



# North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department

## Geocaching Policy

*Revised 01/2011*

The North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department permits geocaching as it coincides with our mission, which is to provide and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities through diverse parks and programs. The purpose of this policy is to establish management guidelines for geocaching, so as to minimize impact on the natural and cultural resources managed by the department.

### Definitions

The following definitions are being provided to assist you in the understanding of this geocaching policy. For additional definitions pertaining to geocaching, please visit the following website: <http://www.geocaching.com/about/glossary.aspx>:

**Geocache** - A container hidden that includes, at minimum, a log book for geocachers to sign (container may also be filled with trinkets such as stickers, pencils, fishing tackle, stick-on tattoos, maps, small toys, key chains, etc)

**Cache** - a shortened version of the word geocache

**GPS** - Global Positioning System that utilizes satellites that work from a GPS receiver to determine your location on the planet

**Geocaching** - a worldwide game of hiding and seeking treasure. A geocacher can place a geocache in the world, pinpoint its location using a GPS and then share the geocache's existence and location online. Anyone with a GPS unit can then try to locate the cache.

**Geocache Owner** - an individual who placed and entered in the cache at the official geocaching website, [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com).

**Traditional Cache** - the original type of cache, but one of several types that currently exist. It consists of, at bare minimum, a container and a logbook. Normally you will find a clear container or ammo box containing items for trade in addition to the log book.

**Multi-cache** - multiple cache containers are located from information received from the previous container.

**Event cache** - Occasionally, geocachers and/or a geocaching club or organization designate a time and location to meet and discuss geocaching. A geocache event may be organized to get others introduced to geocaching or may be an event to bring cachers together to cache for the day. Event caches are temporary geocaches that are set as part of a geocaching event. Event caches may or may not be listed online at the geocaching website. If they are put on the website, they are archived after the event.

**Archived cache** - this means that a cache, for whatever reason, no longer exists; therefore, it is archived that it once existed so geocachers can received credit for finding it

## Cache Sizes

These sizes apply to all caches that have a physical container.

1. Micro (35 mm film canister or smaller - less than approximately 3 ounces or .1 L - typically containing only a logbook or a log sheet)
2. Small (sandwich-sized plastic container or similar - less than approximately 1 quart or 1 L - holds trade items as well as a logbook)
3. Regular (plastic container or ammo can about the size of a shoebox)
4. Large (5 gallon/20 L bucket or larger)

## Management of Geocaches

1. State parks are not required to have geocaches, but are encouraged to do so as they have potential to attract a new user group and/or provide another activity for state park users.
2. State parks may have as many caches as they want to manage.
  - a. Traditional caches, multi-caches and event caches are permitted.
3. Only a ND Parks & Recreation Department employee, with approval from the Park Manager, may create a profile on <http://www.geocaching.com> and be that state park's geocache owner, or resident cacher. That individual, or another staff member on their behalf, is the only person permitted to own and manage a geocache within a state park. Geocaching clubs, individual geocaching enthusiasts, school groups, etc. are not allowed to own a cache within a state park or manage the park's geocaching.com profile. However, they can assist the parks' resident cachers to pick out a new cache location, obtain the coordinates to be given to the resident cacher, propose text for the long and short descriptions, help physically rotate park caches every 2 years or help facilitate geocaching events or programs at the park. Park personnel should be the only ones utilizing the park's [geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com) website profile and physically entering information on the website pertaining to the park's geocaches.
4. State parks must abide by the Groundspeak Inc. guidelines pertaining to cache placement, contents, saturation and maintenance. For more information, visit the following link. <http://www.geocaching.com/about/guidelines.aspx>
  - a. Caches must not be placed in sensitive archaeological, historical, or ecological areas. For example, in cemeteries or locations containing rare plant species. Caches are not to be placed in areas that could potentially cause danger to visitors trying to locate the cache. For example, climbing on or near cliffs/bluffs, underwater or in potential flood areas, in potential prescribed burn areas, in thick area of poison ivy, etc.
  - b. Items that are not allowed in caches include food, explosives, fireworks, ammo, lighters, knives, drugs, alcohol, illicit material or material that solicits other websites, companies, political parties, religious groups, etc.
  - c. According to geocache regulations, caches should be separated by at least .1 miles (528 feet).
  - d. The owner will assume all responsibility of their park's cache listings which includes quality control of posts to cache page, deleting any logs that appear to be bogus, off topic, illicit, etc. This also includes periodically checking caches, especially when someone reports a problem (missing, damaged, etc.) You may temporarily disable cache on the website while trying to fix the issue(s), allowing you reasonable time to address the issue at hand. For example, if someone logs that it is missing or broken. Temporarily disabling the cache will provide you time to fix the issue while letting geocachers know to avoid that cache until the problem is addressed and the geocache because back online.

5. Caches can only remain in a single location for two years after placement date. At that time, the cache owner must archive them and can then choose to permanently remove the cache(s) or re-hide caches, which entails re-registering any associated locations and information about such geocaches on the geocaching website. Periodically moving caches provides incentive to geocachers to come back to seek caches, while keeping “first to find” (FTF) statistics for finding the archived caches.
6. Caches must contain a hardcopy of the “Geocache Notification” document located at the end of the policy. This identifies what it is in case people stumble upon a cache, not knowing what it is or if it is supposed to be there.
7. Cache description as it appears on the geocaching website should include the following information:
  - a. The fact that it has been placed and is owned by the state park
  - b. State park's entrance and camping fees
  - c. Facts and/or historical information pertaining to state park, its trails or cache location (examples may include nearby CCC structures, tree species, Lewis & Clark journal entries, lake/river facts, etc.)
  - d. Suggested parking area (not in campsites)
  - e. Department and/or park link to the website
8. If a non-department cache is discovered within a park, the geocache owner at that park must contact that individual via their profile with <http://www.geocaching.com> to request they remove the cache. If the party doesn't do so within 30 days of notification, the geocaching contact at that park should remove the cache and request that Groundspeak Inc. remove the listing, providing the justification that it is an unapproved cache. The physical cache can be stored at the park for an additional 30 days to provide time for the original owner to claim it. In the event a contact is not able to be made or the owner doesn't show up to claim the property, the cache will be considered abandoned property. The park may then keep it and utilize it, if possible, or dispose of it and/or its contents.

**This container has been placed here by the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department.**

## **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 us! We ask 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 us know that you found it, by visiting the web site listed below.

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

**<http://www.geocaching.com>**

If this container needs to be removed for any reason, please let us know. We apologize, and will be happy to move it.

Reference: **Official Geocaching Placement Permit**