

McNeil Scout Ranch – Camp Cris Dobbins

Leader's Meeting 2 – March 18, 2026

AI Summary of the Meeting

A.I. INFORMATION MAY NOT BE ACCURATE, AND MAY BE MISLEADING. CHECK CAMP WEBSITE, DOCUMENTS OR CONTACT STAFF FOR CLARIFICATION.

Overview

This meeting provided comprehensive information about the 2026 summer camp program at Camp Cris Dobbins, McNeil Scout Ranch. The session covered registration procedures, merit badge scheduling, health form requirements, program activities, and the new activity schedule format. The camp leadership team introduced the 2026 program theme centered on rekindling the "Scouting Spirit" and explained significant changes to the camp schedule that give units more flexibility in choosing activities. The meeting emphasized important deadlines, payment schedules, and the new Parent Portal feature in BlackPug registration system.

Key Concepts or Theories:

- **Parent Portal System:** A new feature allowing individual parents to manage their Scout's registration, class selection, and payments independently rather than relying solely on unit leaders
- **Grab Bag Activities:** Flexible program offerings that allow Senior Patrol Leaders to customize their unit's schedule by selecting from various merit badges and activities not part of the standard rotation
- **Color Group Schedule:** A new scheduling system dividing camp into eight color groups, each with assigned times for specialty areas like archery, zip line, lake, pool, and ranges
- **CampDoc Integration:** Electronic health form system that syncs with BlackPug registration, eliminating paper forms and streamlining medical documentation
- **Specialty Areas vs. Open Periods:** Distinction between scheduled specialty activities (archery, ranges, waterfront) and flexible time for unit-directed activities or service projects

Key Takeaways and Summary of Learning Objectives

- Merit badge registration opens April 11, 2026 at 8:00am MDT for weeks 1-3, and April 18, 2026 at 8:00am MDT for weeks 4-6
- All participants must be entered in BlackPug and paid to the current payment cycle (80% due April 1) to register for merit badges

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- CampDoc health forms are required for all participants and must be completed by the 11-day meeting before each camp session
- The new color group activity schedule provides eight different rotation schedules with specialty areas, grab bag opportunities, open periods, and service projects
- Parent Portal is available as a unit-level option to allow individual parents to register their Scouts for merit badges and manage information
- The 2026 program theme focuses on proving the "Scouting Spirit" is still alive, coinciding with Peaceful Valley's 60th anniversary
- Whitewater rafting on the Arkansas River is available Wednesdays for \$85 per person with self-transportation required
- Adult leader training opportunities include IOLS, Wilderness First Aid, CPR, and Cold Water Immersion training throughout each week
- Family Night occurs Friday evenings with dinner tickets at \$10 per person; no overnight stays permitted
- Camp operates at 7,000 feet elevation; hydration is critical with the recommendation of "4 liters before 4 o'clock"

Topic 1: Registration and Payment Requirements

Camp registration for 2026 requires careful attention to payment deadlines and participant entry into the BlackPug system. The first major deadline is April 1, 2026, when 80% of the total registration fee is due for each unit. This payment threshold is critical because it determines eligibility for merit badge registration. Final payment is due May 1, 2026. Units must ensure all participants are entered into BlackPug and current on payments before they can access merit badge class selection.

The registration system has been enhanced with the Parent Portal feature, which represents a significant change in how units can manage their camp experience. This optional feature allows the registration owner (typically the Scoutmaster or unit leader) to grant limited access to individual parents, enabling them to enter information for their Scouts, select classes, and make payments independently. The decision to enable Parent Portal is entirely at the unit level, and the council will not activate it without unit request. Units choosing to use Parent Portal must manage the credential distribution and support for parents using the system.

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For units with adults attending partial weeks, the registration process requires entering them as full-week participants at the standard \$250 rate. Upon check-in and check-out at camp, credits will be automatically issued for the days not attended. This streamlined approach eliminates the need for complex partial-week calculations during registration. Merit badge fees must be paid at the time of class selection to hold the Scout's spot in the class.

Relevant Q&A

Cindy: Can a parent register their scout for Merit Badges if their scout is fully paid but the troop has not fully paid all of the unit?

Response: Individual Scouts must be paid to current payment schedule; the entire unit does not need to be fully paid for individual Scouts to register.

Evan: Do parents need to pay for merit badge fees in order to finalize that registration or can we pay later?

John: Yes, that is our understanding. Merit badge fees must be paid when registering to hold the spot.

Tim: Will a leader be able to sign up scouts for MBs and then have the parents go back to the portal to pay the fees or can you only finalized signup by paying the fees?

John: Yes, you can deselect class scheduling for the parent portal.

Topic 2: Merit Badge Registration Process

Merit badge registration opens on two separate dates to manage server load and provide a smoother experience for all units. Weeks 1, 2, and 3 can begin registering on Saturday, April 11, 2026 at 8:00am Mountain Daylight Time. Weeks 4, 5, and 6 can begin registering on Saturday, April 18, 2026 at 8:00am Mountain Daylight Time. The Saturday morning timing has been determined through several years of iteration to find the optimal time that works best for the majority of units.

The merit badge schedule includes three types of class offerings: all-week classes (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday), Monday-Tuesday only classes, and Thursday-Friday only classes. Wednesday is reserved as a flexible day for whitewater rafting, the Coulter Run relay race, and other unit activities. For classes offered only on specific days, Scouts can combine two different merit badges in the same period—for example, taking Astronomy on Monday-Tuesday and Space Exploration on Thursday-Friday during Period 1.

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Class capacities vary by program area, with some having fixed limits due to state regulations or equipment constraints. Areas with the most rigid capacity limits include ATVs (limited by number of vehicles), horses (limited by number of animals), and all range activities including rifle, shotgun, and archery (limited by state safety regulations). Most other merit badges, particularly Eagle-required badges like First Aid, have more flexibility, and camp staff will attempt to accommodate demand by adjusting staffing when possible.

Units are strongly encouraged to collect first, second, and third choice preferences from Scouts for each period before registration opens. This preparation helps ensure Scouts get into desired classes even if first choices fill quickly. The camp staff works diligently to ensure Scouts receive at least one of their three choices for each period. Tutorial videos demonstrating the class selection process are available on the camp website under BlackPug Tutorials.

Relevant Q&A

Evan: Are merit badge selections held for scouts when they sign up or is the spot not held until fees are paid?

Jack: It's both—when you sign up and add them to the schedule, you should be prepared to make that payment. If unable to pay immediately, it will still lock them in because you're taking the spot and putting them into a schedule.

Larry: I get the parent portal, but is it possible to add 1 or 2 leaders to assist with registering for merit badges instead of having each parent do it?

John: Yes, that is possible.

Speaker: But if we have the parent portal enabled, troop leaders can still register any scout for merit badges?

John: The system is meant to give parents that option OR one leader. If you find a work around, such as adding multiple Scouts to the parent portal, that could work but once they are claimed, they cannot be claimed by another parent portal.

Topic 3: Health Forms and CampDoc Requirements

Camp Cris Dobbins requires all health forms to be submitted electronically through CampDoc; paper forms are not accepted. The CampDoc system integrates with BlackPug registration, creating a streamlined process for managing medical information. To initiate the CampDoc process, unit leaders must go to each registered person in BlackPug, click

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Leader's Meeting 2 – March 18, 2026

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"Update Information," and then click the link to CampDoc. A small window will appear requiring some basic information entry, after which the system syncs the data between platforms.

The synchronization between BlackPug and CampDoc typically occurs within 0-4 hours but can occasionally take up to 24 hours during busy periods. Once linked, participants automatically receive invitations to CampDoc to begin filling out their medical forms. Unit leaders can request access to view and edit all medical forms for their unit by completing a form available on the camp website under the CampDoc section. This manual process is handled by part-time staff, so patience is requested. Leaders granted access should prepare for numerous email reminders for each linked profile and are advised to create email rules to organize these messages into separate folders.

A critical requirement for all youth participants is the Colorado Certificate of Immunization form within CampDoc. This state-mandated form must be completed by transcribing immunization records; doctor office printouts or attachments are not accepted.

Importantly, no provider signature is required—only parent or guardian completion of the form. This represents a change from previous requirements and simplifies the process significantly. All health forms must be completed by the 11-day meeting scheduled for each camp session, when the health team reviews all profiles to ensure compliance.

Waivers for specific programs such as ATVs and Cowboy Action Shooting have been added to CampDoc for 2026, creating a fully paperless experience. Any questions regarding CampDoc should be directed to MSRHealth@Scouting.org, which is monitored by multiple health staff members including health aides and the health officer who attends 11-day meetings.

Relevant Q&A

Speaker: I thought that in BSA - the only "required" immunization is Tetanus - looks like more on that form? Obviously more are "strongly encouraged" but are they required?

John: For adults, that is true, and is true for Scouts in non-summer camp events. Due to child care licensing, more immunizations are required by the state, or exemptions through the state.

Speaker: If a scout takes an over the counter med everyday that the camp has in their med office, do they still need to complete the medication confirmation form?

John: No, just the OTC section. They should NOT bring the OTC, we will provide.

McNeil Scout Ranch – Camp Cris Dobbins

Leader's Meeting 2 – March 18, 2026

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Topic 4: New Activity Schedule and Color Groups

Camp Cris Dobbins is implementing a new activity schedule for 2026 that returns to a format successfully used from 2001-2009. The schedule divides camp into eight color groups (Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Purple, Silver, and Gold), with each group following a specific rotation through specialty areas. Each color group will have no more than 45 participants, and larger units may be split into multiple color groups while attempting to keep troops together when possible.

The specialty areas in the rotation include archery, shotgun/rifle ranges, zip line and climbing, lake activities, and pool activities. Each group has assigned times for these specialty areas throughout the week (Monday 2:00pm, Monday 4:00pm, Tuesday 2:00pm, Tuesday 4:00pm, Thursday 2:00pm, Thursday 4:00pm, Friday 2:00pm, Friday 4:00pm). In addition to specialty areas, each color group schedule includes Grab Bag opportunities, Open Periods, and Service Projects.

The Grab Bag concept allows Senior Patrol Leaders to select from a wide variety of merit badges and activities not part of the standard rotation. Options include merit badges like Leatherworking, Basketry, Pottery, Signs Signals and Codes, First Aid/CPR, Geocaching, and many others, as well as programs like Bob Ross Painting Sessions, Sherlock Holmes Mystery, DnD games, gold panning, nature library visits, and field games. Units can substitute specialty areas for grab bags, but once a specialty area is skipped, it cannot be rescheduled. For example, if a unit chooses a Grab Bag activity instead of their assigned archery time, they cannot sign up for archery again that week.

Open Periods provide completely flexible time for units to schedule horse trail rides, visit the trading post, use shower facilities without lines, work on rank advancement in campsites, or simply relax. Service Projects can be conservation-focused, campsite improvement projects, or other activities coordinated with camp staff. The Senior Patrol Leader plays a central role in this new schedule, working with Scouts to determine preferences and submitting the Grab Bag selection form (details to be provided at the April meeting and 11-day meetings).

Relevant Q&A

Speaker: Will there be enough time for say 45 to get thru Ziplining in a 2 hr window?

John: That is the goal.

McNeil Scout Ranch – Camp Cris Dobbins

Leader's Meeting 2 – March 18, 2026

AI Summary of the Meeting

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Speaker: Will your specific troop be the only one at the specific area at the listed time, or will there be multiple troops?

John: Generally, it would be just your unit. Except for potential grab bag activities.

Speaker: Can people go to different areas during grab bag or does everyone go to the same area? How many people per "group" - troop of 40 vs troop of 10 - big difference there.

John: The group will have to pick one activity.

Speaker: Can troops elect to do something else as a troop on Wednesday? Like hiking at Garden of the Gods.

John: Yes, you can raft, stay in camp or do something as a unit either on or off camp.

Topic 5: Program Theme and Special Activities

The 2026 program theme centers on rekindling the "Scouting Spirit" in a year when Scouting's spark is fading. Three characters—Hunter, Kyler, and Amanda—represent campers who enjoy the outdoors but doubt the relevance of Scouting's core principles. Throughout the week, camp staff and Scouts work to prove that the spirit of Scouting is still alive through various activities and demonstrations. This theme is particularly fitting as 2026 marks the 60th anniversary of Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch, the 150th anniversary of Colorado statehood, and the 250th anniversary of the United States.

The program theme incorporates references to Baden-Powell and the founding principles of Scouting. Scouts earn points for their lodges by participating in activities that demonstrate Scouting values and skills. The theme runs throughout the week, beginning with the opening campfire skit and continuing through daily flag ceremonies and evening programs. Hunter Heth, Assistant Program Director, emphasized that the goal is to get Scouts and leaders thinking about why Scouting started in the first place and to return to the core principles of the movement.

Whitewater rafting remains a highlight activity, offered on Wednesdays on the Arkansas River through Bighorn Sheep Canyon. The experience covers 7 miles of Class II and III rapids and costs \$85 per person for both youth and adults. There is no age restriction—only the requirement to pass the BSA swimmer classification from the swim test. Units must provide their own transportation to and from the rafting location. Registration occurs separately on the camp website with a specific waiver form. Despite concerns about low

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Leader's Meeting 2 – March 18, 2026

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snowpack in 2026, the vendor has not expressed concerns about water levels affecting the program, though the experience may vary between June and July sessions.

For Scouts not participating in rafting, Wednesday offers the famous Coulter Run, a giant relay race throughout camp where units compete against each other and a camp staff team. The day also provides extensive free time for Scouts to visit program areas, work on merit badges, or enjoy waterfront activities. Evening activities include Monday's Campsite Host Night, Tuesday's Lodge Special Night, Wednesday's Interfaith Service and in-troop time, Thursday's Lake Party, and Friday's Closing Campfire. Morning activities feature the Polar Bear Swim at the lake (with Hunter promising to attend in a polar bear costume) and a 5K run around camp.

Relevant Q&A

Speaker: Low, low, low snow year. If the rafting can't happen and a scout has registered, will they get a refund for the fees? The ability to do a different activity?

John: If the vendor cancels rafting, it will be refunded. Camp has alternate activities, and if we have another off site option we will share.

Speaker: Several people mentioned low water concerns with rafting. Can you address?

John: Right now, our vendor has not expressed any concerns with rafting being available due to water conditions this winter. If for some reason the vendor determines they are unable to provide this program, they'll let us know and we'll refund that money. We will try to find an alternative program either on camp or off-camp. Rafting may not be as exciting with the water levels, but as far as right now, we are planning to still offer rafting.

Speaker: What happens if a MB gets cancelled due to weather?

John: We do our best to reschedule.

Topic 6: Adult Leader Opportunities and Family Night

Adult leaders have multiple training and activity opportunities throughout each camp week. Introduction to Outdoor Leader Skills (IOLS) is offered, typically spanning Monday and Tuesday to provide adequate time for a credible course completion. Wilderness First Aid and CPR training are available Thursday and Friday, with fees charged for these certifications. Cold Water Immersion training, provided by the Coast Guard Auxiliary, is offered Monday and is highly recommended for any adults participating in whitewater rafting for the first time.

McNeil Scout Ranch – Camp Cris Dobbins

Leader's Meeting 2 – March 18, 2026

AI Summary of the Meeting

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Additional training courses are available by request based on demand and trainer availability. These include COPE Level 1 and 2, Aquatics Supervision, and other specialized certifications. Adults interested in these courses should contact camp staff to arrange scheduling around the trainers' availability throughout the week. The Scoutmaster Challenge runs throughout the week, allowing adult leaders to participate in various activities and earn a patch by week's end. Unlike merit badge classes, adult leader activities do not require advance registration through BlackPug—adults simply attend at the scheduled times, with payment collected on-site for fee-based courses.

Family Night occurs every Friday evening, providing an opportunity for families to visit camp for dinner and the closing campfire. Tickets cost \$10 per person and can be purchased online ahead of time. Families are encouraged to arrive around 5:00pm. The event typically increases camp population from approximately 450 to 700 people. No overnight stays are permitted during Family Night, and no animals are allowed on camp property. This popular event allows families to see what their Scouts have been experiencing and participate in the culminating campfire program.

The camp continues to seek staff for summer 2026, with positions available for Scouts aged 16 and older. The Counselor-in-Training (CIT) program serves Scouts aged 14-15 who want to experience what it's like to be a counselor and determine if camp staff is right for them. The CIT program costs \$200 for two weeks. Staff positions are nearly full for 2026, but interested Scouts are encouraged to apply for potential openings or for future summers. Information and applications are available at scoutingcolorado.org/campstaff.

Relevant Q&A

Bobbie: For the adult programs, do the adults sign up for those with classes just like they would Merit Badge classes in Blackpug?

Jack: Nope, no sign-up for the adult leader activities. Very easy, straightforward. Since most of them are free, you can just show up at the respective time. The sign-ups happen at camp.

Bobbie: Okay, they just bring payment with them?

Jack: Yep. And it's just for the wilderness first aid and CPR class that need the payment.

Speaker: I came a little late, and you may have already answered this... but will you offer the IOLS training for adults at camp?

McNeil Scout Ranch – Camp Cris Dobbins

Leader's Meeting 2 – March 18, 2026

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John: Yes.

Topic 7: Safety and Operational Information

Altitude sickness, also called acute mountain sickness (AMS), is a significant concern at Camp Cris Dobbins, which sits at 7,000 feet elevation. Even participants coming from Colorado Springs or Denver can experience symptoms. The most effective prevention method is proper hydration. The camp promotes the guideline "4 liters before 4 o'clock"—Scouts and adults should aim to drink 4 liters of water before 4:00pm each day. This hydration practice prepares the body not just for the current day but for the next day as well.

Additional altitude sickness prevention strategies include staged ascent when possible, appropriate exercise levels until acclimated, and awareness of symptoms. Participants should avoid intensity in physical activities initially and be alert to shortness of breath and fatigue. If AMS symptoms develop, individuals should stop ascending until symptoms resolve. If more serious conditions like HACE (high-altitude cerebral edema) or HAPE (high-altitude pulmonary edema) are suspected, rapid evacuation to lower altitude (descending at least 1,000-1,500 feet) and physician evaluation are necessary.

Burn bans are likely to be in effect during summer 2026, as Elbert County typically maintains burn restrictions. Units should plan accordingly and be prepared for limitations on campfires and other open flames. The camp will communicate specific restrictions during 11-day meetings and upon arrival. Scouts are permitted to bring bicycles to camp, but helmets are required at all times when riding, and lights are required for night riding. Bicycles must stay on roads and are not permitted on trails. The camp features approximately 100 miles of trails, including a 9-hole disc golf course that can be used during open periods or as part of the Golf merit badge.

Swimming requirements follow BSA standards. Units may complete swim checks before arriving at camp by using the official swim check form and submitting it upon arrival. For Scouts with special needs who are not strong swimmers, accommodations can be made for activities like the Polar Bear Swim with leader accompaniment or life jackets. The Mile Swim program has specific requirements including attendance at practice sessions; leaders with questions about these requirements should contact john.braselton@scouting.org for clarification.

Relevant Q&A

McNeil Scout Ranch – Camp Cris Dobbins

Leader's Meeting 2 – March 18, 2026

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Speaker: Are scouts allowed to bring their bikes to camp?

John: Yes, helmets required. Lights required at night.

Hunter: They are allowed, but they must only bike on roads, no trails.

Speaker: We have a special needs scout that isn't a strong swimmer - can they do the polar plunge with a leader accompanying them and/or with a lifejacket?

Response: Accommodations can be made for special needs Scouts.

Speaker: Swimming requirement- if we do it before we come, what do you require be done in order to meet your qualifications?

John: Complete the swim check form and turn it in upon arrival.

Speaker: Does everyone who signs up for rafting have to be a good swimmer?

Response: Recommended but not required. There's no requirement to be a BSA swimmer or blue swimmer on the swim tag, but swimming ability is recommended. They'll still help participants, but swimming background is definitely recommended.

Topic 8: Communication and Resources

The camp's text messaging system is currently experiencing technical difficulties due to changes in the Remind platform's settings. The leadership team is aware of the issue and working on a solution, which will be announced at the April meeting. Units should not be concerned about the lack of text updates currently, as the problem is being addressed and a new system or fix will be implemented before camp begins.

All important camp documents are available on the website at ScoutingColorado.org/Dobbins. The Camp Documents section includes the Leaders Guide, Program Guide, and numerous useful links. BlackPug tutorials are available on the website to help navigate class selection and other registration functions. These video tutorials provide step-by-step instructions and are more comprehensive than what can be covered in meetings. The Program Guide was updated on March 18, 2026 (the day of this meeting) and represents the most current information available.

Contact information for various camp functions includes: general inquiries to McNeilScoutRanch@Scouting.org, health team questions to MSRHealth@Scouting.org, program-related questions to MSRDobbinsProgram@Scouting.org, Camp Director Jack Loats at Jack.Loats@Scouting.org, Camping Specialist John Braselton at

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Leader's Meeting 2 – March 18, 2026

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John.Braselton@Scouting.org, and registration questions to Krista Katsirebas at Krista.Katsirebas@Scouting.org. The team emphasized their availability to help units and encouraged leaders to call or email with any questions or concerns.

The meeting recording will be posted on the camp website within a few hours of the meeting's conclusion, typically available by the following morning. This allows units to review information, share with troop members who couldn't attend, and reference specific details about registration, merit badges, or program activities. The next leaders meeting is scheduled for April 22, 2026, which will provide additional information about the Grab Bag selection form, final program details, and any updates to policies or procedures.

Relevant Q&A

Speaker: When will this be uploaded so we can share?

Response: The recording will be posted on the website within a few hours, typically available by morning.

Speaker: The link for the packing list on the program guide is a dead link.

John: Thanks, I will fix this.

Speaker: Is the Leader Guide out on the website?

Response: Yes, it's on the website under Camp Documents, the first link under that section.

Actionable Next Steps / Assignments

- April 1, 2026: 80% of registration payment due for all units
- April 11, 2026 at 8:00am MDT: Merit badge registration opens for weeks 1, 2, and 3
- April 18, 2026 at 8:00am MDT: Merit badge registration opens for weeks 4, 5, and 6
- April 22, 2026: Attend Final Leaders Meeting for additional program information and Grab Bag selection form details
- May 1, 2026: Final payment due for all registrations
- Before 11-day meeting: Complete all CampDoc health forms including Colorado Certificate of Immunization for youth

McNeil Scout Ranch – Camp Cris Dobbins

Leader's Meeting 2 – March 18, 2026

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- Before merit badge registration: Ensure all participants are entered in BlackPug and paid to current payment schedule
- Before merit badge registration: Collect first, second, and third choice preferences from Scouts for each period
- 11 days before camp session: Attend unit-specific 11-day meeting via Zoom for final reminders and questions
- Optional: Complete form on camp website to request CampDoc leader access for viewing all unit medical forms
- Optional: Enable Parent Portal in BlackPug if unit chooses to allow parents to manage their own Scout's registration and class selection
- Optional: Register for whitewater rafting separately on camp website with specific waiver form

Supplemental Resources

- Camp Cris Dobbins website: ScoutingColorado.org/Dobbins with Camp Documents section containing Leaders Guide, Program Guide, and useful links
- BlackPug Tutorials: Available on camp website with step-by-step videos for registration, class selection, and Parent Portal setup
- CampDoc information and leader access request form: Available under Camp Documents section of camp website
- CampDoc questions: Email MSRHealth@Scouting.org monitored by health aides and health officer
- Program questions: Email MSRDobbinsProgram@Scouting.org for merit badge, grab bag, and activity inquiries
- General camp questions: Email McNeilScoutRanch@Scouting.org or call Camp Director Jack Loats at 913.944.2915
- Registration and BlackPug questions: Email Krista.Katsirebas@Scouting.org
- Camp staff applications: ScoutingColorado.org/campstaff for positions and Counselor-in-Training program information

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- Meeting recording: Will be posted on camp website within hours of meeting conclusion for review and sharing with troop members
- Whitewater rafting registration: Separate registration on camp website with specific waiver form required