

Geocaching

POLICY

Geocaching involves the placement of a container (a cache) with various items within it in a specific location and then posts the Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates to a website, and another person goes looking for it. This activity started soon after the U.S. Department of Defense turned off the selective availability of the GPS signals in May of 2000. This improved the accuracy of most recreational GPS units to 10 - 20 meters. Contents of the cache can be anything and typically involves the exchange of items. Another aspect of this activity is virtual caching. This does not involve the actual placement of a cache; rather, coordinates are provided for a specific location where there is a unique natural feature, park sign, etc.

Geocaches have been placed in our State Parks, Recreation Areas and Boating facilities without the approval of unit staff. These placements have resulted in the following concerns:

- Caches have been placed in sensitive natural or cultural areas.
- Caches may contain inappropriate or dangerous items.
- Caches have lead to the creation of spur trails resulting in resource damage and the possibility of visitors leaving established trails and becoming lost.
- Caches may be placed in dangerous or inappropriate areas such as on a cliff or underwater.
- The location of a cache may invite the public into an area we do not inspect for hazards.

PROCEDURE

In consideration of the above concerns it has been decided to manage geocaching through the use permit procedure. If this activity is found to have a negative impact on the unit resources or presents public safety issues, the Unit Supervisor may ban, with District Supervisor approval, geocaching from specific unit areas or the entire facility. The following conditions are to be addressed when issuing a geocaching use permit:

- Virtual caches should be encouraged in lieu of physical caches.
- Physical caches will require a \$35 fee use permit fee.
- Use permits may be issued for a period not to exceed one year for up to three physical caches at any single administrative unit (Park, Recreation Area, and their related units).
- \$35 permit fee is to be waived for virtual caches.

- The person applying for the permit shall provide a valid address and telephone number as well as a location specification and listing of initial cache items.
- The cache placement location, including GPS coordinates, must be stated on the permit and approved by the Unit Supervisor to minimize undesirable impacts to cultural and natural resources as well as minimize hazards to the public.
- A specific time period when a cache may be left in place shall be designated to minimize the creation of spur trails. At the end of the designated time period the cache is to be removed or moved and the web site posting retired by the permit holder. The actual time period the cache is permitted to be in one place will be determined by the Unit Supervisor, not to exceed four months.
- Caches may not be buried, nor may vegetation, logs, stones, etc. be disturbed when selecting cache locations.
- Cache containers are to be transparent and have some form of latch or other closure to deter wildlife.
- Contents of the cache are subject to inspection by park staff at any time. Field staff will have the authority to remove any items deemed unacceptable. Examples include food, medications of any type, pornography, weapons of any type, etc. A log book is required and to be supplied by the permittee.
- Staff will be authorized to remove any cache not permitted by 06/01/2004.
- Failure to abide by use permit conditions may jeopardize the ability of that individual to obtain future permits for caches. Language to that effect should be included in the use permit conditions.

Geocaches and their contents that are removed by unit staff are to be documented in an incident report. Unit staff should periodically review the geocaching websites to monitor caches placed within their unit.

Geocaching web sites are:

www.geocaching.com

www.mi-geocaching.org