

Water (Part 1)

The sources and availability of water is a key component of any backpacking trek, including Philmont, and you will see in future Watchu Grams about trail planning that water may well dictate what your crew does on the trail. Keep in mind that when you are at a water source, whether a stream or a spigot, you must assume it is possibly contaminated and needs to be treated unless a Philmont staff member tells you otherwise. Yes, Philmont has clear fresh mountain streams, but it is a working ranch with cows and horses. And we all know what they like to do, and they don't care where they do it. Wow!

In previous Watchu Grams we have discussed that proper water consumption is essential at Philmont. Dehydration is the most likely reason a crew member will end up being taken off the trail and sent to the Philmont infirmary; in some cases for intravenous treatment. "Clear and Copious" are the watchwords for adequate water consumption, but like all good things, it is possible to over-do it. Fortunately, excessive water consumption is rare and usually only seen in extreme circumstances - for instance, a few years ago a person died during a radio show water-drinking contest. And water intoxication is more than just about drinking too much water - it is drinking water without food, salt or electrolytes, and to some extent not urinating. The following guidelines will keep you and your crew safely hydrated:

1. Proper food intake is equally essential to good health and proper hydration.
2. Six to eight liters of water a day is generally adequate.
3. One liter per hour when hiking is a good rule of thumb.
4. "Clear" urine indicates you are on the right track, as does
5. Regular or "Copious" urination.

Note that practices from the past like "cameling-up" or a "chug-a-lug" approach where a quart of water is drunk at one time prior setting out on the day's hike are no longer appropriate - the intake of water should be spread out both over the day and activities like hiking. Also, only drinking water and not replenishing the electrolytes is bad - Gatorade or similar sport drinks help prevent that situation. The Philmont diet of food and liquid is well-balanced for the job at hand because it is full of salt: crackers, peanuts, jerky, beef sticks, cheese, peanut butter, cookies and not to mention the dehydrated food which is predominately seasoned with salt. Advisors, the Crew Leader, and all crew members all need to be watching that every member of the crew is both drinking enough water and eating enough food.

In addition to drinking and being used for cooking and clean-up, water of course is also used for bathing and laundry. Many staffed camps have shower facilities, with water heated by a variety of sources including wood stoves and propane heaters. Realize that

while a camp may have shower facilities, there are times when they are not available (for example, conserving water during a drought or a fire ban when the heat source is a wood stove) or when your crew's schedule and the posted hours do not coincide. Shower facilities also have large trough-style sinks, washtubs and scrub boards for cleaning clothes. Camp Suds, issued by Philmont for purposes of dishwashing, can also be used for virtually all clean-up purposes, including showering, shaving and clothes washing. It is unscented so you won't be considered a smellable to the bears at night. It is concentrated, so only drops are needed for any use. Most crews prefer each member of the crew carry their own small bottle of Camp Suds, reserving the Philmont issued larger bottle for kitchen clean up.

A Scout is clean, and being at a staff camp without shower facilities or a trail camp is no excuse. A small container and a trail towel is all you need for a quick and refreshing clean-up of the dust and sweat from the day's hike. And clothes can be washed in a portable Philmont "washing machine" (a gallon-size zip lock bag) - put in an article of clothing, a little water, a couple drops of Camp Suds, close the bag (expelling any air) and start squeezing!

Ranger Tip: Does the cap on your Nalgene bottle get in the way when you are trying to fill the bottle or drinking? If so, remove the ring holding it to the bottle, flip it over, and put it back on - there will now be a half-twist in the strap between the ring and the cap, and the cap will fall away when you open the bottle.

Phil Fact: Manly and Theresa Chase founded the historic Chase Ranch in 1867. Located south of Philmont's Six Mile Gate, all crews starting there or at Ponil will pass through that famous ranch. Civil War general and territorial governor Lew Wallace was a frequent guest in the summer of 1879, needing privacy to finish his epic novel, *Ben Hur*.

Are you and your crew clear and copious?

Manly and Theresa Chase
Chase Ranch, Cimarron, New Mexico Territory