

# Thoughts for Philmont Adult Advisors

- Mark Wray
- NCAC HAC Training Coordinator
- January 8, 2023



You Will Not Return Home  
With The Same Crew You  
Bring



# Philmont Fun Facts

- Philmont is the largest youth camp in the world
- There are >30 staffed backcountry camps and >750 campsites
- Approximately 22,000 scouts and advisors will go on treks this year
- Every day, 350 scouts arrive, 350 leave, and 3500 are in the backcountry
- More than 450,000 trail meals are consumed
- It is a working cattle ranch



# Philmont Fun Facts

- Across the ranch there are:
  - 140 Bison
  - 300 Elk
  - 100-150 Bears
  - >1500 deer
  - Unknown number of rattlesnakes
  - Mountain Lions
  - Countless raptors and song birds
  - At last count, approximately 3 million mini-bears



# Philmont Fun Facts

- All of this is accomplished by a staff that is primarily between 18-22 years old
- Most camp directors are young adults - they are managers at very young age
- Large percentage of staff are Eagle scouts
- They work long hours for low pay
- When the tragic flash floods hit a few years ago, they were the ones on the ground responding
- They love what they do
- Large numbers of them go back again and again



# Things Backcountry Staff and Rangers Wish Advisors Knew

- They want your crew to be successful
- They like you, but they want to interact with your crew more than you
- The best adult advisor is mostly invisible except in emergencies
- While infrequent, they encounter advisors who disrespect and harass them (including sexual harassment)
- If you follow the rules only when staff are present, you send a bad message to your crew



# Things Backcountry Staff and Rangers Wish Advisors Knew

What you do in the backcountry has an important effect on whether future crews are safe or in danger

Example: Poor food management means that wildlife will come looking for food when the next crews come through

If you don't follow procedures and get into trouble in the backcountry, they are the ones who have to find/rescue you

It is possible that the tired staff member you encounter in the morning was on a 'hasty' in the middle of the night before



# Advisors: Help Your Crew Leader and Rangers/Staff Succeed

- Let Your Crew Leader Lead
- Give your crew advisor permission to nudge you out of the way
- Give your co-advisor permission to nudge you if they notice something in your behavior
- Do not let your crew stay in the habit of relying on your expertise
  - help them learn to answer their own questions
- Do not try to over-rule rangers and backcountry staff
  - They have reasons for how they do things, even if you don't agree (or think you know better)
  - Treat them like professionals
- But, don't expect them to have the experience and polish of mid-career managers and professionals
- Do not harass backcountry staff and rangers
  - Including sexual harassment





# What Are Your Vulnerabilities as Adult Advisor?

- High need to be in control?
- Do you have a need to be the 'go-to' guy (or lady)?
- Are you afraid that you won't be able to keep up?
- Do you see your crew's functioning as a reflection of your competence?
- Can you accept a crew decision that may be different from what you think they should do?



# What Are Your Vulnerabilities as Adult Advisor?

- What is your temperament when you haven't had enough sleep, your back and knees hurt, and the crew can't get out of camp as fast as you think they should?
- Can you let Philmont staff members young enough to be your son or daughter be in charge?
- Difficulty letting process play out?
  - Don't work too hard to make your crew grow - let the experience do it



- Thoughts/Questions

