

Earth Guardians

This year's theme for Earth Guardians was the past and the future. We reflected on the daily life of emigrants passing through the Black Rock in the 1800s and welcomed new, younger Earth Guardians to our camping and restoration activities in Black Rock. We saw new technologies being developed by long-term burners to address tough LNT issues like removal and treatment of grey water and found new members of our community who still need education on basic Leave No Trace principles and practices.



LNT Train the Trainer Annual Backpacking Trip

We moved this year's trip up north to beautiful Fly Canyon. This location allowed us to explore an even more pristine area of Black Rock and use the lush Soldier Meadows Ranch as a staging area. We got to start out the trip with a hearty ranching breakfast at the ranch and finish our trip with snacks and beverages under their shady trees. Highlights of this year's trip included hiking into the narrow canyon, sharing an awesome dinner and campfire, hearing each others stories, viewing historic rock glyphs and drinking frothy beverages on the green lawn of soldier meadows ranch.



Our annual backpacking trip has been an awesome way to meet burners from many different volunteer groups and theme camps at Burning Man and introduce them to how Leave No Trace principles apply to our event. As we incorporate our own younger Earth Guardian (1 year old Jai) into the training, we will continue to make the trip more 'comfortable', in hopes that more participants will feel that they are able to participate. If there are other ways

(short workshops, etc) that would be more useful to Burning man volunteers and participants on evolving LNT techniques, please let our trainers know! Email us at [earthguardians \(at\) burningman \(dot\) com](mailto:earthguardians@burningman.com).

Emigrants on the Playa

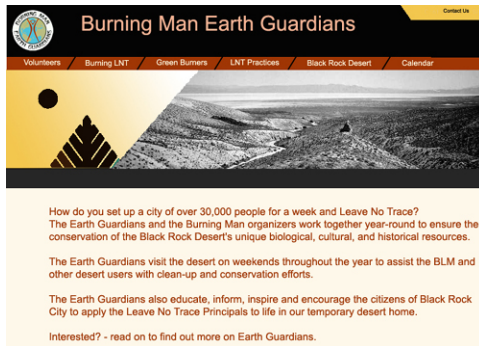
For the last couple of years we have in partnership with BLM to explore different themes for outreach to the residents of Black Rock city. In the first year, 2004, we developed an interpretive exhibit focused on the National Wilderness Preservation System and the celebration of 40th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act. This year we turned our attention to the National Historic Trails which form the backbone of many of the Wilderness areas in the surrounding Black Rock Desert NCA. The exhibit's main focus was on the local

historic trails in the Black Rock Desert NCA area – the Applegate/Lassen Trail (part of the California Trail) and the Nobel’s Trail Cutoff. The ‘camp’ included 1850’s -60’s period tents and an authentic period covered wagon to illustrate a realistic emigrant camp. BLM staff and volunteers were dressed in period costume and became living history presenters with period props. Burning Man participants had fun talking with the emigrants who ‘wandered’ into the city on their way out west. The large tent at the back of the camp included interpretive panels to educate and inform visitors about the history and significance of the National Historic Trails in the region and build awareness of the National Historic Trails Program.



LNT Outreach

Earth Guardians focus on emerging issues that have the potential to impact the playa or our community and develop LNT practices to reduce impacts. Our volunteer teams include groups focused on theme camp and art LNT, restoration of sensitive areas around the playa, outdoor education and monitors for hot springs and burn platforms. We also have communication specialists who work on LNT messages that go out to the larger Burning Man community via email, web, PSA and video (LNTV). During the event we talk with participants to get direct feedback on how well our Leave No Trace messages are getting out to the masses. This year we saw a huge influx of younger burners and



have noticed that many of our communities’ basic LNT ground rules were unknown to many newbies. Younger generations have a different approach to looking at websites and may not be accessing a lot of the information associated with LNT at Burning Man.

We have recommended that important messages in the survival guide be fully incorporated into the larger BM web site, especially in proximity to pages that get the most hits. Earth Guardians are

also working on revamping the EG volunteer pages (<http://earthguardians.burningman.com>). We are redesigning the pages to be more appealing to younger burners with the addition of streaming video (LNTV) and hoping to reinvigorate the BM web team to restart work on the revisions to the environmental side of the larger BM web site. We also need to continue to make sure the messages that newbies need to hear each year (e.g. “if it’s not coming out of my body, it doesn’t go into the potty”) are hit at the greeters, BMIR, and in beautiful, engaging art/signage at the event). We are also hoping to reinvigorate EG crusaders for more face to face contact in 2006.

LNT Outreach and Activities at Burning Man

Theme Camps

With changes in staff this year, crusaders took a backseat, so we weren't as closely in touch with specific camps and respond to LNT problem areas this year. In general, we like to follow the protocol of connecting with each area's theme camp placer before and along with approaching problem LNT camps. The crusaders could follow up with each camp needing additional assistance throughout the week. Perhaps we can participate in a few of the early (in the week of the event) placer meetings to facilitate and coordinate communication with the camps during the event. Regarding our on-site LNT outreach, we're planning to have a better connection with the theme camps during Burning Man in 2006.

Burn Platforms

This year we had a great, hardworking burn platform volunteer crew! They found that most participants had gotten the message to burn only wood and paper, but had some issues with overloading due to the large volume of wood being burned on Sunday. We could respond to this concern by building more burn platforms, however it would be more effective (in the long run) to more strongly emphasize the message of reuse, recycling and repurposing wood for theme camp structures. In the wake of natural disasters like Katrina, more and more participants are dismayed by the large amounts of new, barely used wood being burned after the event where participants don't feel that they want to take home, store and repurpose wood. We will expand and increase the emphasis of these messages in 2006.



Other Activities at Burning Man

Once again we had daily yoga, morning nature hikes, a few nature and afternoon staff meetings and evening happy hours. We also had a few nature and art talks to explore interest with Burning Man participants in these areas. These activities were planned to bring residents of Black Rock City into the Earth Guardian pavilion, where they could learn about Leave No Trace principles, and to support and reward our volunteers for their efforts. With the emigrant camp, we had a few special events. Stories of the trail, ?, and an evening which included authentic food and music with the emigrants kept us nostalgic during the event. We also enjoyed the best butter and corn bread we've had in a while thanks to our skilled pioneers.

Desert Stewardship

This year we continued to leave positive traces on the playa through stewardship activities. We bring participants to the Black Rock desert both during and outside of the Burning Man event to introduce them to the beauty of the area and to participate in stewardship on and education activities. In addition to our cleanup and restoration activities during the nature hikes we hosted at Burning Man, Earth Guardian volunteers

participated in events with BLM and Friends of Black Rock throughout the year. In the spring we assisted with road restoration in the Calicoes and hot springs restoration at Soldier Meadows. In the early summer we also participated in a glyph hunting hike with the Nevada Rock Art Society. Then in the fall, for public lands day, we assisted in development of a new campground, documented an archeological site and investigated potential rock glyphs with a BLM archeologist. We are proud to note that many burners are active in groups such as Friends of Black Rock and other groups supporting environmental activities in Black Rock.



Ideas for 2006

On a last positive note, Earth Guardians would like to continue expanding our role in promoting environmental stewardship and environmentalism in 2006. Our mission is to educate participants about how to leave no trace at Burning Man and promote an appreciation and conservation of the surrounding natural environment, so they want to leave only positive traces. In addition to the reinvention of the EG web site mentioned earlier, we hope to start efforts to create a new Black Rock Interpretive walk which includes a timeline of the ‘greening’ of Burning Man and highlights different department’s proactive, eco-friendly changes in operations and includes our efforts outside the event (e.g. participate in Public Lands Day, Friends of Black Rock, restoration of wilderness areas and Gerlach, and contributions to environmental education). We will need to work with folks from other departments to complete the research to document the work; we’ll also need funding for materials and printing. It’s not yet clear if we’ll be able to complete these projects by BM2006, but hopefully we’ll have some of each done as the research for the project is completed.

With the development of the new web site, we hope to facilitate sign-ups for volunteer shifts and activities and event at the Earth Guardian pavilion. We hope to use on-line sign-ups via a calendar and form process for each. We are also planning a chocolate, bacon and margarita social for new volunteers during the event, in addition to our annual party, and daily events such as yoga and nature hikes.

