GEOCACHING POLICY

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Acknowledgement This document represents the efforts of an inter-divisional committee assembled for the purpose of developing an agency-wide policy to address geocaching on all agency lands. Special acknowledgement is extended to Mr. Matt Busch for his participation and contributions to this document on behalf of Geocaching.com and the geocaching community.

Alert Hunting is a primary public use on the majority of lands managed by the Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC). As such, all users are stongly encouraged to be familiar with applicable hunting seasons and to wear a hunter orange cap/hat or other outer garment made of hunter orange material while on WRC lands during open hunting seasons.   WRC lands are also intensively managed and some areas may not be conducive to recreational use while management acitivies are underway. Users are encouraged to avoid areas undergoing active timber harvest, prescribed burns, construction projects and other similar management activities.

INTRODUCTION

Geocaching is a real-world, outdoor treasure hunting game using GPS-enabled devices. Participants navigate to a specific set of GPS coordinates and then attempt to find the geocache (container) hidden at that location (http://www.geocaching.com/guide). Individuals who participate are known as geocachers.

OBJECTIVES

- Minimize potential impacts of geocaching on WRC-allocated lands.

- Where appropriate and compatible, support geocaching as a means of providing for additional recreational use of WRC-allocated lands and to increase awareness of WRC and its mission.

APPLICATION

This policy applies to all WRC-allocated lands and those WRC-managed properties where the landowner has ceded authority for the management of recreational uses to WRC. On those lands which WRC manages under cooperative agreements which do not cede authority for management of recreational uses in general, geocaching activities are subject to control of the landowner.

CONSENT

On WRC-allocated lands, and those WRC-managed properties where the landowner has ceded authority for the management of recreational uses to WRC, blanket permission is granted for the placement of geocaches which comply with the provisions of this policy. No special license, permit or fee is required at this time.

DEFINITIONS

Archive - Archiving a cache removes the listing from public view on Geocaching.com.

Cache (Geocache) – A hidden container that includes, at minimum, a logbook for geocachers to sign.

EarthCache - An EarthCache is a special place that people can visit to learn about a unique geoscience feature of our Earth. EarthCache pages include a set of educational notes along with cache coordinates. Visitors to EarthCaches can see how our planet has been shaped by geological processes, how we manage its resources and how scientists gather evidence to learn about the Earth.

Geocachers – Individuals who participate in placing and/or seeking geocaches.

GPS - GPS stands for Global Positioning System. It is a system of satellites that work with a GPS receiver to determine your location on the planet.

Multi-Cache (Offset Cache) - A Multi-Cache ("multiple") involves two or more locations. The final location is a physical container. There are many variations, but most Multi-Caches have a hint to find the second cache, and the second cache has a hint to the third, and so on. An offset cache (where you go to a location and get hints to the actual cache) is considered a Multi-Cache.

Physical Cache – Cache consisting of a sealed container and containing at least a logbook and pen or pencil.

Stash Note - In geocaching, a stash note is a note left in a cache container to explain geocaching to any non-cachers who might stumble across the cache.

Virtual Cache – Cache that exists in the form of a location where no physical object is left. **Note**: grandfathered caches are still available to find, but have otherwise been retired as a geocache type and may no longer be created on Geocaching.com.

WRC – Wildlife Resources Commission.

<u>GENERAL GUIDELINES</u>

1.   WRC will seek to foster a cooperative partnership with the geocaching community to promote the objectives of this policy

2.   Geocachers are encouraged to practice principles of Leave no Trace outdoor ethics.

3.   The cache owner must assume all responsibility for the accuracy of online content.

4.   WRC accepts no responsibility for the security or maintenance of physical caches.

5.   Geocachers are encouraged to wear blaze orange in areas where hunting is allowed.

6.   All caches must be registered and comply with www.geocaching.com guidelines finder (see ATTACHMENT 1).

7.   Caches may not be used for purposes of advertising, commercial gain, or promotion of political or other social agendas.

8.   Acceptable caches include physical caches, virtual caches, multi-caches, and EarthCaches.

CACHE PLACEMENT

9. Caches may not be placed in areas of known archaeological, historical, or ecological significance.

10. Caches may not be placed in stockpiled construction/maintenance materials such as gravel, lime, sand, etc.

11. Caches may not be placed in locations that present a safety risk to those subsequently attempting to locate the cache. Examples include, but are not limited to caves, rock outcrops, top of ledges, base of overhanging cliffs, elevated positions that require climbing above ground level, blind curves adjacent to roadways, etc.

12. Caches may not be placed within 100 feet of any lake, pond, or waterway.

13. Caches may not be placed in locations where public access is prohibited.

14. Cache placement may not involve alternation of the natural environment, such as digging, cutting, or removal of vegetation from its present location except that dead and down vegetation may be used to help with concealment.

15. Caches may not be placed within or attached to any buildings, piers, docks, or wildlife nest box structures and may not be attached to any other feature by use of nails, screws, bolts, or wire.

16. Caches may not be placed within cavities of any tree.

17. Marks may not be placed on any natural or man-made feature to aid in locating a cache.

18. Caches may not be placed in maintained landscaped areas, wildlife openings, or areas containing agricultural crops. Areas containing blackened tree trucks, which indicate frequent application of prescribed fire, should be avoided.

CACHE CONTAINERS

19. Containers must be clearly labeled on the exterior as a "geocache", along with the name of the cache as it appears at: http://www.geocaching.com/

20. Containers should be waterproof or sealable.

21. Containers may not exceed a volume greater than 1 cubic foot.

22. Clear (see through) containers are preferred.

23.   Containers may not consist of PVC or metal pipe.

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24.   Containers must include contact information of the cache owner, to include at a minimum an email address and GC# (Geocaching ID#) if applicable.

25.   All cache containers should contain a standard geocache "stash note" explaining the activity to an unintentional finder (see ATTACHMENT 2).

26.   Contents must be family friendly and appropriate for all ages.

27.   Caches may not contain items that are inappropriate, offensive, dangerous, or illegal. Examples of such items include, but are not limited to firearms, weapons, ammo, alcohol, drugs, explosives, items of an adult nature, etc.

28.   Caches may not contain food items.

29.   The cache should contain a log book and pen or pencil for finders of the cache to log their visit.

30.   Trade items are acceptable, provided such items are in compliance with this policy.

ENFORCEMENT

WRC supports responsible non-traditional use of WRC lands and recognizes the enjoyment and recreational value associated with Geocaching. However, we reserve the right to restrict, without prior notice, any cache and/or all Geocaching activities:
- deemed to be in an inappropriate or potentially unsafe location,
- where uses conflict with legal hunting, fishing, trapping, or the Commission's management and administration of WRC lands,
- found to be causing or having the potential to cause undue impact to archaeological, historical, or ecological resources,
- containing inappropriate, offensive, dangerous, or illegal items, or
- determined for any other reason to be in non-compliance with the provisions of this policy.

An immediate attempt will be made to contact the owner of any cache that is removed to provide the owner with an opportunity to retrieve the cache and to alert the owner of the need to archive the cache as quickly as possible.

ATTACHMENT 1 – GEOCACHING.COM

Each cache submitted to Geocaching.com is reviewed to ensure that the cache meets the Geocaching Listing Guidelines (http://www.geocaching.com/about/guidelines.aspx). It may take up to three days for the volunteer to contact you and make your cache live on the web site. Sometimes the volunteer will need to work with you to fine-tune the listing so it can be published.

Following is the general review process and sequence of events:

- Hider places the cache, fills out the appropriate form http://www.geocaching.com/hide/planning.aspx at geocaching.com, and checks off the boxes indicating they have read and understand the guidelines.
- Cache appears in a queue that only the Geocaching.com volunteers and staff can access.
- Cache is reviewed to ensure it meets the Geocaching.com guidelines, with specific attention paid to the location in areas known to have a geocaching policy, proximity to other caches, schools, railroads, and other sensitive areas.
- The cache description is verified to make sure it matches the posted waypoint and that the hider lives near enough to properly maintain their hide.
- The cache is then published and posted to geocaching.com for all to see.
- All listings on WRC lands must include approved logo.

ATTACHMENT 2 – GEOCACHE STASH NOTE

GEOCACHE SITE – PLEASE READ

Congratulations, you've found it! Intentionally or not!

What is this hidden container sitting here for? What is this thing doing here with all these things in it?

It is part of a worldwide game dedicated to GPS (Global Positioning System) users, called Geocaching. The game basically involves a GPS user hiding "treasure" (this container and its contents) and publishing the exact coordinates so other GPS users can come on a "treasure hunt" to find it. The only rules are: if you take something from the cache, you must leave something for the cache, and you must write about your visit in the logbook. Hopefully, the person that hid this container found a good spot that is not easily found by uninterested parties. Sometimes, a good spot turns out to be a bad spot, though.

IF YOU FOUND THIS CONTAINER BY ACCIDENT:

Great! You are welcome to join in! Geocaching.com asks only that you:

- Please do not move or vandalize the container. The real treasure is just finding the container and sharing your thoughts with everyone else who finds it.

- If you wish, go ahead and take something. But please also leave something of your own for others to find, and write it in the logbook.

- If possible, let Geocaching.com know you found it by visiting the web site listed below.

Geocaching is open to everyone with a GPS enabled device and a sense of adventure. There are similar sites all over the world. The organization has its home on the Internet. Visit Geocaching.com if you want to learn more, or have any comments

http://www.geocaching.com