

**New York State Office of Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**

**GUIDANCE DOCUMENT:
GEOCACHING IN STATE PARKS AND HISTORIC SITES**

The mission of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) is to provide safe and enjoyable recreational and interpretive opportunities for all New York State residents and visitors and to be responsible stewards of our valuable natural, historic, and cultural resources. Geocaching is a recognized recreational activity. In order to protect environmental resources and ensure the safety of park visitors, the agency has established a permit system for this activity.

Geocaching is an outdoor activity in which the participants use a Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver to place “geocaches” or “caches” and post the GPS coordinates on the internet. Cache-seekers then use their GPS units to locate the site. Some caches are small containers with a variety of items. Visitors to caches can take a few items as souvenirs and leave new items for others to find. Others are virtual caches, where the “treasure” may be simply in the beauty or uniqueness of the site.

Geocaching provides park visitors an opportunity to learn about nature and enjoy the outdoors. Left unmanaged however, this activity has the potential to damage natural and historic resources and can pose a possible risk to visitors. Placing caches in locations such as cliffs or underwater is prohibited. Items must not be left in caches that are either dangerous to visitors or inappropriate for children. Caches shall not be placed in ecologically sensitive areas, or in areas that are far from established trails, because of the potential environmental damage from trampling. No food or materials attractive to wildlife shall be cached and no cache shall be buried.

Any visitor wishing to place a cache must complete an application for a geocache placement permit, which requires review and authorization by the park manager or designee. The permit process will provide for review of all geocache placements to ensure the protection of natural, historic, and archeological resources, and the safety and security of park visitors.

Guidelines have been incorporated within the permit. These guidelines provide information regarding the identification of sensitive natural, cultural, and archeological resources to be protected; the maximum number of permits allowed in a facility; guidance for placement, identification, and documentation of caches; restrictions on cache contents and maintenance; safety measures; and authority for removal of caches and notification of owner if necessary.

Any questions regarding this guidance document should be directed to the Deputy Commissioner for Operations or Deputy Commissioner for Natural Resources.

This Guidance Document rescinds and replaces the agency's previous "Geocaching Policy" dated December 14, 2004.

Dated: September 27, 2010



Carol Ash
Commissioner

GEOCACHING GUIDANCE FOR FACILITY MANAGERS

September 27, 2010

The following guidelines are designed to assist Facility Managers in implementing this Geocaching Guidance Document.

- Geocaching will not be permitted in the following State Historic Sites and State Historic Parks:
 - Bennington Battlefield
 - Clinton House
 - Crailo
 - Darwin Martin House
 - Crown Point
 - Fort Ontario
 - Ganondagan
 - Grant Cottage
 - Guy Park Manor
 - John Burroughs Memorial
 - New Windsor Cantonment
 - Parrot Hall
 - Philipse Manor Hall
 - Planting Fields Arboretum
 - Schuyler Mansion
 - Senate House
 - Walt Whitman Birthplace
 - Washington's Headquarters

- Geocaching will not be permitted in the following State Parks (including NYPA lands) along the Niagara Gorge due to security and safety concerns:
 - Earl W. Brydges Artpark
 - Devils Hole
 - Fort Niagara
 - Niagara Falls
 - Reservoir
 - Whirlpool
 - Niagara Gorge Trails

- For State Parks, Historic Sites, and Historic Parks that may allow geocaching, caches shall not be located within the following areas:
 - Areas that are not normally open to the public.
 - Golf courses.
 - Campsites (within camping loops).
 - Soccer fields/Athletic fields/Softball fields/Play fields.
 - Swimming pool complexes.
 - Reservable picnic areas.
 - Maintenance complexes.
 - Park Police compounds.
 - Park roads and parkways.
 - Other areas identified by the Facility Manager.
 - In areas with sensitive natural and/or cultural resources.
 - In or within 20 feet of any park structure.
 - Near gorges or steep cliffs or other areas that may pose a safety concern.
- OPRHP has developed a written permit form (available in PDF format) that is required for each geocache installed on lands under the agency's jurisdiction.
- The Facility Manager approves the location of any permitted cache site.
- There will be no charge for a permit. The term of a permit is limited to two years to reduce any potential environmental impact at a cache site. OPRHP may renew expired permits for cache sites for an additional two years if park staff have inspected the site and determined that no site impacts have occurred.
- The permit only gives the user the right to place a cache within a park. All Park Rules and Regulations still apply. The cache owner will be considered a park user whenever he/she visits the park. Cache access shall be restricted to normal operating hours and seasons.
- Items must not be left in caches that are dangerous to visitors or inappropriate for children. No food or materials attractive to wildlife shall be cached and no cache shall be buried.
- Caches shall not be placed more than 20 feet from a trail unless otherwise approved by the Facility Manager (for example, longer distances may be considered for field areas).
- The permit is for placing a cache by an individual in the park or historic site. It shall not be used for geocaching events (permits for special geocaching events can be obtained by contacting the Facility Manager).
- The Albany Office (Planning Bureau) will produce and provide labels to regional offices that will be required to be placed on all permitted caches.
- Park/site staff and the Albany Office should use the local clubs' and geocaching websites to monitor and track caches placed in State Parks and Historic Sites. All unauthorized caches shall be removed and held at the park office for a minimum of 30 days.

**GEOCACHING GUIDANCE
FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC
September 27, 2010**

The following guidelines are designed to assist geocachers in placing a cache within a State Park or State Historic Site:

- OPRHP has developed a written permit form (available in PDF format) that is required for each geocache installed on lands under the agency's jurisdiction.
- OPRHP's Facility Manager shall be contacted before going out into the Park or Site. The Manager can provide guidance on areas within parks where cache sites are allowed.
- Geocaching will not be permitted in the following State Historic Sites and State Historic Parks:
 - Bennington Battlefield
 - Clinton House
 - Crailo
 - Darwin Martin House
 - Crown Point
 - Fort Ontario
 - Ganondagan
 - Grant Cottage
 - Guy Park Manor
 - John Burroughs Memorial
 - New Windsor Cantonment
 - Parrot Hall
 - Philipse Manor Hall
 - Planting Fields Arboretum
 - Schuyler Mansion
 - Senate House
 - Walt Whitman Birthplace
 - Washington's Headquarters

- Geocaching will not be permitted in the following State Parks (including NYPA lands) along the Niagara Gorge due to security and safety concerns:
 - Earl W. Brydges Artpark
 - Devils Hole
 - Fort Falls
 - Niagara Reservation
 - Reservoir
 - Whirlpool
 - Niagara Gorge Trails

- For State Parks, Historic Sites, and Historic Parks that may allow geocaching, caches shall not be located within the following areas:
 - Golf courses.
 - Campsites (within camping loops).
 - Soccer fields/Athletic fields/Softball fields/Play fields.
 - Swimming pool complexes.
 - Reservable picnic areas.
 - Maintenance complexes.
 - Park Police compounds.
 - Park roads and parkways.
 - Other areas identified by the Facility Manager.
 - In areas with sensitive natural and/or cultural resources.
 - In or within a minimum of 20 feet of any park structure.
 - Near gorges or steep cliffs or other areas that may pose a safety concern.

- No cache shall be buried.

- The Facility Manager approves the location of any permitted cache site.

- The term of a permit is limited to two years to reduce any potential environmental impact at a cache site.

- The permit only gives the user the right to place a cache within a park. All Park Rules and Regulations will still apply. The cache owner will be considered a park user whenever he/she visits the park. Cache access shall be restricted to normal operating hours and seasons.

- Caches shall not be located more than 20 feet from a trail unless otherwise approved by the Facility Manager (for example, longer distances may be considered for field areas).