



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
DIVISION OF PARKS AND FORESTRY
STATE PARK SERVICE



POLICY

NUMBER:

2.37

DATE: December 10, 2014

SUBJECT:

Geocaching, Waymarking and other Global Positioning System (GPS)-based Recreational activities (collectively referred to as Geocaching in this policy document) in New Jersey State Parks, Forests, Recreation Areas, Historic Sites and Monuments (collectively “parks”).

INTRODUCTION:

Geocaching is becoming an increasingly popular activity using a Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) or mobile device and other navigational techniques to hide and seek containers or “geocaches” or “caches.” “Geocache” and “geocaching” will refer to all GPS-based recreational activities.

BACKGROUND:

Geocaches have been placed without approval, in some cases, throughout lands administered by the Division of Parks and Forestry and some may be placed in sensitive natural, historic or cultural areas. Caches may also contain inappropriate or dangerous items; be placed in dangerous or inappropriate areas and in locations which may invite the public into where we do not inspect for hazards. These activities have the potential to cause injuries to participants or lead them into unsafe situations; cause serious adverse impacts to park resources; and otherwise violate State Park Service policies.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines to minimize impact on the natural, historic, and cultural resources managed by the Division of Parks and Forestry, State Park Service, while providing safe opportunities for those who wish to hide or seek containers or caches throughout State Park Service lands.

DEFINITIONS:

Traditional Cache - a traditional cache is a small waterproof container containing a logbook where the geocacher enters the date they found it and signs it with their established code name. Larger containers such as plastic storage containers (i.e. tupperware), or ammunition boxes can also contain items for trading, usually toys or trinkets of little value.

Multi-cache - involves two or more locations. The final location is a physical container. There are many variations, but most Multi-caches provide a hint to find the second cache and the second cache provides a hint for the third box, etc.

Letterbox - Letterboxing is similar to Geocaching, but you use a series of clues to find a container. Once you find the container (or letterbox), you take a carved stamp from the box and stamp your personal logbook. You then take your carved stamp and stamp the letterbox’s log book.

Waymark or Virtual - A Virtual Cache is about discovering a location rather than a container. The requirements for logging a Virtual Cache vary—you may be required to answer a question about the location, take a picture, complete a task, etc. In any case, you must visit the coordinates before you can post your log.

Event/CITO - An Event Cache is a gathering of local geocachers or geocaching organizations to discuss geocaching. The Event Cache page specifies a time for the event and provides coordinates to its location. After the event, the cache is archived. CITO - is a variation an event caching and is a coordinated activity of trash pickup and other maintenance to improve the environment.

Mystery - This form of geocache may involve complicated puzzles that you will first need to solve to determine the coordinates. Mystery/Puzzle Caches often become the staging ground for new and unique geocaches that do not fit in another category.

Webcam - These are caches that use existing web cameras placed by individuals or agencies that monitor various areas like parks or business complexes. The idea is to get yourself in front of the camera to log your visit. The challenging part is that you need to call a friend to look up the web site that displays the camera shot. You will need to have them to save the picture in order to log the cache or use your own mobile device. One can take a snapshot of the webcam video via their smartphone or tablet.

IMPLEMENTATION:

A “Geocache Identification Permit” is required for all those seeking to hide a container or cache within any Division of Parks and Forestry, State Park Service lands. There will be no specific fee for this permit or activity. Any placement of a cache on land administered by the State Park Service is unauthorized and is subject to removal from its location unless it complies with this policy.

GUIDELINES:

Any person who wishes to place a cache on State Park Service lands is required to complete and have approved the Geocache Identification Permit. A Geocache Identification Permit Approval Number will be assigned to permits that have been approved.

All proposed GPS activities must be appropriate to the park and not impair or cause unacceptable impacts to park resources and values.

The organization or person applying for a permit must provide valid contact information such as address, telephone number, email address, the GPS coordinates for the proposed cache location, a description of the proposed cache and the website address on which the cache will be posted (Geocaching.com, Navicache.com, etc.)

The Park Superintendent/Area Manager or their designee will review the permit to ensure the location of the cache is compatible with other park activities and to ensure that it will not cause any damage to natural, historic or geological features.

Caches may not be buried. Shovels, trowels or other pointy objects are not to be used to dig or break ground, either to hide or to find the cache. Vegetation, stones, logs, etc., shall not be disturbed when selecting a location.

The cache may not be placed in or near any natural or historically sensitive areas, state designated Natural Areas, in lakes, stream banks or under water; wetlands, historic sites, exemplary natural communities, ecologically sensitive areas, on cliffs, underground, in unsafe areas or within or attached to any State Park Service structures or facilities unless otherwise approved by the Superintendent/Area Manager or designee. Caches hidden in trees or hung from branches should be placed no more than six (6) feet from the ground. Trees may not be cut and no objects can be permanently affixed to the tree.

There shall be no marks on any natural or physical features to aid in the location of a cache.

Caches shall not be attached to any historic, archaeological or geologic feature.

Cache containers must be non-breakable, have some form of latch or other closing mechanism to prohibit content exposure to wildlife, and must be approved by the Park Superintendent or designee.

Those seeking to place caches or search for caches within any Division of Parks and Forestry, State Park Service lands shall familiarize themselves with the park area map and caches are only permitted to be placed within ten (10) feet from an authorized trail or road shoulder or at the Superintendent/Area Manager or designee's discretion based upon site conditions and sensitive habitats. Permittee should be familiar with seasonal changes to a proposed cache location prior to requesting permit.

Each approved Geocache Identification Permit will be given a Geocache Identification Permit Approval Number consisting of the park initials followed by the year, month, and day of the approval and the sequential number of approvals for that day, using four digits for year and two digits for month, day, and approval. For example, the sixth geocache permitted approved on September 3, 2014, at Island Beach State Park would have an approval permit number of IBSP2014090306.

Geocaches must be labeled as a geocache and include the Geocache Identification Permit Approval Number and permit expiration date on the outside of the container.

Internet listings for approved geocaches must include the following phrase: "this geocache has been placed with permission in an area administered by the New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry. All State Park Service policies apply. Geocache Identification Permit Approval Number: (insert permit number). Permit expires on: (insert date)"

If a permit holder wants to change the location of the cache, a new permit must be issued and the original permit canceled.

All geocache activities must be conducted during posted park hours. Internet listings for geocaches must be available for viewing without fee. No premium or paid member geocaches will be permitted.

Caches may not contain inappropriate, offensive or dangerous items. All contents of a cache shall be subject to inspection by park staff at any time. Park staff has the authority to remove any items that are deemed unacceptable or that is in violation of this policy, which may cause the cache permit to be revoked and the cache to be removed.

Cache owners must physically inspect their caches a minimum of twice a year. Cache owners must post a note indicating inspection on the internet cache description after the cache has been inspected.

Caches may remain at the approved location for no more than 3 years at which time it must be removed and the site restored to its original condition or a new permit must be requested. The Park Superintendent/Area Manager shall be advised in writing of the removal. This will control cache abandonment and assist in preventing extensive degradation of trails.

Unauthorized geocaches on State Park Service lands will be removed and treated as abandoned property.

Permittee is responsible for deleting the site location(s) from all websites and publications within seven days of removal of the cache.

Geocache permit application may be obtained online at: njparksandforests.org or by contacting the park office directly. Individual parks may set hours/days when permits may be received. A review period may be required.

Metal detectors may not be used in cache searches.

Failure to comply with this policy directive will result in the revocation of effective geocaching permits and online cache/waymark listings. Continued failure to comply with these guidelines will prevent the issuance of any further permits to the non-compliant group or individual.

If geocaching or waymarking activities as a whole are found to have a negative impact on park resources or if safety becomes an issue in geocache/waymark searches, the Park Superintendent/Area Manager or designee may ban geocaching from certain areas or from the entire park.

The Park Superintendent/Area Manager or designee will determine the appropriate number of manageable caches and waymarks at each location.

All caches placed in state parks prior to the implementation of this policy must comply with this policy within 120 days of implementation or they may be removed by park staff or designees.

New geocache applications may not be reviewed until 120 days after implementation of this policy.

This policy is effective immediately.



Mark Texel, Director
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