**2025 New Year’s Resolutions**

Oh, you say: I’ve heard this before. I’m not somebody who normally makes New Year’s Resolutions, but I am for 2025. I’m going to Leave No Trace my life. You may have heard of the LNT principles for backcountry users. They are:

1. Plan ahead and prepare
2. Travel and camp on durable surfaces
3. Dispose of waste properly
4. Leave what you find
5. Minimize campfire impacts
6. Respect wildlife
7. Be considerate of others

Taken together, these principles not only lessen our impact on the backcountry, but they can be used for a life philosophy to lessen our impact on the planet.

**Plan ahead and prepare.** The idea is to plan where you are going and eliminate the need for rescue. Be prepared is the motto of the Boy Scouts and yes, I was one. Plan ahead in your life in everything you do for lessening your impact on the planet.

**Travel and camp on durable surfaces:** Applied to our lives, choose the travel means that uses the least or no fossil fuels. Carpool, take the bus or train. Buy carbon credits if you must fly. Don’t use off-road vehicles – even in approved areas - they cause erosion, air, water, and noise pollution, scare wildlife and contribute greenhouse gases. I am extending this principle to my home. I have lived in the wildland urban interface (WUI) in the past and understand the appeal. If I moved back it would be to an existing home and I would commit to fire-hardening the structure and landscape. Fire and climate risk insurance is becoming increasingly expensive and difficult to find. Future building in the WUI should be restricted and building codes and fire mitigation polices should be mandatory.

**Dispose of waste properly**: We can recycle nearly all our household waste. Compost your kitchen and yard waste. Drive an electric vehicle (yes air pollutants and greenhouse gases are waste). Take steps to reduce your carbon footprint. Americans average 15 tons per year, among the very highest in the world, while the United Kingdom averages only 5 tons. In my own life, we have taken steps to reduce our carbon footprint to 5 tons per year. It is expensive but necessary. Good carbon footprint calculators may be found at: [Carbon Footprint Calculator | US EPA](https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/carbon-footprint-calculator), and [Carbon Calculator - Climate Hero](https://climatehero.me/). Be advised that you may need your utility bills to enter the proper information, and that some calculators are based on the household and some are per person.

**Leave what you find**: Leaving what you find applies to future generations. We should strive to leave a world as good as we found it and even better, for our children. Consciously reduce your consumerism. Avoid plastic as much as possible. Limit water use by eliminating lawns and landscaping with native plants. Limit your carbon footprint.

**Minimize campfire impacts.** In life, you can eliminate wood and gas fireplaces, extravagant backyard barbeques. Any combustion of fossil fuels creates greenhouse gases and air pollution. We need to adopt better and systematic treatments of forests in the WU) to reduce wildfire-related damages. Thinning followed by prescribed fire is the best policy. Future building in the WUI should be restricted and building codes and fire mitigation polices should be mandatory. In the end, only significantly reducing greenhouse gases will reduce wildfires.

**Respect wildlife**. All over the world, wildlife is declining due to loss of habitat. Try to live in urban areas and not in wildlands (for many years I did) and leave the land for wildlife or regenerative agriculture. We need to reduce our beef consumption as cattle claim 60% of the world’s agricultural land but only contribute 2% of global calories and protein. Beef is the largest contributor of greenhouse gases in our food supply and grazing on our vast public lands is harmful to the land and wildlife. Public lands grazing is insignificant to our beef supply and should be eliminated. I am going to reduce my beef consumption to once a week and go on a diet. We also must stop new drilling on public lands! In fact, we need to wean ourselves totally off fossil fuels. I am going on a fossil fuel diet too and get my carbon footprint down to 5 tons.

**Be considerate of others:** War is unfortunately in our DNA. War destroys people and the planet. Our world, our country, and our state, are overcrowded. Perhaps an apocalypse will give the world a reset, but current human population growth is unsustainable, especially with “developed country” cultures owning a high carbon footprint, industrialized agriculture, wasteful water use and pollution. Understandably, “lesser developed” countries want the same lifestyle as the West, but that scenario is unsustainable for all and will vault Earth into a climate catastrophe and millions, maybe hundreds of millions may die and create floodgates of climate refugees, anarchy and chaos worldwide. We can respect life and our neighbors as long as we halt our profligate use of resources and associated waste. Those of us in the “developed” countries must do our share and more since we have created most of the greenhouse gases.