



MAINE ISLAND TRAIL
ASSOCIATION

MONITOR SKIPPER PROGRAM MANUAL



www.mita.org/skippers

207-761-8225

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Updated 6/5/2023

THE MONITOR SKIPPER PROGRAM

MITA Monitor Skippers are experienced boaters trained to use MITA workboats for stewardship activities on the islands of the Maine Island Trail. Skippers serve as boat drivers for scheduled monitoring runs and may also assist with cleanups, volunteer service days or other island work projects.

During the boating season, Monitor Skippers use MITA workboats to visit specific Trail islands on a regular basis to gather information and perform stewardship services. The goal of the Monitor Program is threefold:

1. To **steward the islands** on the Trail by removing trash, dismantling unauthorized fire rings, checking signs and logbooks, and helping with work projects as they arise
2. To **educate island visitors** by providing on-site information about stewardship and Leave No Trace guidelines
3. To **report** on recreational use including island and campsite conditions

Monitor Skippers are MITA's ambassadors of stewardship and Leave No Trace practices on the islands. Information gathered during monitoring runs plays an integral part in informing island management decisions.

New Skipper Training

Prospective Skippers should be experienced small boaters who are interested in volunteering to help steward Maine's islands.

Apprentice Skippers should have:

- Prior small power boat handling experience
- A vehicle with towing capacity (minimum of 1400 pounds and Class II or III hitch)
- GPS and VHF radio

All new Skippers must complete an apprentice program that includes the following:

- Participation in a welcome orientation and annual pre-season Skipper meeting
- Accompanying veteran Skippers and/or staff on monitoring runs in MITA workboats to learn the routes and approaches, boat nuances, and role of the MITA Skipper *
- Final "check-ride" with MITA staff or a veteran Monitor Skipper to demonstrate sufficient boating skills and run familiarity

Upon completion of the apprenticeship, new Skippers will be authorized to captain a MITA boat during monitoring runs, cleanups and work projects on the islands.

** The time from apprentice to Skipper varies from one person to the next and depends in part on boating experience and how frequently apprentices are able to get out on monitor runs.*

MITA'S STEWARDSHIP APPROACH

The Roles of a Monitor Skipper

STEWARDSHIP

Island shorelines and campsites should be inspected via a walk-through as time allows. If you come across more work than you can manage in a routine sweep, inform MITA staff and we will schedule a work party. During your visit to each island, try to accomplish the following:

1. Remove flotsam and other trash

Inspect and clean island campsites, trails, and as much of the shoreline as possible. Remove trash that has washed up or been left by visitors, including toilet paper and solid human waste (be sure to use gloves or a plastic bag). Dispose of human waste in a toilet/privy or marine pump-out station. Only waste in a "wag-bag" system may be disposed of in the regular waste stream. Do not remove recognizable fishing gear such as buoys and lobster traps, or wood and other natural materials. Exceptions for buoys are made on a year-to-year basis with permission from Marine Patrol, and buoys should be returned to sanctioned drop-off sites.

2. Dismantle unauthorized fire rings

Look for fire rings not sanctioned by the island owner (i.e., those that are not noted in the Trail Guide). To dismantle a fire ring, first make sure that the fire is completely extinguished, then remove the stones and toss them below the high tide line, and finally cover the charred area with natural materials (leaves, needles, seaweed, etc.).

3. Check island signs and logbooks

MITA signs and island logbooks are found on many Trail islands. We ask Skippers to check that if the signs and logbook containers are intact. Note any disturbing logbook entries (such as those that indicate misuse of the island, unhappy visitors, etc.). If you encounter a full or missing logbook, please post a new one using a replacement found in the boat. Let MITA staff know if the boat needs replacement spare logbook materials. If any signs have been removed, vandalized or are otherwise damaged, please let MITA staff know and we will supply replacements for the next steward to post.

EDUCATION

When you encounter island visitors, it's best to take a friendly approach. Privacy, solitude, and a wilderness experience are what most folks are seeking when they visit islands, so you should take care not to be intrusive. Still, it is appropriate to inform island users about your role as an island steward and encourage them to follow Leave No Trace practices. *The Maine Island Trail Guide is your best resource for LNT.*

The following may be useful as you interact with visitors on the Trail:

- If possible, land at a location away from visitors on the island.
- Approach with casual, friendly conversation (carrying a trash bag provides a convenient segue into an explanation about why you are there). Provide useful information about the island, guidelines, and Leave No Trace, so that visitors can make their own good decisions.
- If for any reason you feel unsafe or unduly uncomfortable approaching island visitors, you should continue on to your next stop, and make note in your report of the situation.
- You do not need to ask if visitors are MITA members, even if you are on a private island. Often, members will volunteer information such as that they are part of MITA when they learn that you are a Monitor Skipper. If they are not members or are unfamiliar with MITA, you might gently work into the conversation that you are a volunteer steward working to care for the island on behalf of the island owner and MITA, and talk up the benefits of MITA membership.
- If you encounter a person who is rude or has an unfavorable view of MITA, it's best to remain sympathetic and listen. Let the person vent. You may want to suggest they share their thoughts with the MITA staff. You might say "I hear your concerns and I know the folks at MITA would appreciate hearing them as well. Here is their phone number, or if you'd like, I can take your number and have them call you directly." If you feel personally attacked or uncomfortable in any way, disengage in a cordial manner and carry on.
- If you witness people engaged in activities potentially damaging to an island (having a bonfire, cutting limbs or trees, digging in shell middens, etc) try to discourage the activity in a non-threatening way, but as a Monitor Skipper you should not act as the island police. Recommend low-impact alternatives and suggest why it's important. Be sure to note the incident on your Monitor log. If you witness activities that you consider dangerous to the health and safety of others nearby or future visitors, contact MITA or the local authorities.

REPORTING

The information you supply is used to inform our island owner reports and site management decisions, so please be as thorough as possible in your reports. It is important to submit them in a timely fashion after your run to ensure adequate coverage of the islands and timely response to issues needing attention during the season. During your monitoring visits, please take note of the following:

- Human impacts (waste, limbing, soil compaction, erosion, etc.) to the island's primary use areas: the access points, campsites and trails.
- Stewardship activities performed (e.g. dismantling fire rings); include the number of trash bags removed. Note anything that needs attention beyond what you can do (e.g. blowdowns to clear or lobster traps to remove).
- Recreational use you observe, including number of boats, visitors and dogs present during your visit. Include mention of anything from the logbook that may require attention, but a full report on recent logbook entries is not necessary.
- Note any crew members who were with you on your run and the total volunteer hours /person.

Please submit your report as soon as possible after your trip.

Submit reports online: www.mita.org/skipperreport

or report via email, mail, voicemail or text:

stewards@mita.org | 100 Kensington St, 2nd floor, Portland, ME 04103 | 207-370-8358

MONITOR SKIPPER FORMS

Accident/Incident Report Form

MITA asks that this form be filled out and returned to the office within 24 hours of any incident. This includes boat/trailer mishaps, medical situations, injuries, or any other accidents regardless of how minor. If you need to get into the boat's first aid kit, you should submit a report along with the form to indicate which supplies you used so they can be replaced.

Daily Float Plan

MITA asks that all Skippers file a Daily Float Plan with a responsible friend or relative prior to each monitoring run; do not rely on the MITA office to hold your float plan. In the event of an emergency, the float plan is the most important source of information needed in searches and rescues. At the conclusion of your run, check in with your float plan contact to let him or her know that you returned safely.

Release of Liability Form

Every person that rides in a MITA boat, including Skippers, cleanup volunteers and passengers on a monitoring run, must sign a Release of Liability Form. This form only needs to be signed once, and it is good for the present and all subsequent MITA-related activities. Check with MITA staff if you are unsure if you have signed the current form. It can also be filled out online: www.mita.org/agreement

Emergency Contact Form

This form is filled out at the beginning of the season and kept on file at the MITA office in case of an emergency. Please let the office know if your emergency contact information has changed.

Volunteer Expense Form

MITA is happy to reimburse Skippers for expenses that they incur while performing stewardship services for the organization. The reimbursement process is simple, but there are a few things to keep in mind when filling out the form:

- You may submit for reimbursement for mileage, parking fees, and boat gas costs without permission from the office. For any other items, please get prior approval.
- When recording your mileage, keep track of towing and non-towing miles. Mileage is reimbursed using the IRS rate for non-towing, with a 5 cent/mile increase for towing. Current rates are found on the digital and paper forms.
- Please attach original receipts to the form.
- MITA tries to track ALL expenses – even those for which volunteers do not wish to be reimbursed. Skippers who incur expenses but do not seek reimbursement should still submit an expense form and check the appropriate box on the form. A tax-deductible receipt letter can be provided to you for all donated expenses.
- Reimbursements can be submitted online via mita.org/reimbursement or via hard copy by mail.

Monitor Logsheet

With each monitoring run, Skippers are asked to record observations on recreational use and the condition of the islands/campsites. The information provided in your logs is critical in helping us make island management decisions. Please be as thorough as possible when filling out your logs. This form can be submitted online, by email or hard copy. Online monitor log is available at: ww.mita.org/skipperreport

Hardcopies of all forms are available at mita.org/skippers

FOUL WEATHER & EMERGENCY MEDICAL PROTOCOLS

Thunderstorms

Monitor Skippers should check the weather before every run, but if an unexpected storm comes up during your trip and you cannot get back to the launch ramp before the storm, use the following protocol:

- Locate a viable “hunker down” island or mainland spot ahead of an advancing storm; consider the weight of your boat, wind and tide to determine your speed and whether or not you can get to your destination before the storm hits
- Land at least 1/2 hour ahead of the storm
- Make sure the boat is well secured (stern anchor) when you get to safety; anticipate higher winds and a possible shift in wind direction
- Get passengers under cover if possible, but avoid tall trees. Have them spread out and crouch in “lightening position” on their PFDs.
- Wait 1/2 hour from the last thunder before returning to the water

Fog

- Use discretion when visibility is limited, particularly with passengers
- While underway:
 - Follow VHF security calling protocol:

On channel 16 (or 13 if 16 is unsuccessful), press microphone button and say, “Securite, securite, securite. This is (who you are), operating between (name of islands or mainland points). Course is x degrees, speed is x knots, any traffic in the area please respond.” Keep radio tuned to that station for traffic.
 - Consider the following:
 - Mark your location on your chart
 - Call someone to let them know you’re in the fog at X location
 - Proceed slowly
 - Listen for auditory clues or nearby boats
 - If you are aiming for a mark, aim off to one side so as not to hit it

Man Overboard

- Kill the engine or go into idle, doing everything at low or no speed
- Swing the boat’s stern away from the person
- Make verbal contact with the person – remind and instruct them to swim
- Quickly throw the person a flotation device or throw bag
- Keep the person in sight at all times – point at the person
- If possible, have a passenger act as a lookout while the Skipper maneuvers the boat
- Try to approach the person from downwind or into the sea
- Help the person aboard (stop the engine first for safety), using the stirrup

Capsize/Hypothermia

- Get atop an over-turned boat or any wreckage
- Secure a PFD or buoyant cushion (treading water leads to rapid heat loss)
- Assume the 'Help' or 'Huddle' positions to reduce body heat loss
- Swim only if you are within easy reach of shore (less than 1 km)
 - Swimming increases heat loss by 35 to 50 percent
 - Consider current, water temp, weather and wind before deciding to swim
- Refrain from removing clothing

Signs of Hypothermia

- Loss of coordination and fine motor control
- Momentary dementia
- Uncontrolled shivering followed by no shivering

Mild Hypothermia- Signs & Treatment

Signs: Loss of coordination and motor skills, momentary dementia, uncontrolled shivering

- Prevent further heat loss
- Get the person into dry clothes (cover neck and head)
- Get them out of the wind and keep them off the cold ground
- Cover them with warm items (or people for body heat)
- Provide food and water (warm and sweet is best)
- Try to keep them moving if possible

Severe Hypothermia- Signs & Treatment

Signs: Patient is unconscious or semi-conscious and has stopped shivering

- Handle person gently
- Replace wet layers with dry, warm clothing
- Insulate them from the ground
- Place hot water bottles in palms, at soles of feet, in armpits, and groin
- Wrap their body with a vapor barrier (trash bag, tarp, etc.) to trap heat
- Do not force food or drink

Injury

- Assess the situation
- Call for help if needed (see Emergency Resources list in boat box) and follow expert advice
- If no help can be reached, administer appropriate first aid using your best judgement and acting within the scope of any first aid training you may have.

Accident/Incident Report Form

MITA asks that this form be filled out and returned to the office within 24 hours of any accident. This includes boat/trailer mishaps, emergency medical situations, injuries, or any other major or minor accidents.

WORKBOAT HANDLING PROCEDURES

The guidelines below should be followed every time a MITA workboat is used to keep the boats and equipment in good working order and ensure the safety of the Skipper, passengers, and other boaters. MITA workboats are only to be operated during daylight hours.

As MITA ambassadors and to demonstrate best LNT practices, **pets are not allowed on MITA skiffs.**

A. Before leaving home

1. Check weather conditions to decide if it is safe to go out. It is always better to err on the side of caution in potentially unsafe conditions.
2. If possible, plan your run with additional consideration to tides as some sites on runs are tidally dependent.
3. Ensure that your plan for the day includes enough time to be off the water well before sunset as **MITA skiffs do not have navigation lights.**
4. File your float plan with a reliable individual (see Daily Float Plan in appendix).
5. Make sure you have your personal and safety gear, including GPS, VHF, and any first aid kit or extra clothes you bring along.

B. Before leaving boat storage location check for the following:

1. Full fuel tanks
2. Working trailer lights & signals
3. Good tire pressure on the trailer
4. Tight safety straps and correct position of boat on trailer
5. Inventory boat gear, ensure proper storage
6. Appropriate engine position (locked in up position, correct side up per sticker)
7. Proper hitch connection (safety chains on, locked hitch – 8225 combo)
8. Correct mirror orientation

C. While trailering

1. Obey all speed limits and make careful, wide turns
2. Get out and check for obstacles before reversing

D. Prior to launching

1. Rig for launch away from the launch ramp
2. Check conditions on VHF and observe visually
3. Have all passengers fill out MITA's liability waiver (www.mita.org/agreement)
4. Tilt motor up (full tilt)
5. Insert drain plug
6. Release safety tie downs

E. Launching

1. Be as efficient as possible
2. Reverse into the water keeping the rear hubs of trailer dry
3. Release winch strap & safety chain (keep hold of bow line)
4. Secure the boat on dock or with anchor while you park the vehicle

F. Prior to motoring

1. Start and warm up the engine
2. Put on PFDs (driver and all passengers)
3. Brief passengers on boat operation and safety
4. Clip into engine kill switch

G. While underway

1. Handle boat, motor and equipment with care at all times
2. Check motor regularly for cooling water stream and tight fuel fittings
3. Check fuel regularly to determine rate of consumption in the given conditions
4. Always observe the rules of the road
5. Keep an eye on the weather and check the forecast using your VHF
6. When approaching an island or in shallow water, tilt engine and use push pole
7. Land gently, without ramming bow into beaches or rocks
8. Leave the boat in a position that accounts for length of stay and tide
9. Use a bow and stern anchor where appropriate

H. Hauling out

1. Land or dock so as not to interfere with larger boats or commercial users
2. Tilt engine to full tilt position
3. Back trailer so that wheel hubs are not submerged
4. Winch boat onto trailer and secure safety chain (make sure boat is sitting squarely)
5. Haul boat away from launch ramp
6. Pull drain plug and stow all gear
7. Lock engine in up position and secure tiller handle
8. Check for working lights and signals

I. Storing the boat

1. Refill fuel tanks (unleaded gasoline)- add fuel stabilizer from boat box.
2. Unload any trash and tidy the boat- if the boat is grimy or otherwise dirty, wash it out or alert the MITA staff if it needs more cleaning than you have time to do.
3. Lock and stow all gear appropriately
4. If any gear was used up/lost either replace it (and fill out an expense reimbursement form) or contact the MITA office
5. Leave trailer tilted to allow water to drain
6. Notify the person with your float plan that you have returned and are off the water
7. Send in your Monitor Report if not submitted online during monitoring

THE HONDA MOTORS

Please make sure to treat the motors with care so that they may be returned in good working order at the end of the season. Below are guidelines for use:

Starting and Settings

1. Retrieve key from the boat storage box. Insert key into ignition
2. Set throttle at start mark, turn ignition key. The choke is automatic
3. At the front of the motor below the tiller handle is the Steering Friction Adjustment, a lever that moves left and right. On the tiller collar next to throttle is the Throttle Friction Adjustment. Set to your comfort level
4. There are two lights on the tiller; oil pressure and engine temperature. If either goes into alarm the engine speed will slow down automatically

Electric Tilt

1. To lower motor, unlock the tilt lock on the right side of motor
2. There are two buttons that raise and lower the motor; located on the tiller and on the port side of the engine
3. Tilting lower than normal will help put the boat on plane faster from a full stop. Use normal trim for regular motoring
4. When tilting up while motoring be certain that the water stream continues to flow out of the motor. If not, the motor is tilted too high and engine will overheat.
5. Make sure the tiller handle and fuel line is free to move while tilting

Transporting

1. Remove key from ignition and return to container in boat storage box
2. Tilt motor all the way up and lock silver lever on starboard side of motor to lock in tilt position. Lower the motor until it touches the lock
3. Lay motor to left with tiller to port for oil pan benefit
4. Tighten Steering Friction Adjustment
5. Do not tie tiller handle or back of motor

Strout's Point Wharf Company

5 Wharf Rd (at the end of Main St) South Freeport, ME 04078

Phone: 207-865-3899 | www.stroutspoint.com

ENGINE FAILURE TROUBLESHOOTING

Should you find yourself with a dead engine while underway, follow the steps below for simple fixes of some of the most frequent causes of engine failure.

First, make sure you are safe —

1. Is there oncoming boat traffic?
 - Consider VHF (Channel 16) and/or other signal devices to alert nearby boaters
2. Are there rocks or other hazards to avoid, or strong currents or heavy swells?
 - Consider dropping an anchor to keep the bow pointed into the waves, or using oars to guide the boat to a safer location if possible

Second, check the following —

1. If the engine **DOES NOT** turn over:
 - a. Is the shift control in neutral? If not, the engine won't start.
 - b. Check tilt for battery power to engine. If no power, check for loose battery connections and retighten if necessary.
2. If the engine **DOES** turn over:
 - a. Is the “kill-switch” safety lanyard attached? If not, the engine won't run. Try taking it off and putting it back on again.
 - b. Is the fuel tank empty?
 - c. Is the vent closed on the fuel tank and/or primer bulb collapsed?
 - d. Is the fuel line fully attached?
 - e. Is there a kink in the fuel line?
 - f. Check water intake valve on the lower unit for any seaweed or plastic bags clogging the intake. If overheating, the engine will shut off.
 - g. Drain water separator and check fuel filter. Replace filter if necessary.
 - h. If engine dies when placed in gear, check for any line or seaweed wrapped around the prop.
3. If you feel safe and time allows, you can also consult the engine manual for additional troubleshooting guidance.

If the engine still will not start, call SeaTow at (207) 772-6724 and alert the MITA office.

Monitor Skipper Apprentice Training

All incoming Apprentices are aware that in order to participate in the Monitor Skipper program, they must have advanced coastal small boating experience, sound judgment, and good seamanship skills. MITA **does not** instruct volunteers on basic boating skills and does not expect training Skippers to do so. The intent behind the apprenticeship process is to gain familiarity with the basics of being a Monitor Skipper and with using the MITA skiff, trailer and equipment.

Besides significant small craft boating experience, new **Apprentices will have some familiarity with all of the following:**

- Pre-trip planning (weather, tides, proper gear, float plan)
- Towing, launching, docking and hauling
- Maintaining and fueling outboard engines
- Anchoring a small boat for extended periods of time (i.e. through tide cycles)
- “The Rules of the Road”
- Boating safety requirements
- Navigation with chart, compass, and GPS
- Low-visibility navigation
- VHF and basic radio procedures

Training Skippers should expect to assist Apprentices in strengthening the above skills, and share and instruct on the following information:

- Skiff storage locations
- Nearest fueling stations
- Monitor run launching points
- Monitor run routes and tidal considerations
- Island locations and landings
- Trail site guidelines and Leave No Trace ethics
- Filling out and submitting monitoring reports
- MITA's history, mission and work
- Best practices on interacting with Trail Users

During runs and to steadily advance through the process, **Apprentices should expect to:**

- Tow, launch, drive, dock, haul & refuel the skiff
- Practice island landings including bow and stern anchor deployment
- Secure the skiff while on shore
- Pay attention to tide changes
- Fill out monitoring reports
- Interact with Trail users and share Leave No Trace principles and Island Guidelines
- Take notes on monitoring routes and islands visited including landings, guidelines, and stewardship issues for each site (e.g. fire pits, campsites, trails, common trash spots, etc)

At the end of each run, Training Skippers and Apprentices should discuss how the day went and what skills should be focused on for further improvement on future runs. Training Skippers report back to MITA staff on Apprentice progress.

MITA staff schedule check-off rides after multiple Apprentice runs are complete ***and*** Training Skippers feel that an Apprentice has demonstrated sufficient boating skills, monitor run familiarity, and positive interactions with Trail users as a MITA ambassador.

FRIENDS/FAMILY ON MONITORING RUNS

Boating is significantly safer when not done alone. While many Skippers choose to go solo, MITA strongly supports including friends and family on your monitoring runs. When bringing others, please make sure they have signed a copy of the liability waiver (included in this packet) or signed the online version available at www.mita.org/agreement.

PUBLIC SIGNUPS

MITA encourages members of the public to join monitoring runs by publicizing select trips through the MITA website and app. This is a great way to share the Trail and MITA's mission as well as spread the word about the Monitor Skipper Program.

At the beginning of the season, Skippers can request to be included on the public calendar. MITA staff will handle initial communication with interested parties to ensure they are fully prepared to participate. Once screened, contact information between Skippers and crew will be shared so meeting times can be coordinated. MITA prides itself on maintaining a quality experience for its Skippers. If any issues arise when having the public join a Skipper run, please contact the office immediately.

WORKING WITH YOUTH

There are times when Skippers may find themselves working with youth. This could be on a cleanup, a special project, or if the public joins you on a monitoring run. It is in the best interest of MITA and its wonderful community of Skippers, that the volunteer experiences be safe for all individuals involved

If you find yourself working with youth, be aware of and consider the following:

- Limit one-on-one interactions when possible by having another adult present at all times.
- Be friendly with youth within the context of the volunteer experience and observe appropriate boundaries.
- Use discretion and consider the age of the youth when communicating with him or her.
- Limit physical contact with youth. Be aware of how your actions and intentions might be perceived or misinterpreted.
- Be mindful of taking pictures with smart phones or cameras.
- If you are contacting a group prior to or after a volunteer project, limit communication to adult chaperones only.
- Consult with other Skippers, chaperones or MITA staff if you feel uncertain about a situation.

Working with youth is very rewarding and can have tremendous, long-lasting positive impacts that influence the next generation of island stewards. Enjoy the opportunity to be a role model and share the beauty of the Maine Island Trail!

EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

MITA greatly values your participation in the Monitor Skipper program and will strive to provide you with a positive volunteer experience.

In order to do this, MITA staff will:

- Provide an apprentice orientation and facilitate training runs that include all the information needed to perform the duties of a Monitor Skipper
- Support and guide Apprentices and Skippers to the best of our ability
- Actively solicit feedback from volunteers and remain open and receptive to program improvement ideas
- Provide reimbursement for mileage and other approved expenses while you are volunteering as a Skipper or Apprentice

As a Monitor Skipper, you agree to:

- Perform the basic duties of a Skipper as outlined in this handbook which include stewarding Trail sites, sharing LNT information and island guidelines with the public, and submitting monitoring reports
- Hold yourself to a professional standard when using MITA boats and equipment and while acting as a Skipper
- Respect all individuals you encounter on the Trail including other volunteers, staff and the general public
- Communicate issues or concerns which are likely to affect your role as a Skipper to MITA staff by phone, email, or in person

Commitment to Volunteer Communication

It is important that volunteers feel supported while they are on the water and that they have ample opportunity to provide feedback about their experience to staff. To help facilitate communication, MITA staff will check-in with volunteers throughout the summer and volunteers can reach out to staff whenever needed.

Check-ins will also be an opportunity for MITA staff to provide feedback to the volunteer(s) and make sure that program expectations and responsibilities as outlined above are being met. If they are not being met, staff will work with the volunteer to establish improvement steps and if necessary, volunteers may be asked to discontinue their participation in the program.