GET WILD Geocaching
How-To Guide
Park and Recreation Month 2012

Welcome to Geocaching!

Geocaching is a real-world, outdoor treasure hunting game using GPS-enabled devices that participants use to navigate to a specific set of GPS coordinates and then attempt to find the geocache (container) hidden at that location. Geocaches are currently placed in over 100 countries around the world and on all seven continents, including Antarctica.

After almost 12 years of activity, there are more than 1.7 million active geocaches published on various websites and there are over 5 million geocachers worldwide!

Geocaching is fun and adventurous! It is also a great way to engage your community and get them exploring your park or recreational areas.

NRPA is encouraging agencies to hide geocaches in their park and rec areas during July or if you already hide caches, to update the contents with Park and Recreation Month information.

If you already hide geocaches, consider making a current container a special Park and Recreation Month "Get Wild" geocache. Include such things as:
- The "Get Wild" geocache log sheet
- The "Get Wild" welcome letter
- "Get Wild" themed caches; ideas include:
    o Print out and laminate a copy of the 2012 NRPA GET WILD! Logo
    o Any small "Get Wild" branded items you've produced
    o Exercise tips or healthy food recipes
    o Free admission coupons to a park or rec program
    o Any other special items that coordinate with your July activities

If you are new to geocaching, there is a little bit of prep work but the results are worth the effort as geocachers will come in droves to hunt for these caches.

More information, tips, and guidelines are available at www.geocaching.com. You'll also want to log your hidden cache on www.geocaching.com.

Here are a few tips for **hiding your first geocache**.

Step 1 - Research a Cache Location

Geocaching is just like real estate - location, location, location. Most geocachers hide caches in locations that are important to them, reflecting a special interest or skill of the cache owner. Find a unique site in your park or rec to hide the cache. A campsite, near a piece of exercise equipment, on a trail, near a playground, the options are endless but keep these things in mind:

- Does it meet all requirements and geocaching guidelines to be listed on geocaching.com? Make sure to review these during your research. Issues include cache saturation, commerciality, solicitation and long-term cache maintenance.

- Did you consider accessibility? If it is too visible or too close to busy roads and trails, there is a good chance someone may stumble upon it by accident. It is best to place a cache just off trail to preserve the environment but keep it out of sight of people casually passing by.

- You are ultimately responsible for the cache so make sure you know the rules for the area where your cache is being placed. Respect the area around your chosen location. Keep in mind that others will be walking in these areas.

Be careful not to place your cache in a fragile or sensitive environmental area or an area where you don't want too much foot traffic. If it's the location of a wild animal nest, or if it is off-trail with delicate ground cover, too much activity may damage the very nature of why this area is special.

Step 2 - Preparing Your Cache - Cache Containers

Start by choosing a container that will withstand the weather all year round. Geocachers have had good success with clear, watertight plastic containers and waterproof boxes often used on boats. Place your cache in a zippered plastic bag to further protect the cache contents, in case your container does leak. The best geocaching caches are disguised to look like something else or to blend into their surroundings.

Here are some ideas for Geocache containers:
- Lunch-box sized plastic storage containers
- Surplus military ammunition cans
- 35mm film canisters
- Tupperware™ containers
- Plastic tobacco containers
- Empty licorice containers
- Mayonnaise jars

Whatever the container, make sure to clearly identify your cache as a geocache. Most geocachers mark the cache container with the words "Official Geocache" the name of the cache, and appropriate contact information. The more information you can provide the better.

Cache Contents
You will need a log sheet in your cache so people can log in their name. Download the official GET WILD Log Sheet at www.nrpa.org/july . Make sure to place a writing utensil in the cache as well…pencils are better than pens.

Include a note to welcome the cache finder. The note, should explain the activity in case someone accidentally finds your cache. A sample note is available for download at www.NRPA.org/July.

Lastly, you can put items for trading into the cache. What you place into your cache is up to you, budget permitting.

Some ideas of items to give as goodies:

- Disposable camera. Put one in your cache and ask everyone to take a picture and put it back in the cache. Later you can develop the photos and place them online.
- A laminated printed color copy of the 2012 NRPA GET WILD! Logo.
- Any small branded "Get Wild" or park and recreation month items you have produced.
- Exercise tips or healthy food recipes.
- Free admission coupons to a park or rec program.
- Park user cards.
- Any other small items that coordinate with your July activities.
- Toys for children. Include action figures, games, playing cards, and more.
- Trackable items.

People of all ages hide and seek caches, so think carefully before placing an item into a cache. Please do not put food in a cache. Explosives, ammunition, knives, drugs and alcohol should not be placed in a cache. **Respect the local laws**.

Step 3 - Placing Your Cache

Once you arrive at the location of your hide, it is critical to obtain accurate GPS coordinates. This is the very heart of the activity, after all. Be aware that during bad weather, the accuracy of the GPS unit may be poor.

Some GPS units have the ability to take an average set of coordinates. If your device cannot, it is best to mark a waypoint, walk away from the location, then return and mark another waypoint. Continue marking waypoints at the location, around 7 to 10 times, and then select the best waypoint.

Once you have your waypoint, write it in permanent marker on the container and in the log sheet. Make sure you have a copy to bring back with you. Write a few notes in the log sheet if you like, place it in a zippered plastic bag for extra protection, and place it in the cache container.

Step 4 - Submitting Your Cache

Take time to review the Geocaching Listing Guidelines again. After placing your cache, does it still meet all requirements for placement? If so, fill out the online form on geocaching.com, paying careful attention to the helpful notes provided. Write a description that attracts

geocachers to your location, including images of interest and add descriptive attributes so that others can make a quick assessment of your cache. For example, is this area dog-friendly? Is the hike over an hour long? Is the area accessible in a wheelchair? Is a boat required?

Double-check the accuracy and the format of your work and make any needed edits. After a review, your cache will be published for the general public.

Step 5 - Maintaining Your Cache

Once you place the cache, it is your responsibility to maintain the cache and the area around it.

You will need to return as often as you can to ensure that your cache is not impacting the area negatively, and to check that the container is in good shape. And when you go to your hiding place, does the area look disturbed? Are visitors disrupting the landscape in any way? If you eventually have concerns about the location, remove the container and make appropriate changes to your online listing.

Happy Geocaching!