

Report on Adults Weekend at Rochelle

On weekend of 17-18-19 October Troop 505 held an adults camp out at The Ranch with the intention of not only having fellowship and an opportunity to discuss patrol method camping, issues and to pass on information to other adult leaders.

There were 10 adults in attendance, including a new parent and some more recent adults that have been in the troop for a year or so. Much of the troop 505 leadership has many years of experience and this knowledge would be passed on. These notes will be circulated to all adults in the troop.

A relaxed weekend was planned with two informal sessions to cover how we plan and execute camp outs and to provide an opportunity to discuss improvements. In addition, the team wanted to explore The Ranch as we feel that this is a resource underutilized and the property contains far more than we traditionally used. For the main part the troop has camped in Oak Grove for Advancement Camps. On this weekend we used a small and recently built camp site in Heavy Timber up near the old entrance gate.

Session One – Camp Planning

The team reviewed the process of how the boys choose camp outs, who organizes them, how far ahead we plan and what is needed from an adult in charge (site reservation, forms for sign up, tour plan etc.) along with the resources who are available.

The team was reminded that Mark Wilson can file the tour plan for them, and also the scoutmaster. Also, mark is frequently available to book the sites as long as he is given dates and instructions. This is useful resource for any adult planning a camp out.

Considerable discussion was had on the topic of signing up, including the desire for better numbers earlier. This is difficult, earlier close of would help meal planning (although meal planning and buying would be the week before the camp anyway) but sometimes the schedule gets more crowded and makes this harder. The team discussed the use of electronic sign-up and agreed to look into this as a more modern method and more suitable to helping the “oops I forgot” people. Dave Schmitt will look into this in more detail and report back, it was agreed this is something we really want to try. We also raised the amount for food to \$15 per person from \$14.

The idea of a scoutmaster's surprise weekend was supported as a way to introduce the boys to new camp out ideas as they tend to choose the same things again (which they enjoy but maybe some new ideas would be good). The fall camp out for 2015 will be a scoutmaster's surprise – more on that later.

Session Two – At the Camp

In session two the team discussed the execution of a camp once it is organized and boys are signed up. This was where we felt the most progress on patrol method can be made and that the key is Friday night, where there is sometime chaos and certainly an opportunity to set the stage. I re-iterated my desire to have the boys camp more separately as a patrol and noted that in the last two camps the clean up was much easier as each patrol policed their own area and kept it more clean. This needs some continual reminders during the weekend to ensure it is clean and ASMs or the scoutmaster will consider this part of the general interaction with the boys. At the end of the weekend each patrol will have the area inspected by the SPL and SM.

Troop Assembly is conducted before leaving for the camp out to make sure all the expected boys are present and this is conducted by the SPL or the designated SPL for the weekend.

Friday night is when the team can lay down the immediate expectations and implementations of the patrol method. Firstly we realize it is hard to choose a camp site for the patrol in the dark, so the SPL and SM will walk the site to look and choose. The designated patrol leaders for the patrols will also walk the site and choose their camp location. Where possible these will be separated by some distance and have their own table for food preparation.

Additionally the patrol leaders will be the ones who sign out the tents for their patrol, and boys will be required to tent in their patrol except under unusual circumstances. The SM will be part of this decision and problem solving. Patrol leaders who sign out the tents are ultimately responsible for those tents and should ensure that it is noted down who takes it home for cleaning and who takes home the patrol box. This is often a patrol decision, the patrol leader should help ensure the decision is taken and if necessary escalate problems to the scoutmaster and adult quartermaster.

A discussion on camp fire program and flow occurred and the flow of a program discussed, with more noisy skits and songs at the start, trailing off to stories and finishing with a scoutmaster minute. This was implemented at the previous camp out in a very informal but successful camp fire and served as a good example.

General Impressions of The Ranch

This facility is much larger than most realize. The group walked the entire area and found many nooks and crannies to make use of. Our planned Advancement camp should use Light Timber – we normally stay at Oak Grove. Light Timber looks really good for combining advancement stations and separate patrol camping. Nice shower block too!

Scoutmaster Surprise Camp Out – The Hunger Games

During the walk we discussed having the boys camp away as a patrol from the regular camp, like NYLT does with the Outpost night. In fact, the area used for Outpost is ideally situated for this with several small camp sites that are separate but not too far away. Again this is a chance to emphasize the patrol method.

As discussions went further, the idea of each patrol completing challenges to earn items from the Hunger Games pile was proposed. The actual challenges and logistics have not been deeply discussed but the idea would be to earn the shelter, food and fuel required to stay overnight. Challenges could be anything from a map and compass challenge to starting a fire.

In addition the team felt a further element of surprise would be interesting and foster cooperation with other patrols. As each challenge is completed the patrol earns some items but not all that they need, and has too many of what they earned. The intention is that each patrol will need to work with the other patrols to barter and trade and help ensure each patrol has what they need. For example, completing the fire challenge might result in earning all the gas canisters but not stove. Another patrol receives 2 stoves but no gas.

While this requires further planning, the group was enthused by the idea and how it might fit improve patrol identity while also giving the boys more a night of freedom “away”. Adult support would never be too far away, for example the scoutmaster could camp near the large oak near the Outpost but not located with the patrols. In the event of need, the scoutmaster would be readily available with just a short walk.

Since it is a surprise people are sworn to secrecy and it will be a surprise up to and including driving to the location.

Conclusions

The event was an enjoyable weekend and there was enthusiasm for doing again next year. The vent achieved a number of stated goals about patrol method camping although more new parents would be welcome. In future a more personal request of each parent should be made. It is also possible to choose a closer camp site to home and allow more people in and out access on the Saturday. It was good to explore The Ranch though, and the troop has wanted to do that for some time.

The team clearly endorses the ideas of more patrol method camping and came up with several good ideas about how to better implement this concept. These concepts will be put into place over the coming camp outs where patrol method is readily available for camping (some winter camp outs are cabin camps and not conducive to patrol camping, although other patrol method ideas such as cleaning patrols can be implemented to re-enforce the concepts).

These notes will be circulated to the adult membership.

Additional Notes and Resources

Camp out ideas from the boys are to be obtained in a troop meeting in the fall. The current format of patrols coming up with 3 top suggestions for discussion with the troop seems good.

Planning is often done a year in advance, at least as choosing dates and sometimes booking sites. An adult is needed to co-ordinate the planning (cost, booking) for each camp out and this should be volunchosen early. The plan is published as part of the scoutmaster meeting.

Assistance in booking camp sites is available from Mark Wilson.

Assistance in lodging Tour Plans is available from Mark Wilson or Jezza Sutton.

Help is available from other adults who have organized camp outs, and for regular camp outs like the ski trip or survival it is a good idea to have someone shadow the existing organizer. The current adults are very keen to help the new guys learn more and be set up for a successful time as an adult leader.

The ASM in charge is to know the schedule for the weekend and if not able to attend to ensure another ASM knows. The scoutmaster should be spending his time interacting with the boys and seeing how they are doing, taking any opportunities to encourage patrol identity and responsibility.