

Summer Camp: A Year Round Program

Introduction

For many Scouts summer camp is the highlight of the year's program; a week of fun, friendship and advancement. What more could a Scout ask for? The Scout shows up at summer camp and the program is in place and everything runs smoothly. Unbeknownst to the Scout is the all the hard work and preparation that the summer camp coordinator has done in the past year to make camp run smoothly. Yes you read that correctly over the past year.

This guide covers what occurs over the course of the year to run a summer camp program. It is aimed at the person who coordinates summer camp for a troop or crew. Many troops have one person, not the Scoutmaster, who coordinates summer camp. The key tasks for this person are taking care of all the necessary paperwork, camp promotion, training programs, and budgets.

The goals of this year round program are:

1. Increase participation at summer camp. Scouts that attend summer camp are more likely to stay in the program.
2. Improve quality of summer camp experience for both Scouts and adults
3. Provide guidance for new summer camp coordinators.

The program is structured on a calendar basis starting in August and ending in July. It uses the dates and processes required for attending Monmouth Council's Forestburg Scout Reservation summer camp.

August

The first questions about summer camp are the most fundamental when and where. When to go to camp is the easiest one to answer. Most troops go to camp the same week every year. The date may slide based on when July 4th occurs and how that may shift the camp schedule. Once you know the week you want to go it needs to go on the troop planning calendar. The question of where to go is also easy for some troops as they go to the same camp every year.

However some troops go to different camps every summer or may rotate between a few camps. If your troop is one of these then there are a number of things to look at in choosing a camp. These include the program, facilities, the ages of the majority of your Scouts, and the number of Scouts that might attend. Let's examine these issues.

The quality of the program is perhaps the most important factor. Does the camp offer the merit badges that are of interest to the Scouts? What's the quality of the merit badge instruction? Will the Scouts actually learn the skills or will they get credit for just showing up? Are the class sizes limited? Is there a program for the first year Scouts?

Are their programs for the older Scouts? Is there a High Adventure program? The best way to find out the answers to these questions is to talk to troops that go to that camp. A visit while camp is in session is another good thing to do.

The next thing to look at is the camp facilities. Start with the basics waterfront, camp size, camp location. Some camps specialize in certain types of experiences such as sail boating or canoeing. How about the campsites? Does the camp provide tents, tarps, and tables? What's the dining hall like or if you troop does patrol cooking how much of the cooking gear is supplied?

Other things to consider are not related to camp but to what is going on in your troop. For example, is there a special event, National Jamboree, World Jamboree, Philmont, Sea Base, NOAC, or a troop trek that might reduce the number of Scouts attending camp? This can also change the mix of the ages of Scouts attending camp. For example, my home troop is sending eighteen Scouts to the 2010 National Jamboree. I expect our summer camp number, normally 35, to drop and most of the Scouts that will attend will be first and second year campers.

There is one last topic in choosing a camp that can sometimes generate some heated discussion; dining hall or patrol cooking. This is a topic for the troop to decide before looking at camps. Not all camps offer a choice. Luckily, Forestburg offers both. Of course if you choose to eat in the dining hall you can always do some in site cooking if you plan ahead.

The last thing to do in August is to get two additional dates on the troop calendar. The first is a meeting night for summer camp promotion. This is usually best done right around the time the Webelos are crossing over. The second is a weekend camping trip in June a few weeks before camp. This is shakedown trip for those Scouts attending camp, more about this later.

Once you have made your choice send in your deposit.

September

With the start of another year of it is a good time to review the previous year's summer camp with both the Scouts and the adults who attended. The first thing is to check on what could have gone better. This will help planning for next year or identify issues that may have to be addressed sooner. The next set of questions for the Scouts is what requests are there for next year. For example, our PLC had an overnight canoe trip that gave them a chance to work on leadership and do some team building. They thought this would be a good thing to do every year.

Another important thing to do is get pictures for promotional purposes. These will be used for the camp promotion meeting but are good for recruiting as well.

And finally, now is a good time to distribute those partial blue cards.

October/November

The first court of honor of the year is always a long night as the summer camp merit badges are handed out. It's always nice the parents to hear a little about what the Scouts did for a particular merit badge. This is also an important time to recognize the adults who helped out. And it doesn't hurt to start talking about next year's camp.

December/January

In Monmouth Council we have our first kick off meeting for Forestburg in December. This is a good time to get the leader's guide and learn about any new program features. It is also a good time to discuss any issues from the previous year. Each troop sends a least one person to attend but it is never too early to have other adults attend the meeting.

The next set of topics relate to troop policies on summer camp. The areas to cover with the committee are cost issues, allowed merit badges at summer camp, the number of merit badges for first year campers, and any in site programming.

The first topic is cost. The leader's guide will specify the cost. The first question is will the troop add a fee on top of that? Some troops add money to cover the cost of materials, propane, extra food, lunch on the way home, etc. The second question is there a mechanism for Scouts to offset their cost through a troop account or other fund raising? If so, how will it work? The committee should also agree on a payment schedule. For example, a deposit may be due in March with the balance in May or the entire fee is due in March.

The second topic is about merit badges. Are there any merit badges that Scouts should be discouraged from taking at summer camp? For example, some troops prefer that Scouts do not take first aid at camp because the troop may run a more extensive program. What about first year Scouts? In some troops they only take the swimming merit badge. In other troops they take as many as they want. In our troop we have done it both ways. We find that first year Scouts have trouble taking more than the Swimming merit badge. We now have them take the Swimming merit badge and focus on advancement. They attend Frontier Camp for rank advancement and then we provide in site classes. This arrangement also gives them time to explore the camp in the afternoons.

The third topic is in site programming. What activities will the troop organize? For first year Scouts tot'n chip, fireman chip, knots, and first aid might be good. For all Scouts you might have sessions on Dutch oven and box oven cooking. We have one adult who likes to do turkeys on a spit. It's a combination lesson in fire building, lashing as well as cooking. If you are going to have this type of programming it is important to find someone to run it. It needs to be well organized and have appropriate materials.

February

This month kicks off the sign up for summer camp with a camp promotion meeting. The goal of this meeting is to get Scouts excited about attending summer camp and provide them with the basic information, when, where, and the cost. This meeting is also good

for hosting Webelos dens. They have to visit a troop as a requirement for the Arrow of Light. So invite all the Webelos dens and their parents to attend the meeting.

The format of the meeting is a series of stations that cover all the different areas of camp. At each station one or two Scouts will make a short presentation about the activities of that area. They may have samples, pictures or just a short presentation. For Forestburg these areas will include; waterfront, high adventure, technology center, scout craft, arts and crafts, environmental science. Two additional stations will be the campsite and one for the summer camp coordinator. The campsite station might have a slide show of last year's camp. These are the pictures you got back in September. The summer camp coordinator hands out a flyer and answers any questions. Note that the flyer has a spot for adults who want to attend camp.

The Scouts are divided into groups and rotate through all the stations. The Webelos will be one group and their parents are a separate group. One added benefit is that this gives the Webelos and parents a chance to meet the Scouts and see them in action.

March

Now is the time to start collecting the camp fees based on the schedule the troop committee approved back in December. Scouts should indicate any funds that are from their troop accounts, Scout Bucks, etc. Once you know they are attending camp it is good time for the Scout to start thinking about what merit badges they want to work on. Also, will any of the Scouts be attending the high adventure program? This is especially true for eagle required merit badges. It is important to have the Scout review the prerequisites. For example, the Emergency Preparedness merit badge requires the First Aid merit badge. Also, you need to review the merit badge choices within the troop guidelines as well. Once the Scout has a list you can submit them to Council. For Forestburg this involves sending an email in the proper format to the appropriate person. There is no need to wait till you have the whole troop's choices, you can do individual Scouts. It is better to do this early as classes do close out when full.

Another thing for this month is to answer parent questions, especially the first year campers. There are lots of questions about the program and equipment. However, the most common question is how will the Scout do for a week away? The Scouts usually do fine sometimes it's the parents who have the problem. Encourage the Scout to attend as many camping trips as possible to get a good feel for what camp will be like. You can also encourage the parents to attend camp as well.

And finally, remember to send in your deposit to Council when required.

April

This month continues the collection of camp fees and merit badge sign ups. It will be good if they are complete by the end of the month. Also by the end of the month you should have confirmed what adults will be attending camp. Remember that in New York state you need one adult for each eight Scouts. The last task this month is to reserve a camp site for the shake down camp out in June. The date should be on the troop planning

calendar since last August. This camp site should be local so that the parents can bring the boys and stay for a meeting.

May

This month is mostly about paperwork and planning. By now you should have the final list of Scouts going to camp. You may get a few last minute decisions especially from first year guys. At this time you should also have collected any outstanding fees. The final camp payment is due at the end of the month. One related issue is financial aid. If you have a Scout that needs financial aid they should apply to Monmouth council. The forms are in the Leader's Guide. Note that the council will not provide a 100% financial aid but will work hard to make sure that every Scout can attend camp. Also, this is a good time to review health forms. National has a new health form that is required for 2010. The health forms must not expire before the end of camp. This is true for both Scouts and any adults that are attending. At this time your Scouts can also pre-order their merit badge kits for example Basketry, Wood Carving, and Indian Lore. They can also order extra rounds for Rifle and Shot Gun. A troop should submit a consolidated order. If you have any Scouts in the High Adventure program make sure you receive the additional permission slips for that program.

The last piece of paperwork is to hand out the permission slips for the Shakedown camping trip in June. First year Scouts should be strongly encouraged to attend. The details will be discussed in the June section.

As for planning it is good time to start thinking about what programs and activities will occur at summer camp. If you are going to have an in site program do you have appropriate instructors? Is there any special gear that is needed?

June

The main goal this month is to organize and run the Shakedown camping trip. This camping trip is designed to help get the first year Scouts and their parents get ready for camp. This is especially the case for troops in Dan Beard that will be doing patrol cooking. The goals of this camp out are:

1. Get patrols and summer camp leadership identified. The patrols for summer camp may be different than the rest of the year. The SPL organizes this, subject to review by the Scoutmaster. Having a Quartermaster for summer camp can be helpful.
2. Work on patrol method.
3. Get a list of tent mates.
4. Check troop gear. The troop may have some gear it uses primarily for summer camp.
5. Review skills such as fire building, cooking, and KP.
6. Review merit badge sign ups and check on pre-requisites.
7. Meet with parents
8. Arrange drivers for car pooling (not all troops will do this)

Now let's go through the details of the Shakedown camp out. The camp out typically is from Saturday through Sunday morning, see schedule in Appendix A. The SPL should contact all the summer camp patrol leaders and give them their patrol rosters. As the Scouts show up they need to do the usual camp set up tasks. Once the majority of Scouts have arrived they can get started. To push the patrol method and chain of command one approach is to give the SPL a task and a time limit. The SPL then passes instructions to the patrol leaders who then work with their patrols to get it done. At the end of the time limit the SPL is given the next task. A key thing is that the Scouts must use the chain of command to get their questions answered. A second important thing is that the Scouts learn to work to a deadline. This is so important for Scouts in Dan Beard.

After lunch the Scouts will do team building. This can be three or four activities for each patrol. One favorite is the nuclear waste problem. The Scouts have a can filled with water and three pieces of rope. Without touching the can the Scouts must transport it 10 feet without spilling any of the water. They should have a limited amount of time to do this. The second one is Scout transport. Give the Scouts three staves and three pieces of rope. They must transport one Scout over a distance without him touching the ground. One solution is to lash a triangle together while the simplest is to just hold the three staves together. Another one is to have the entire patrol stand on a tarp just big enough to fit them all. They have to turn the tarp over without using their hands or getting off it. For all of these tasks the patrols should compete on time. The key things to look for during the activities are planning and team work. Did the patrol take time to come up with a plan and did they have good communication? How did they do when things did not work? These are good discussion topics at the conclusion of the activity.

The next activity is a conservation project. Working with the local camp staff a suitable project can always be found. An alternative might be to do a short hike that works on map and compass skills.

While one patrol prepares dinner the others should work on getting ready for the campfire. This is a good time to review fire building with the new Scouts. The Scouts should also plan a full program of skits, songs, and stories. The SPL might also want to talk about what is appropriate for a camp fire and what is not.

After dinner is a good time to review the merit badge sign ups with the Scouts. They should be reminded of the pre-requisites they need and what work they should be doing before summer camp. For example, they can work on the Environmental Science essays at home. This will make the badge easier to get done at camp. Remind them that they need to make sure that they have a way to show the counselor what they did.

On Sunday morning after breakfast and camp clean up there should be time for a question and answer session. It is also a good time to review what will happen on arrival at camp. Things like making sure that they have everything they need for the swim test handy. Also, what should they pack their gear in? Some troops want the Scouts to pack everything in while some prefer trunks.

The last activity is another patrol competition. For example, you could send the Scouts out for a short hike and they could collect different plants or signs of animals. These are both advancement requirements.

Before the Scouts leave you want to make sure that the SPL has a list of tent mates. The Quartermaster should have a list of gear that needs repairs, replacement or needs to be purchased. For example, is there a working lantern for each patrol? Do you have spare globes and mantles, enough propane bottles?

On Saturday while the Scouts are busy setting up camp it's time to meet with the parents. The first year parents will have lots of questions. The biggest question is what their Scout should bring. There are lots of lists around, check the camp Leaders Guide for one. The most important thing is rain gear. Camp does not stop for rain unless there is lightning. The next thing is appropriate footwear; closed toed shoes are a must. And finally if they are taking the swimming merit badge, they need long pants and a long sleeve shirt for the inflating their clothes requirement.

The list of what not to bring starts with a simple nothing they are afraid to lose. No expensive jewelry or cameras. Most troops prefer no electronics and no cell phones. Then of course there is all the obvious stuff that never allowed on camping trips. One question is always a pocket knife for a first year Scout that does not have a tot'n chip.

Once you have discussed the gear to bring how should it be packed? Does the Scout have to carry it in a backpack, a foot locker, how about a wheeled duffle bag? Make sure that the parents are clear on the expectations. Note this is also something to mention if you have any provisional Scouts. One thing to stress is that the Scout should pack their stuff. If they do not do this they will never be able to find their swim suit and towel for the swim test.

The next area is communication. What is the troop policy on Scouts calling home? Some troops will not allow the Scouts to call home unless there are extenuating circumstances. These might include a Scout who lost his glasses and needs a new pair or Scout needs his social security number for the ham radio test. Over the years we have found that having a home sick Scout call home is the worst possible thing. On a more positive note encourage your parents to send mail. The Scouts always enjoy a card or letter from mom and dad especially if there is a few dollars in it for the trading post. Remind parents that they should mail things a few days before camp if it is to get their early in the week. Some parents will want to send packages. The only problem with packages is how much stuff they are sending. Remind them that there is little storage space and that Scouts may not keep food in their tents. Years ago our troop had a parent who sent enough baked goods for the entire troop every day. All the other parents heard about this and then they started sending packages as well. However, since they did it at the last minute they sent them FedEx and Express Mail. For what they spent on the shipping the Scout could have bought the entire troop snacks. So because of this we try to have a 1000 calorie limit on all packages. That should be enough for a single patrol for one meal.

An important topic is medications. Camp requires all prescription medications be in their original bottle. There should just be enough for the week. One topic to discuss with parents is a drug holiday. This is sometimes done for ADHD medications. This requires a private conversation with the parent on what does this mean. How will the child behave without the medication?

Another topic to cover is having parents visit. Some parents might want to spend a day or two at camp. If they are not going to stay the entire week then encourage them to come up on the first day and see the camp or come up the last night for the camp fire. Forestburg has a family barbeque Friday night before the camp fire. Parents can stay over at camp if you have the tent space. The worst case is if a parent of a first year Scout comes up in the middle of the week. This can make home sickness worse.

The last topic is transportation. How will the Scouts get to and from camp? Is everyone responsible for their own transportation or is there a car pool? Some troops have even been known to organize a bus. Parking at camp is limited so car pooling is encouraged.

And finally there will be lots of questions.

Let's digress and talk about gear. First thing is what will the camp provide? At Forestburg every camp site will have tents on platforms, bunks, a picnic table, a patrol tarp, a chuck box, and of course a latrine. For Billet campers (dining hall) that's the basics. For Dan Beard campers (patrol cooking) camp provides half barrels, cooking equipment, plates, utensils, and KP buckets. Now the big question is what else do you want to bring? This depends a lot on the in site programming you want to do. For example you might want to demonstrate Dutch oven or box oven cooking or something as simple as a coffee pot for the adults. This is also true for Dan Beard. Other equipment should include an axe yard, knife sharpening gear, and ropes. For Dan Beard some type of cart for getting the food is very useful. And finally review the needs of the in site program you discussed back in December and January.

July/August

Before going to camp it's a good idea to have a final meeting with all the adults who are attending camp. This is really to make sure that everyone is on the same page with the troop guidelines and that they know what they are responsible for during camp.

The meeting should start with a review of the troop guidelines for behavior and expectations for the role of adults. Then a review of any in site programs: tot'n chip, fireman chip, knots, first aid, cooking demonstrations. Who is going to be the instructor for each of these? When will they occur? Is all the gear needed to teach them available? Who is bringing it?

The next topic is to review the camp schedule especially the specials. For example Forestburg has a first year overnight program. How many Scouts will attend? What adults will go? How many Scouts are in the OA? Will they go to the OA brotherhood

ceremony and cracker barrel Thursday night? If so, how does that affect the program for the rest of the Scouts? Will there be a hike to Darlington Falls, if so what day? And finally what adult activities are scheduled? Is anyone going to be teaching a merit badge during the week? Is there a camp site improvement project planned?

Now it is time for the last minute paperwork. The most important of these is getting a copy of the health forms to council two weeks before you attend camp. This allows the nurse to review the forms and check for any problems. This saves a huge amount of time when you arrive at camp. There is no need for the troop to stop by and see the nurse before going for swim tests. Note that you should have at least one more set of health forms that can stay in the site. This is also a good time to review any allergy issues and generate a list of all prescription medications. Other paperwork includes having a list of all the driver's cell phones. One copy for each driver is necessary. Four copies of the roster should be sufficient. Two copies of the permission slips for any Scouts in the High Adventure program are needed. Finally print out the latest merit badge list. And of course now you need to make sure you have sufficient blue cards for all those merit badges.

A week before camp, please call the camp office with final numbers so they can plan accordingly.

Go to Camp

Finally, after a year of preparation it is time to go to camp. Once everyone arrives at the parking lot you will meet up with camp staff. They will instruct you where to go to check in and how to get one vehicle up to the camp site. At check in you will turn in three copies of the roster, any prescription medications, the medication list, and any last minute health forms. You will receive a set of swim tags. Check that you have enough and if they are labeled that the names are correct. At this time let the staff know if you have any extra parents staying for dinner so the kitchen can give you enough food. Also, for Dan Beard you will have to provide the number of patrols and the number in each patrol. Do not forget your adults or they will not eat. One more thing that may occur at check in is that the Scouts may be screened. For example, they might have their temperature taken to see if they have the flu.

After check in, your guide will take you to your camp site. He and the SPL will inspect every tent for damage and check all the equipment. Any problems will be noted. Once that is done the Scouts should get ready for the swim test. After the swim test the guide will take them on a tour of the camp. Dinner will be eaten in the camp site. The guide will show you where to pick it up. Dan Beard campers will also be shown where to pick up their cooking gear. After dinner there will be religious services; Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant are available. Then there will be time for any last minute merit badge changes and sign ups at the dining hall. The dining hall is also the setting for the Scoutmaster and SPL meeting. This meeting covers the schedules for the week including sign ups for troop swim, troop shoot, and the monkey bridge. If you have any Scouts in the High

Adventure program, note where and when they will meet. And finally, there is the opening camp fire run by the staff.

The daily schedule for Dan Beard and Billet camps is the same except for meals. In Dan Beard the troops have to get their food before each meal and then prepare it. The Billet campers will get their meals at the dining hall. The only different schedule is that of the High Adventure program. Those Scouts will meet in the morning and their program will return some time in the afternoon depending on the day's activities. For more information on the program see the Leader's Guide and the camp schedule issued by Monmouth Council. The camp website is <http://www.fsrcamp.org> and the camp email is fsrcamp@monmouthbsa.com.

Appendix A

Shake down camp out schedule

Saturday

- 8:30 Troop Leadership Arrives
- 9:00 Scouts arrive
- 9:30 Parent Meeting
- 9:30 Camp set up and troop gear check
- 11:30 One patrol starts preparing lunch
- 12:00 Lunch
- 1:00 Team building activities
- 3:00 Conservation project
- 5:00 One patrol starts preparing dinner other patrols plan campfire work on fire building
- 6:00 Dinner
- 7:30 Merit Badge sign ups review
- 8:00 Camp fire

Sunday

- 7:00 One patrol starts preparing breakfast
- 7:30 Breakfast
- 8:30 Pack up camp
- 9:30 Q&A session. Get any program requests from Scouts; hikes, overnights, troop shoot, troop swim, etc.
- 10:00 Patrol competitions; plant identification, animal identification, orienteering.
- 11:00 Pick up