors of the blowup, and more. That was another major reason for success.

However, one group of people must be singled out for special thanks: the personnel of the Payson Ranger District on the Tonto National Forest. Without their support and interest, the Dude Fire Staff Ride would not have gotten off the ground.

Stands for the Dude Fire Staff Ride

A total of 135 people – in groups of 45 – experienced the March 1999 Dude Fire Staff Ride in 8 in-the-field presentations/discussions (called stands). The stands, designed to stimulate interaction between participants and presenters, told the story of the 1990 Dude Fire blowup in chronological order.

Stand 1

- **Site:** Fire camp location (with a panoramic view of the fire's topography)
- **Presenters:** Fire management officer and district ranger from the host Payson Ranger District, Tonto National Forest
- **Discussion Topics:** Ignition; seasonal severity; geography; management response in this type of fire/locality; general fire behavior and weather.

Stand 2

- **Site:** On buses traveling through the Whispering Pines residential development in the wildland-urban interface.
- **Presenter:** Bus facilitator
- **Discussion Topics:** Fuels; terrain; suppression options.

Stand 3

- **Site:** Control Road and Fuller Canyon (inside the burnover perimeter)
- **Presenters:** Type 2 incident commander; National Weather Service fire weather forecaster.
- **Discussion Topics:** Night fire behavior/weather; evening fire operations; crew deployments/evacuations the first night; escape route.

Stand 4

- **Site:** Permanent memorial for the fallen Dude Fire firefighters in the Bonita Creek Estates residential development.
- **Presenters:** None (a time for respectful and reflective silence)
- **Discussion Topics:** An opportunity to visit this site in a moment of silent reflection.

At this point, the groups abandoned the buses and walked from stand to stand along the Dude Fire dozer line.

Stand 5

- **Site:** Safety zone.
- **Presenters:** Four hotshot superintendents on the fire; National Weather Service meteorologist.
- **Discussion Topics:** Early-morning operations; fire behavior/weather; wildland-urban interface; location of overhead, including fire behavior analysts; transition from type 2 to type 1.

Stand 6

- **Site:** Inside the perimeter of the Bonita Creek Estates residential development.
- **Presenters:** Hotshot superintendents.
- **Discussion Topics:** Burnout operation; tactics; fire behavior/weather; lookouts, communications, escape routes, safety zones; chronology of finding the burn victims.

Stand 7

- **Site:** Entrapment site.
- **Presenters:** Entrapment survivor; accident investigation team member.
- **Discussion Topics:** Entrapment and deployment chronology; “get-on-the-ground” message; fire behavior/weather, including difference at this location and the safety zone.

Stand 8

- **Site:** Control Road and Walk Moore Canyon.
- **Presenters:** Type 1 team fire behavior analyst; Tonto National Forest Fire and Aviation Management Officer; assistant U.S. Attorney involved in Dude Fire litigation.
- **Discussion Topics:** Post-deployment; fire behavior/weather; fatalities; litigation.

The morning following the field visit, the official “integration phase” – discussing how to apply lessons learned to future incidents – took place in nearby Phoenix, AZ. This phase actually began immediately after Stand 8 as individual discussions started on the bus ride to Phoenix

This is a reprint of an article written by Dave Thomas, the regional fuels specialist for the U.S. Forest Service, Intermountain Region, Ogden, UT; and Wayne Cook, a technology transfer specialist for the U.S. Forest Service, Missoula Fire Sciences Laboratory, Missoula, MT. This article appeared in the Fall 2002 issue of “Fire Management Today.” The theme of that entire issue was the staff ride and how this concept of organizational learning, used for over a century by the U.S. military, was applied to the 1990 Dude Fire that burned near the Mogollon Rim in Arizona.

APPENDIX B

Recommended Field Gear List for Staff Ride Participants

Day pack

Sunscreen

Insect repellent

Rain gear

Warm jacket

Water

Lunch/energy bars

Camera

Map(s)

Compass and/or handheld GPS

Note pad and pen

First aid kit

Moleskin

Cell phone or radio w/extra batteries

Flashlight or headlamp

NOTE: This generic list is offered as a starting point. It will probably need to be modified for specific staff rides depending on the location, time of year, weather, etc.