



June 15, 2009

To Whom it May Concern:

Geocaching is an opportunity and incentive for New Yorkers to get outside and enjoy the benefits of our natural resources. As such, this activity is consistent with Commissioner Grannis's goal to "Connect New Yorkers to Nature." As you know, we have previously identified geocaching as an acceptable activity on most state forests and I encourage you and your colleagues to avail themselves of this additional state land. Whereas geocaching may also be an acceptable activity at many Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), it does pose some potential concerns that need to be addressed.

WMAs are managed first and foremost for fish and wildlife and that is the overarching consideration in what activities may be allowed at the sites. Most of our WMAs support some sensitive habitats, such as wetlands, and these areas are not conducive to human traffic and disturbance. Some seasons are of particular concern, such as the breeding season (spring through fall).

Therefore I am identifying a few specific limitations for use of WMAs for geocaching:

- Before creating a new cache, the responsible sponsor must contact the Regional Wildlife Manager for that area to determine whether there are any site-specific or seasonal limitations that need to be factored into the siting of the cache. Approval must be given in writing to establish the cache. Some WMAs simply may not be acceptable cache sites.
- Limit caches to occasional use, not event-type caches where there is a large-scale or timed event, which is more likely to provide disturbance to the wildlife. This is particularly critical for the spring through fall when breeding is occurring.
- Preference is given to virtual caches where coordinates are given to a specific natural or geologic feature and there is no physical material left at the site.
- Some caches may require Temporary Revocable Permits (TRPs) depending on the conditions of the site. The sponsor would be required to apply and receive the TRP before siting the cache.

Please be aware that most of our WMAs are used for hunting and that at certain times of the year geocachers may choose to limit their activities at these sites. Certainly wearing conspicuous clothing and exercising extra caution would be appropriate.

People using WMAs should exercise good stewardship principles. Keep to trails when possible and avoid creating footpaths that create erosion. Check clothing and footwear for clinging seeds and plant material to prevent the spread of invasive species. Respect other users and do not disturb wildlife. Carry trash out and help pick up any left by previous, less respectful users.

Although WMAs were purchased over time with a suite of funding sources, much of the funding for management comes from the sporting licenses purchased by hunters and anglers or from similar federal funds. Geocachers who do not buy sporting licenses can help “pay the way” by purchasing a voluntary Habitat and Access Stamp from their local town clerk or wherever licenses are sold.

I'd also be interested in having stewardship suggestions posted on your website, if possible, about good manners in the woods and the role that WMAs play in managing wildlife in New York.

Good luck with your endeavors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patricia Riexinger', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Patricia Riexinger
Director
Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources