

Michigan

Regional Geocaching Policies Wiki

An evolving, community-created wiki on where you can and can't hide geocaches.

COVID-19 Information

The situation concerning mandates surrounding COVID-19 is updating rapidly. Geocaching HQ and your Michigan Review team urges all event hosts and attendees to prioritize the safety of themselves and their attendees.

From Geocaching HQ

At this time, we advise Event hosts to consult their regional health authorities to understand the guidance regarding gatherings of people. Generally, Geocaching HQ leaves the decision to Event hosts on whether to continue hosting the event and to attendees on whether they will participate. In certain cases, we may suspend publishing new events and/or may disable, retract, or archive already published events, in accordance with guidance from health authorities.

Do not rely on this information being the most up-to-date, but I will try.

Currently in Michigan:

*As of June 22, 2021, all gathering restrictions have been lifted, both indoor and outdoor. Masks restrictions have also been lifted statewide, though some businesses may still require them. ***Please verify with your chosen venue that they are indeed open to and allowing gatherings to take place. Ultimately, per the regular [geocaching guidelines](#), you as the organizer are responsible to make sure you follow all state and local guidelines.****



Geocaching Guidelines on Events

Events must comply with health and safety guidelines, as well as all local laws. Event cache owners are responsible for ensuring the number of people in attendance is in accordance with any local restrictions on gatherings.

Table of Contents

- 1 COVID-19 Information
 - 1.1 Currently in Michigan:
- 2 The biggest issues that prevent a cache from being published:
 - 2.1 1. Proximity
 - 2.2 2. Vacation Cache/No Home Coordinates
 - 2.3 3. Waypoints Needed
 - 2.4 4. Cemetery Caches
 - 2.5 5. Virtual Caches
 - 2.6 6. Commercial
 - 2.7 7. Agenda
 - 2.8 8. Permit Required
 - 2.9 9. Forbidden areas
 - 2.10 10. Restricted Areas
- 3 Other Issues/Suggestions:
 - 3.1 Bad Ideas:
 - 3.2 Attributes:
 - 3.3 Additional Logging Requirements:
 - 3.4 Challenge Caches: (Help Center Article)
 - 3.5 Handicap Accessible:
 - 3.6 Cache disabled for an extended period.
 - 3.7 Reply by e-mail
 - 3.8 Reviewer Notes
 - 3.9 Geo-Trash

Michigan Reviewers

-Rusty- (Northern LP & UP)

-DeRock- (South East)

-Tiki- (South Central)

-allenite- (South West)

- [Reviewer Region Map](#)

About This Guide

The local laws and guidelines for geocaching placement vary from place to place. As community reviewers learn geocache placement policies for a certain location, they can add it here. This site may not be a complete or accurate list of land policies. These policies are made by the land owner or manager, they are neither the reviewer's nor Geocaching HQ's. This guide is just for reference, if no policies for the area you're looking for are listed, that doesn't mean no policies exist. You must still obtain permission to place your geocache from the landowner or land manager, comply with all applicable laws, and follow the [Geocaching Listing Requirements](#).

If you have an update, email the community reviewer(s) listed.

- 3.10 [Adoption](#)
- 3.11 [Pre-Review](#)
- 3.12 [Publish at a specific date/time:](#)
- 3.13 [Large series of caches](#)
- 3.14 [Relocating a cache](#)
- 3.15 [Changing cache type](#)
- 3.16 [Life outside caching](#)
- 4 [Happy Caching!](#)



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And, you agree to keep content current by checking back regularly for updates.

The biggest issues that prevent a cache from being published:

1. Proximity

Putting your cache too near an existing cache. This includes stages of other multi caches and solutions to other puzzle caches. Guidelines require 528ft (0.1mi) separation.

2. Vacation Cache/No Home Coordinates

Placing caches too far from home. We check the distance from your home area to the cache, as large distances have historically caused maintenance issues. If you place a cache a good distance from your home, please indicate your "Maintenance Plan" in a reviewer note. That is, if you frequent the area, or have someone locally set up to watch over the cache for you.

3. Waypoints Needed

Please use the "Add/Edit waypoints" tool for the stages and final coordinates of a multi-cache or the solution coordinates for a mystery/unknown cache. These points must also comply with the listing guidelines, and are then protected from future caches being placed too near them.

4. Cemetery Caches

Be aware that most all Michigan townships and municipalities have ordinances that close all cemeteries at dark unless otherwise posted. It's helpful to finders if you include a note on the cache page that this cache is not available at night, and set at least one of the attributes (Not available at night, or Not available 24/7).

5. Virtual Caches

The Virtual cache type (a cache without a log book) has not been allowed for new caches for some time now. The existing Virtual caches are grandfathered in but have special maintenance requirements and are being archived regularly. All new caches must have a physical log book.

6. Commercial

A cache can be deemed too-commercial for listing.

In general,

- avoid using a business name in the title and on the cache page
- please do not include any links to a business website or websites that have commercial content
- do not include any business promotional material on the cache page including logos, menus, and endorsements

Caches placed inside a business or that require interaction with employees cannot be published.

Commercial requirements also apply to non-profit businesses as well.

For Event caches,

Geocaching allows:

- mention of event coins that are trackable at GC.com
- mention of a business in the page text
- mention of sponsors without links

7. Agenda

Caches that appear to be promoting an agenda are not allowed. This may include religious, environmental, military, political, charitable or other social agenda, etc. Geocaching is supposed to be a light and fun activity.

8. Permit Required

Placing caches in one of these areas require a permit:

- [Michigan State Parks and State Recreation Areas](#)
- [Huron-Clinton Metroparks maps](#)
- [Oakland County Parks map](#)
- [Ann Arbor City Parks map list](#)

- Sterling Heights (all parks along the Clinton River require a permit from the Parks and Recreation Dept) (Clinton River, Clinton River North, Dodge)
- Washtenaw County Parks and Preserves [Geocaching Policy and Guidelines](#) and links to [map](#) and permit. Please inquire at the park office for that park.
- **National Parks/Lakeshores:** Cachers are encouraged to approach their local National Park staff and attempt to establish a good working relationship on a cache by cache basis.
 - Isle Royale National Park [map](#)
 - Keweenaw National Historical Park
 - Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore [map](#)
 - River Raisin National Battlefield Park
 - Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore [map](#)

9. Forbidden areas

Caches are generally not allowed in the following areas, exceptions may be available from the local land /unit manager:

- **National and State Wilderness Areas**
 - [Beaver Basin Wilderness \(map\)](#)
 - [Big Island Lake Wilderness \(map\)](#)
 - [Delirium Wilderness \(map\)](#)
 - [Horseshoe Bay Wilderness \(map\)](#)
 - [Huron Islands Wilderness \(map\)](#)
 - [Isle Royale Wilderness \(map\)](#)
 - [Mackinac Wilderness \(map\)](#)
 - [McCormick Wilderness \(map\)](#)
 - [Michigan Islands Wilderness \(map\)](#) - Scarecrow islands (Lake Huron near Alpena), and Pismire, and Shoe islands (in Lake Michigan near Beaver Island)
 - [Nordhouse Dunes Wilderness \(map\)](#)
 - [Rock River Canyon Wilderness \(map\)](#)
 - [Round Island Wilderness \(map\)](#)
 - [Seney Wilderness \(map\)](#)
 - [Sleeping Bear Dunes Wilderness \(map\)](#)
 - [Sturgeon River Gorge Wilderness \(map\)](#)
 - [Sylvania Wilderness \(map\)](#)
- **National Wildlife Refuges**
 - Huron
 - Seney [map](#)
 - Harbor Island (off the northwest shore of Drummond Island in Potagannissing Bay) [map](#)
 - Michigan Islands (8 islands in Lake Michigan and Huron. Thunder Bay and , Big and Little Charity islands (Saginaw Bay), and Gull, .
 - Shiawassee [map](#)
 - Detroit River [map](#)
- **Michigan State Game Areas and Wildlife Areas - [Map](#)**
 - Adams Township State Game Area in Hillsdale County [map](#)
 - Allegan State Game Area in Allegan County [map](#)
 - Almer Township State Game Area in Tuscola County [map](#)
 - Backus Creek State Game Area in Roscommon County [map](#)
 - Barry State Game Area in Barry County, Main Unit [map](#), - Fish Lake Unit [map](#)
 - Betsie River State Game Area in Benzie County [map](#)
 - Blendon Township State Game Area in Ottawa County County [map](#)
 - Brookfield Township No.1 State Game Area in Huron County [map](#)
 - Brookfield Township No.2 State Game Area in Huron County [map](#)
 - Cannonsburg State Game Area in Kent County [map](#)
 - Cass City State Game Area in Tuscola County [map](#)
 - Chelsea State Game Area in Wastenaw County [map](#)
 - Chesterfield Township State Game Area in Macomb County [map](#)
 - Columbia Township State Game Area in Tuscola County [map](#)
 - Crane Pond State Game Area in Cass County [map](#)
 - Crow Island State Game Area in Bay and Saginaw Counties [map](#)
 - Dansville State Game Area in Ingham County [map](#)
 - Deford State Game Area in Tuscola County [map](#)
 - Denmark Township State Game Area in Tuscola County [map](#)
 - Edmore State Game Area in Isabella and Montcalm Counties [map](#)
 - Elmwood Township State Game Area in Tuscola County [map](#)
 - Erie State Game Area in Monroe County [map](#)
 - Fabius Lake State Game Area in St. Joseph County [map](#)
 - Flat River State Game Area in Ionia and Montcalm Counties [map](#)
 - Flynn State Game Area in Huron and Tuscola Counties [map](#)
 - Fulton State Game Area in Kalamazoo County [map](#)
 - Gagetown State Game Area in Huron and Tuscola Counties [map](#)
 - Goose Lake State Game Area in Wastenaw County No map available
 - Gourdneck State Game Area in Kalamazoo County [map](#)

- Grand Haven State Game Area in Ottawa County [map](#)
- Grand River State Game Area in Ionia County [map](#)
- Grass Lake Unit State Game Area in Jackson County [map](#)
- Gratiot-Saginaw State Game Area in Gratiot and Saginaw Counties [map](#)
- Gregory State Game Area in Livingston County [map](#)
- Haymarsh Lake State Game Area in Mecosta County [map](#)
- Hillcrest State Game Area in Livingston County [map](#)
- Horseshoe Lake State Game Area in Oakland County [map](#)
- Keeler State Game Area in Van Buren County No map available
- Langston State Game Area in Montcalm County [map](#)
- Lapeer State Game Area in Lapeer County [map](#)
- Leidy Lake State Game Area in St. Joseph County [map](#)
- Lost Nation State Game Area in Hillsdale County [map](#)
- Manistee River State Game Area in Manistee County [map](#)
- Maple River State Game Area in Clinton, Gratiot and Ionia Counties [map](#)
- Maple-River - Gratiot-Saginaw State Game Area in Gratiot County [map](#)
- Martiny Lake State Game Area in Mecosta County [map](#)
- Middleville State Game Area in Barry County [map](#)
- Minden City State Game Area in Sanilac County [map](#)
- Murphy Lake State Game Area in Tuscola County [map](#)
- Muskegon State Game Area in Muskegon and Newaygo Counties Main (western) [map](#), East Part - [map](#)
- Muskrat Lake State Game Area in Clinton County [map](#)
- Oak Grove State Game Area in Livingston County [map](#)
- Olive Township State Game Area in Ottawa County [map](#)
- Oliver Township State Game Area in Huron County No map available
- Onsted State Game Area in Lenawee County [map](#)
- Ottawa County State Game Areas in Ottawa County [map](#)
- Pentwater River State Game Area in Oceana County [map](#)
- Pere Marquette State Game Area in Mason County No map available
- Petersburg State Game Area in Monroe County [map](#)
- Petobego State Game Area in Antrim and Grand Traverse Counties No map available
- Pinconning Township State Game Area in Bay County No map available
- Pointe Mouillee State Game Area in Monroe and Wayne Counties [map](#)
- Port Huron State Game Area in St. Clair County [map](#)
- Portland State Game Area in Clinton and Ionia Counties [map](#)
- Rogue River State Game Area in Kent County [map](#), Extension - [map](#)
- Rush Lake State Game Area in Huron County [map](#)
- Sanilac State Game Area in Sanilac County [map](#)
- Saranac-Lowell State Game Area in Ionia and Kent County [map](#)
- Sharonville State Game Area in Jackson and Washtenaw Counties [map](#)
- Shiawassee River State Game Area in Saginaw County [map](#)
- Somerset State Game Area in Hillsdale County [map](#)
- St. Clair Township State Game Area in Macomb County No map available
- Stanton State Game Area in Montcalm County [map](#)
- Three Rivers State Game Area in Cass and St. Joseph Counties [map](#)
- Tuscola State Game Area in Tuscola County [map](#)
- Vassar State Game Area in Tuscola County [map](#)
- Verona State Game Area in Huron County [map](#)
- Vestaburg State Game Area in Montcalm County [map](#)

10. Restricted Areas

(Special Permission or Circumstance Required)

- Airports
- Highway bridges
- Railroad - 150ft from all active lines
- Schools
- **Ottawa County Parks**
 - **Prohibited Areas (Except Earthcaches - see bullet point below):**
 - Marne Bog
 - Olive Shores
 - Rosy Mound Natural Area
 - Historic Ottawa Beach Parks, including Mt. Pisgah, Black Lake Boardwalk, and Holland Harbor Fishing Access
 - ***There are a couple of existing caches that are in a couple of these areas that the parks department has graciously grandfathered in as these sites have not (yet) shown signs of causing damage or destruction to the surrounding environment but NO NEW CACHES will be allowed in the prohibited parks.***
 - Ottawa County has opened the remaining county park areas ([Map](#)) up for geocaching with some restrictions found here: [Park System Policies](#)
 - Caches must be placed no more than 10 feet away from a designated trail in a "Park" and must be more than 50 feet from a property boundary in an "Open Space." List which property is classified as which type is found in "map" link above.

- Containers must clearly be identifiable as a geocache using the word "geocache" or the Geocaching logo on the outside of the container and must be no bigger than a standard brick or 20oz soda bottle.
- Caches are not permitted in sensitive areas (wetlands, fragile dunes, steep slopes, protected areas and river banks)
- Placements that cause damage to park amenities or natural features are prohibited such as the use of screws or nails into trees, signposts, kiosks, or buildings.
- Earthcaches:
 - EarthCaches are permitted at all Ottawa County Parks and Open Spaces, however, these caches must be completely virtual in nature with nothing physically left on park property, must be accessible without leaving the trail, and all questions must be preapproved by park staff by emailing ocparks@miottawa.org

Other Issues/Suggestions:

Bad Ideas:

The following places have historically been bad ideas for cache hides. While allowed by the guidelines, please think twice about the types of cachers that will be hunting your cache, and get adequate permission for your hides. In general, these are bad ideas:

- Playgrounds - Many cachers are single adult males and get parents rather upset if they are hanging around playgrounds looking suspicious.
- Post Offices - Postal areas are very sensitive due to problems with letter contents, and it's illegal to hide on on a postal box.
- Banks - Bank security does not hesitate to call law enforcement about suspicious activity.

Attributes:

Please take a minute when creating your cache page to add some attributes to your listing.

Additional Logging Requirements:

Additional Logging Requirements (ALR) are physical caches that **REQUIRE** a finder to do anything more than just sign the log, such as take a picture, email the owner, or some other activity be performed in order to claim credit for the find. As of April 4, 2009, ALRs are no longer permitted. Geocaches can be logged online as Found once the physical log has been signed. This guideline change applies immediately to all logs written from April 4, 2009 and going forward. Older caches with ALRs are **NOT** grandfathered under the older guideline. The lone exception to ALRs, Challenge Caches, are discussed below.

Challenge Caches: ([Help Center Article](#))

A Challenge Cache requires that geocachers meet a geocaching-related qualification or series of tasks before finding the cache. **An older iteration of challenges existed prior to April 21, 2015 that may not adhere to the following, these are for the most part grandfathered.** If you are thinking of creating a Challenge Cache, please keep the following in mind, challenge caches...

1. **MUST** include a Challenge Checker ([Help Center Article](#))
2. **MUST BE** geocaching related
3. **MUST BE** reasonably attainable by a number of geocachers - you may be asked for a list, if we are unsure
4. **SHOULD NOT** based on non-accomplishments, such as DNFs
5. **SHOULD NOT** require cachers to log caches that are disabled or archived
6. **SHOULD NOT** require cachers to hide cache
7. **SHOULD BE** independent of the actions of other cachers. (FTFs, Lonely)
8. **SHOULD NOT** require cachers to find an explicit list of caches or one's own hides
9. **SHOULD NOT** be a book-keeping exercise with overly complex requirements requiring a bottle of aspirin to understand

Handicap Accessible:

Caches currently published with a terrain rating of 1.0 are required to carry the Handicap Accessible attribute. This means the location can be reached and the cache hide is retrievable from a wheelchair (not on the ground or up high). Historically, this has not always been the case, please consider adjusting older caches you may own to include the attribute or adjust the terrain rating. Caches may be rated higher than a 1.0 and carry the Handicap Accessible attribute.

Cache disabled for an extended period.

The "Temporarily Disable" feature that allows you to disable a cache is meant to be used for no more than a few weeks. A disabled cache will continually show up in search lists from the browser, and while there's no cache to be found, it prevents someone from placing a new cache in the area that others can find. As reviewers, we realize that you may not be able to get to your cache right away, so we generally wait to post a note until the cache has been disabled for an extended period or the cache is brought to our attention. If there is no response to our note within a 30 days, the cache will likely be archived. If there are extenuating circumstances, please post a note to your cache page. We look for notes posted in response to mine before archiving any cache. ***Please be sure to post a note to the cache page, this state has multiple reviewers, an email will only be seen by one and may result in an archival, if another reviewer looks at it.***

Reply by e-mail

When contacting one of Michigan's reviewers, please do so by email and not the internal message system. Also, do not reply to the automatic e-mail sent out by the Geocaching.com notification system in response to a log. This will reply to an unmonitored email maintained by HQ. We will not see it. When contacting a reviewer, please e-mail us directly or via our profile (Send Email). ***Please include the GC# when e-mailing.***

Reviewer Notes

We do not get automatic notification of Reviewer Notes placed on caches. Please e-mail if you've left a note you'd like us to see. ***Please include the GC# when e-mailing.***

Geo-Trash

If you feel a geocache has been so neglected that it has become more litter than cache or if a cache appears to be totally missing and the owner is unresponsive to either an e-mail or posted notes on the cache page, you can bring this to our attention by either

- Select the "(!) Report a problem" when logging the cache, then selecting "Cache should be archived." We do get notifications of these "Needs Archived" logs and will address them as time allows
- E-mail us the GC# of the cache

Adoption

If you would like to adopt a cache, you must make contact with the cache owner. Have them go to www.geocaching.com/adopt and set up the adoption to you. If the owner is gone (no longer active) and is non-responsive to your e-mail, sadly the cache is unable to be transferred, so it's your choice if you decide to help maintain it. Archived caches cannot be adopted.

Pre-Review

If you are planning a cache and wish to verify the location ahead of time, or possibly assemble the cache page in steps, please uncheck the "Yes, it's ready for review" box. If you'd like us to check out the listing before you place the cache, just e-mail us with the GC#. Creating the page ahead of time also has the added feature of "reserving the location" for a few weeks while you complete your cache. Normally, caches are expected to be in-place when they are submitted for review.

Publish at a specific date/time:

If you would like your listing to be published at a special date/time, please be sure to give us at least a full week's notice. We try to accommodate special requests but sometimes things just don't happen as we plan. We can't guarantee a specific time, but we're usually within a couple of hours.

Large series of caches

If you are planning on a large series of caches, please let us know ahead of time. This is so that we can both alert you to potential problems with completing your series and so we can pre-review at least some of them before a mass release date. We ask that caches be submitted far enough ahead of time that we have at least 1 day's notice for every 5 caches you submit.

Relocating a cache

If you relocate a cache, you can change the coordinates up to 528ft (0.1mi) via your cache page. If you need to move it further, please send one of us reviewers a note with the new coordinates and GC# and we can change it for you. Hopefully the new position doesn't encroach on another cache or it's stages, or we may not accept the new location.

Changing cache type

Generally, cache type changes (Traditional -> Multi, Puzzle -> Traditional, etc) are discouraged. Many users are very particular about their statistics, and changing the cache type can cause other issues as well. Often, we recommend archiving the old listing, and creating a new one in the same place with the new type. This has the added benefit of bringing cachers back to the area for the new hide. That said, there are valid reasons for changing a type. Contact one of us reviewers and we'll work through it with you.

Life outside caching

Please be kind. Since we are *highly compensated* by geocaching.com for our volunteer efforts, most reviewers need a *second* job to make ends meet. We make our best attempt to reply to your questions and cache submissions within 7 days. Many times we are quicker, however life often gets in the way of caching and reviewing, and we may sometimes take a little longer to get to you.

Happy Caching!