

Regional Open Space



MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

Geocaching Guidelines

Overview:

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District encourages appropriate low-intensity recreational use of District lands when such use will not result in degradation of District open space land. The activity of Geocaching has recently gained popularity, and District staff believe this activity to be a positive and beneficial pastime which has very limited impact on the land and on other users of District preserves. The use is an appropriate, low-intensity recreational use, subject to the limitations and restrictions listed in these guidelines.

Geocaching is initiated by an individual hiding a cache (normally a waterproof container with small items inside), then recording the location with a Global Positioning Unit (GPS). The individual then posts the GPS coordinates along with a description of the cache on a Geocaching Web site. Other individuals then try to find the cache. When it is located, participants sign a logbook, and then may take or leave a small item.

Procedures:

The following procedures shall apply to the placement, discovery and management of geocaches.

1. A permit is not required for the placing or searching for geocaches on the lands of Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.
2. Placing and searching for geocaches must only take place during normal preserve hours as defined in District Ordinance 805.3, (sunrise to ½-hour after sunset), and in areas open to the public.
3. Caches must be registered on the Internet with Geocaching.com.
4. Caches must comply with all guidelines established by Geocaching.com.
5. All caches must be clearly labeled on the exterior as a "Geocache" and all caches must include a standard geocache "stash-note" inside, giving contact information and explaining the activity to an unintentional finder.
6. Contact information, including a valid username and e-mail address for the owner, must be included in the cache.
7. Containers for caches must be of a "neutral" nature so as not to cause alarm or concern. Examples of inappropriate containers are: unmarked tubes, ammunition boxes which have not been painted with clear "Geocache" markings, containers marked "biohazard or hazardous material" or similar, suspicious-looking containers.
8. Caches must not be placed so as to encourage the development of new "unofficial" trails.
9. Caches must not be placed in locations that will encourage trail damage, or cause erosion, or be located further than 200 feet from the edge of designated trails.

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10. Caches must not be buried, or located within a water body.
11. Cutting or modification of vegetation is prohibited.
12. Modification of geographical features is prohibited.
13. Altering preserve signs, fences, posts, trails, trail markers or any District building or facility is prohibited.
14. Caches must not be placed on or near potentially hazardous locations.
15. Caches must not interfere with wildlife or preserve visitors.
16. Caches must not contain inappropriate, hazardous or illegal materials such as: flammables, explosives, controlled substances, pornography or food.
17. Caches must not be placed on or in buildings or structures located on a preserve or within designated historic or cultural resource areas.
18. Caches must be maintained by the owner. Caches that have been abandoned and not maintained will be considered as litter and removed.
19. The District reserves the right to remove any cache that has been determined to be inappropriate because of location or content, or has an impact on wildlife, vegetation visitors, preserve neighbors, or natural or cultural resources. In the event the District removes a cache, the District may attempt to, but will not have the responsibility to, notify the owner of the cache.

Geocache Management:

A member of the group "Geocachers of the Bay Area," will be selected to serve as a liaison between the District and the geocaching community. The title for this volunteer position shall be "District Geocache Liaison." This individual will be registered as a District volunteer, with responsibility for coordinating other members of Geocachers of the Bay Area who will form a volunteer group called "GeoWatch Monitors." An assigned District Public Affairs Department staff person will create a new volunteer category for geocache management as a part of the District's ongoing volunteer program.

GeoWatch Monitors will be a volunteer group interested in Geocaching who will monitor the Geocaching.com Website looking for caches that have been inappropriately placed on District lands, or which are on District lands but do not meet the District's guidelines for Geocaching as outlined herein or the guidelines stipulated by Geocaching.com. In the event the guidelines conflict, the District's guidelines shall prevail for all geocaches on District lands.

It is anticipated that each volunteer GeoWatcher Monitor will have multiple preserves, which he/she monitors.

Monitoring of inappropriate caches within District boundaries will conform to the following standards:

1. The "Geowatch Monitors" will set up "watch lists" of geocaches in their assigned preserves.

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2. The "GeoWatch Monitors" will place all caches in their respective selected preserve(s) into a "watch list" at Geocaching.com. This will cause geocaching.com to automatically e-mail the Monitor a copy of every log for those caches (i.e. whenever a geocacher finds or cannot find a given cache). Monitors will therefore see these logs whenever they read their normal email.
3. Since Geowatch Monitors are not automatically informed of new caches in their preserve(s), they will need to periodically use the mapping tools available at Geocaching.com to check for new caches and add them to their "watch list."
4. Geowatch Monitors should review their watch list emails at least weekly. If any issues are discovered, they should be reported to the District Geocache Liaison, and the assigned District Public Affairs Department staff person. Geowatch Monitors should check for new caches placed in their preserves on at least a monthly basis.
5. If necessary, the District Geocache Liaison will work with District staff to map inappropriate geocache locations on District preserves, utilizing a GIS map overlay, which shall be made available as necessary to assist District field staff in the removal of inappropriate geocaches.

Procedure for Dealing with Non-compliant Caches:

1. If a GeoWatch Monitor sees that a cache has a compliance issue, the Monitor should attempt to inform the owner of the cache and have the owner resolve the issue.
2. If the compliance issue is not resolved in a timely manner, the District's Geocache Liaison should be informed and should submit a "should be archived" log for the cache and inform the assigned District Public Affairs Department staff person of this finding. Filing a "should be archived," log entry will alert the Geocaching.com Web site reviewers who can pull the listing for the cache from the Web site.
3. If compliance is not obtained after the above steps have been taken, then the District's Geocache Liaison will work with the assigned District Public Affairs Department staff person to take further action as necessary.

Procedures for Removal of Caches:

Geocachers typically report caches requiring attention by posting comments in their logs on Geocaching.com. These comments are automatically e-mailed to the cache owner, and will also be automatically sent to GeoWatch Monitors.

In certain cases, geocachers can file a "should be archived" log. This log will be sent not only to the owner and the GeoWatch Monitors, but will also be sent to the Geocaching.com volunteer reviewers. The Geocaching.com website volunteer reviewers can summarily remove caches from the Geocaching.com Web site.

An "abandoned cache" is one that (1) needs maintenance or replacement or needs to be moved, or (2) is not receiving such attention in a timely manner.

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If a cache is a hazard (draws people to a dangerous cliff or to posted off limits areas, etc.) a "should be archived" log should be filed, and the cache physically removed by District staff as soon as practical. If the cache has some other issue (is visible from the trail or not in compliance with guidelines) the issue should be addressed with less urgency, but the Web site listing should contain a "should be archived" log.

The District Geocache Liaison, any Geowatch Monitor, or any District staff member may remove a cache that is not in compliance with these District Geocaching guidelines.

If caches are physically removed from the preserves due to any procedures outlined in these guidelines, the District staff member who removes the cache shall return the cache to the assigned District Public Affairs Department staff person, who will attempt to contact the cache owner, and to return the cache to the owner if practical.

Procedure for District Staff:

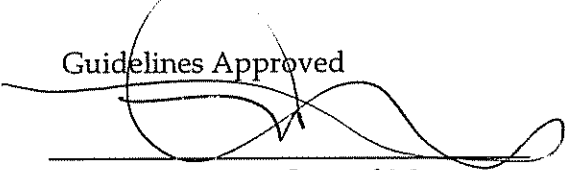
1. If District staff discover a compliance issue regarding a cache that is an immediate hazard to life, property, vegetation or wildlife species, they are authorized to immediately remove the cache, and notify the District public affairs staff person thereafter.
2. If a District staff member finds a compliance issue regarding a cache that does not require immediate resolution, they should inform the assigned District Public Affairs Department staff person who works with the District Geocache Liaison. Necessary actions should be taken by the District Geocache Liaison to resolve the issue.

Guidelines Approved

Date

June 15, 2007

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