

## City of St. Charles Parks & Recreation Geocaching/Letterboxing Procedure

The City of St. Charles Parks permits Geocaching and Letterboxing to provide opportunities for safe recreational activities.

The purpose of this procedure is to establish management guidelines for geocaching and letterboxing, so as to minimize impact on sensitive areas, the natural and cultural resources managed by the Department.

For purposes of this procedure and the permit, we will be using the following definitions:

**Cache** - A hidden container filled with a logbook, pen/pencil, stamp and possibly trinkets.

**Datum** - a point or line used as a basis for calculating and measuring.

**Geocaching** - Geocaching is a game for GPS (Global Positioning Systems) users. The basic idea is to have individuals/organizations place caches and share the locations of these caches on the Internet. GPS users can then use the location coordinates to find the caches. Once found, the user records their find on [www.Geocaching.com](http://www.Geocaching.com).

**Letterboxing** – a treasure hunt using clues and sometimes map coordinates or compass bearings. The basic idea is for someone to hide a cache, write clues to the location and enter the clues on the letterboxing Web site. People can obtain these clues and attempt to locate the box. Finders should log the find in the cache's logbook and their personal logbook.

**Multi-cache** - Multiple cache containers are located from information received from the previous container.

**Offset cache** - Coordinates will take the visitor to a location to find a number stamped/written in or on an item at the location or once at the location, the user will continue the search according to instructions on the initial information received from [geocaching.com](http://geocaching.com).

**Virtual cache** - A virtual cache means there is no cache container. It's the location that is the cache itself. Nothing is normally traded, except photos and experiences.

### **Guidelines:**

1. Any visitor wishing to place a cache on Park property is required to complete and have approved, an Official Geocaching/Letterboxing Placement Permit with an original signature of the cache owner.
2. Authority to approve the permits has been delegated to the Chief Ranger or their designee.
3. Caches are not to be placed in sensitive archaeological, historical, or ecological areas such as historical buildings, caves, or locations that contain rare plant species.
4. Cache placement in recognized wild and natural areas needs to be kept to a minimum.
5. Prescribed burn units are to be monitored for consideration of placement. If the desired location is in an area that is scheduled to be burned within twelve months of the date of request, the unit is to be considered off limits for the placement of the cache.
6. The Chief Ranger or designee is required to inform the applicant of any areas that have been recognized as off limits for placing caches.
7. No digging or disruption of the ground is permitted when placing the cache.

8. Caches are not to be placed in areas that could potentially cause danger to visitors trying to locate the cache, i.e. climbing on cliffs/bluffs, underwater or in potential flood areas, in trees, etc.
9. Multi-caches are limited to three total per site, yet treated as one cache and require only one permit.
10. If any park staff determines that the location of a cache poses a risk to park visitors, the owner is to be contacted and asked that the cache be moved to a safer location. All information regarding the risk is to be recorded on the original permit. If the owner relocates the cache, a new permit is to be generated.
11. If at any time the terms of a permit are violated, the Chief Ranger has the authority to void the permit, remove the cache from its location, and attempt to notify the owner or indicate on the appropriate Web site that the cache has been removed. Justification for these actions is to be recorded on the permit.
12. If a non-permitted cache is discovered, park staff is to remove the cache, retain it at the park office for 30 days and, if possible, attempt to notify the owner of their actions. If contact is not made, the cache is to be considered abandoned property and disposed of.
13. A cache owner is limited to 2 cache permits at a time.
14. Caches are limited to one per 20 acres. This does not include the areas designated as off limits. Facilities are encouraged to place their own caches for interpretative and educational purposes. Park caches should also have a permit included in the file.  
Caution needs to be given to the cache owners regarding placing the caches on adjacent private property.
16. Permits are valid for 12 months from the approved date.

*The City of St. Charles Parks and Recreation Department is not responsible for lost, stolen or damaged Geocache/letterbox, their contents or use.*

### **Procedures**

1. Cache owners wishing to place a cache on park property must complete an Official Geocaching/Letterboxing Placement Permit with original signature and contact phone number. The Chief Ranger or designee is to review the permit and the cache for procedure compliance.
2. The cache containers must be clear and display the words "Official Geocache" or "Official Letterbox" clearly on the outside of the container.
3. An explanation of the geocaching/letterboxing activity and permit number is to be included in the container. (See the attached form for an example.)
4. The cache owner is to monitor the site monthly and maintain family friendly contents. This means the cache is **not** to contain food, alcohol, firearms, drugs, explosives, dangerous items, adult items or inappropriate items. Park staff will make periodic checks.
5. Once the cache is placed, the applicant is to return to the Park office to record the exact location information for completion of the permit. The facility is to keep a park map indicating the exact cache locations in the file with the permits.
6. The Chief Ranger has the option of taking a photograph of the cache, asking the cache owner to provide a detailed listing of the cache contents or a photograph(s) of the cache and attaching it to the permit.

7. After the permit has been completed the Chief Ranger or designee will approve or deny the permit. For approval, the following items need to be reviewed for procedure compliance:

- Cache is not located in sensitive archaeological, historical or ecological areas.
- No damage or disturbance of the ground will result from placement of this cache.
- The cache is not located in an area scheduled to be burned during the duration of the permit.
- The cache is not in an area that might cause potential danger to park visitors, i.e. climbing on cliffs/bluffs under water or in potential flood areas, etc.
- Cache container will be of clear material.
- Text for the cache has been reviewed, and it is accurate and complies with this Geocaching/Letterboxing Procedure. Non-compliance of procedure requirements will result in denial of the permit.

8. The original copy of the completed permit is to remain on file at the facility. A copy of the permit, approved or denied, is to be given to the cache owner. If the permit is denied, the justification is to be recorded on the permit.

**This container has been placed here with permission of the  
City of St. Charles Parks & Recreation Department  
GEOCACHE/LETTERBOXING SITE  
PLEASE READ**

**Congratulations, you've found it! Intentionally or not!**

What is this hidden container sitting here for? What is this thing doing here with all these things in it? It is part of a worldwide game. You have found a Geocaching or Letterbox site. These games basically involve a player to hide a "treasure" (this container and its contents) and publish the exact coordinates or directional clues on the appropriate Web page so users can go on a "treasure hunt" to find it. The only rules are: if you take something from the cache, you must leave something for the cache, and you must log your visit in the logbook. Hopefully, the person that hid this container found a good spot that is not easily found by uninterested parties. Sometimes, a good spot turns out to be a bad spot, though.

**IF YOU FOUND THIS CONTAINER BY ACCIDENT:**

Great! You are welcome to join us! We ask only that you:

- Please do not move or vandalize the container. The real treasure is just finding the container and sharing your thoughts with everyone else who finds it.
- If you wish, go ahead and take something. But please also leave something of your own for others to find, and write it in the logbook. Do **Not** leave food, alcohol, firearms, drugs, explosives, dangerous items, adult or inappropriate items
- If possible, let us know that you found it, by visiting the appropriate Web site listed below. Geocaching and letterboxing is open to everyone with a sense of adventure. There are similar sites all over the world. These organizations have their homes on the Internet. Visit the Web sites if you want to learn more, or have any comments:

<http://www.geocaching.com> or <http://www.letterboxing.com>

If this container needs to be removed for any reason, please let us know. We apologize, and will be happy to move it.

The City of St. Charles Parks and Recreation Department is not responsible for lost, stolen or damaged Geocache/letterbox, their contents or use.

Reference: **Official Geocaching Placement Permit # \_\_\_\_\_** .

[www.stcharlesparks.com](http://www.stcharlesparks.com)

**City of St. Charles Parks & Recreation**  
**Geocaching Application**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Other #: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Cache Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Park Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Coordinates / Location Description: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Alternative Coordinates: \_\_\_\_\_

Type / Description of Container: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Owner: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Permit #: \_\_\_\_\_ (To be assigned by Park)

Approved / Denied \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Circle One)

Signature

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

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