

AFTERBURN REPORT 2002

Earth Guardians

The main focus of the Earth Guardians is communication of Leave No Trace (LNT) principles and practices within the Burning Man community. Since we are a small volunteer group, we work closely with other departments to educate the community about Leave No Trace. We introduce participants to the beauty of the Black Rock Desert outside our event in the hope this exposure contributes to better appreciation and in turn more respect for the environment. This message is intended to raise people's awareness of the important mission to "never let it hit the ground" which helps to ensure the reappearance of Black Rock City each year.



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LNT Masters and LNT Backpacking Training Trip

Over the last year, several senior Earth Guardians participated in the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) LNT Master Training at [Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge](#) in southern Arizona. (The refuge shares a 56-mile border with Mexico.) While hiking through the Sonoran desert, we saw creosote bushes, palo verde trees, majestic saguaro cacti, prickly cholla cacti, and the weird and wonderful ocotillo in bloom. Throughout the week, we camped at four different sites, learning to pick campsites with care so that we could easily naturalize them again. Our time during the day was mostly split between hiking to amazing sites and participating in individual students' LNT presentations. It was a great opportunity to learn lots of fun teaching techniques from our LNT classmates, who ranged from federal land managers and college professors to wilderness campers and Girl Scout trainers. As LNT masters, most of our classmates are hoping to go on to train other LNT trainers. Of the entire group, the Burning Man folks had the clearest venue for applying our new skills. For the first time in Burning Man history, our annual Black Rock Desert Leave No Trace (LNT) backpacking trip was led entirely by Burning Man staff and volunteers! This year's trip took us to the Calico Mountains, which are located on the west side of the Black Rock playa. We started at the Burning Man work ranch with introductions, an LNT video, and our first talk on LNT principles. The day proceeded with hikes, more LNT talks, and activities. Upon returning to camp we were treated to a great surprise: margaritas with chips and salsa, guacamole, and Brie! We were camping in true Burning Man style!

LNT Tour / Camp of the Day Contest—

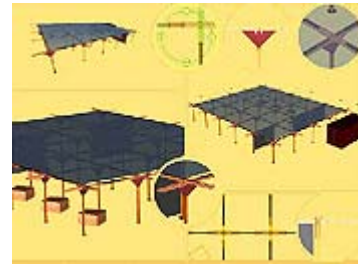
The Leave No Trace Tour of Black Rock City initiative was launched in 2002. The tour was conceived as part of an effort to gather and disseminate information about successful practices and technologies for adapting to the specialized conditions of the playa and Burning Man. Theme camps were invited to be part of the tour by featuring simple or novel examples of grey water and trash management systems, camp kitchens, reusable structures, and camp showers that they had devised. The nine participating camps

included two villages and a large-scale sound camp that aspired to "leave nothing but energy." Camps were encouraged to share their plans and designs, which were then incorporated into announcements to theme camps, articles in the Black Rock Gazette, Jack Rabbit Speaks, and camp and Earth Guardians web sites. Burning Man participants were invited to visit the camps via the LNT tour, and they could also access information on the techniques in the Earth Guardians library. Participating theme camps were entered in the Camp of the Day contest, which awards two tickets to Burning Man and recognition on the Earth Guardians bulletin board and web pages. The inaugural tour of 2002 catalyzed an exchange of ideas about camp design and planning that leaves no trace. Some camps simply want to do the right thing, some love to tinker and experiment, while others aspire to establish truly sustainable camps. The tour was a vehicle for communication about better ways to plan ahead and leave no trace. The 2002 Camp of the Day winners were Borrachos Y Bicicletas, Heart Waves, Om Bayou, and Poly Paradise.

ABOUT THIS PHOTO > **Earth Guardians at Burning**

Man 2002

"Build it, make it fun, and they will come." This statement communicated our mission for the Earth Guardians presence at Burning Man in 2002. We started by redesigning our pavilion. Since we are one of the few volunteer groups who build our own structure, then take it down and clean-up the site before leaving, we saw a critical need to design a reusable structure that we can erect with minimum effort. We also redesigned the inside of our pavilion to contain not only an information desk and stage, but several new areas: an interpretive walk, the Oasis Cafe and Water bar, a library and reading lounge, a working LNT kitchen, and a shower. We all became more familiar with the operation of power tools by building a wooden bar, a bookshelf, and several tables during the summer.



Keeping It Fun—

In contrast to most Burning Man volunteer teams, we don't have a specified task at the event, but we do have a goal to fulfill at Burning Man: We do whatever our creative minds and active bodies can do to get participants to Leave No Trace. This year, keeping with our "fun" theme, we held many classes to attract participants to the Earth Guardians pavilion. We held sessions on yoga, playing the didgeridoo, drumming, throat singing, and belly dancing. Our hope was to bring folks in, then inspire them to Leave No Trace. We also had a great party on Wednesday night, thanks to the Space Cowboy and Cowgirl's UniMog! Featured prominently at our party were several new art pieces— Reflection, the Nirvana tubes, and the Playasphere. Reflection, an art piece covered in flashing lights, attracted people to the pavilion from all across the city, helping to draw them in for the educational interpretive walk. The Nirvana tubes allowed folks to hear sounds of the playa, while the Playasphere was just fun.

Interpretive and Nature Walks

The interpretive walk was an interactive, self-guided tour that included information on

the Black Rock ecosystem, the area's human history, LNT practices, and desert stewardship activities. The walk was designed to inspire participants to reconsider their own impact on their environment. The piece included lights, sounds, and full-size displays for a full sensory experience to provide an introduction and tribute to the Black Rock Desert and an examination of people's relationship to it. We hoped that after participating in the walk, residents of Black Rock City would see the desert with new eyes, reexamine their own impacts on the area, and be inspired to start at Leave No Trace then go further in their own creative ways. We also hosted nature walks throughout the week to inspire participants to appreciate the desert. Despite the early morning start time (6:30 and 8:00 am), we had waiting lists for many nature walks throughout the week. During the event, we also patrolled local hot springs to fulfill the BLM permit stipulation initiated by Burning Man in 1998 to educate folks on why we can't visit the hot springs during the event. Lastly, we encouraged participants to do MOOP patrols throughout the city and at the trash fence throughout the week.

Year-Round Stewardship

Earth Guardians don't stop participating after the event; we're active year-round. We are now in the initial stages of planning for environmental restoration at Frog Farm, and we get involved in desert restoration projects with BLM and the [Friends of Black Rock](#) throughout the fall and spring of each year. Members of the Earth Guardians participate on the board for Friends of Black Rock and attend monthly meetings in Reno. As part of that group, we participated in a hot springs educational trip and Public Lands Day last year. It was a great opportunity to clean up part of the desert, meet other desert users, and teach LNT techniques to new volunteers.



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Ideas for Next Year

What's in store for 2003? Earth Guardians will be leading another LNT backpacking trip for staff and participants, and we will also be helping BLM put on a LNT Master's class in the Black Rock Desert! We're also hoping to host a fun trip exploring High Rock Canyon. To expand awareness of LNT techniques and practices, we hope to enhance the LNT sections of the Burning Man web site, providing extensive information on LNT principles, related trips and work weekends, how to plan a LNT camp at Burning Man, how to pack it in and pack it out, and much more. For Burning Man 2003, we hope to further refine the ambience of the Earth Guardians pavilion by developing the gypsy stage and dharma garden areas and adding another bookshelf to the quickly growing library. We may also expand the interpretive walk to include more multimedia exhibits and add meditation classes and more kids' activities. If we can get enough interest from artists, we'd like to complement our theme camp LNT tour with an art LNT tour. Lastly, we're hoping to work more closely with other BM departments next year to tackle tricky issues like improving management of burn platforms. We'll work together to prevent clouds of toxic chemicals from drifting toward unsuspecting campers.

Submitted by,
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