

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission GEOCACHING GUIDELINES



Background

Geocaching, also known as GPS Stash Hunt or GeoStash is a contemporary combination of orienteering and scavenger hunting generally utilizing a GPS unit. It involves hiding items, usually containers holding various “treasures,” and then posting specific geographic coordinates for each “cache” on a designated public website. Visitors to these websites choose which cache they would like to locate. Cache hunters typically bring along their own “treasures” and make an exchange once the cache has been located. A logbook is sometimes included in the cache. The cache hunter will then typically relate their experiences in searching for the cache on the website. Geocaching is typically done by individuals or in small groups and is motivated by the challenge of exploring.

Geocache websites routinely promote good stewardship however the potential exists for resource damage, user conflicts or safety issues caused by inappropriately placed caches and/or links that do not provide adequate information about the area.

Policy Statement

It is the policy of the FWC to allow placement of geocaches only in those locations that do not present the potential for resource damage, user conflicts or threats to the safety of the activity participants. The placement of geocaches is governed by the procedures contained in this policy.

Procedures

I. Cache Applications

- A. The FWC requires all caches to be registered (at no cost) and the inside of all caches must display an issued FWC permit sticker. Applications may be submitted on-line on the FWC website. Any cache located on FWC property that does not have a valid permit sticker displayed is subject to removal.
- B. The person requesting permission to place a cache must provide a valid address, telephone number, email address and the website address on which the cache will be posted.
- C. The exact cache location, including GPS coordinates, must be stated on the request.
- D. The cache application will be received by the Office of Recreation Services who will maintain a database of all approved cache sites. ORS will inform the WMA lead

biologist of a cache request. The exact location of the cache must be pre-approved by the WMA Lead Biologist, who will consider potential negative impacts to wildlife, wildlife habitat or cultural resources, potential user conflicts and public safety when reviewing the proposed site.

- E. If approved, the cache posting (description), typically found on <http://www.geocaching.com>, must contain the following text:

This cache is located within the WMA/WEA/FMA NAME. Visitors should be aware of seasonal hunting and must abide by all area regulations while on the area. Please visit <http://myfwc.com/recreation/list.html> for more information.

- F. Registrations must be renewed annually. The exact approval date will be recorded on the application if approved. If the Responsible Party wishes to change the location of the cache, a new application must be submitted.
- G. The Responsible Party is responsible for removing the cache and for removing the cache location from all websites and any information source once the registration period expires. If the permit holder fails to remove the cache, it will be removed and disposed of by FWC staff.
- H. FWC reserves the right to remove the geocache at any time without prior notice to the geocache owner.

II. CACHE CONTAINERS AND CONTENTS

- A. Cache containers must be reasonably non-breakable, water-resistant, and fire-resistant, and have some form of secure latch to prevent the contents from being exposed or possibly trapping animals in the container. (Example: 7.63 m / .30 cal. military ammunition can.)
- B. Each cache container must contain a permit sticker affixed to the inside identifying it as an approved cache and containing the registration number and approval date.
- C. Caches may not contain inappropriate or dangerous items. Such items include, but are not limited to, food, medications, personal/hygiene products, pornography, weapons of any type, etc.
- D. All caches are subject to random inspection by FWC staff. FWC staff has the authority to immediately remove any item

held in a cache deemed unacceptable or that is violation of this policy.

- E. FWC accepts no responsibility for damage, destruction, loss or upkeep of geocaches placed on FWC property.

III. CACHE LOCATIONS:

- A. Physical caches are prohibited inside any WMA structure.
- B. The location of a cache must be pre-approved by FWC.
- C. Caches may not be placed in locations that may lead to the creation of spur trails.
- D. Caches may not be buried, nor may vegetation or stones be disturbed to place a cache.
- E. Caches may not be placed in dangerous, inappropriate, or protected areas and habitats, on cliffs, underground, or underwater.
- F. Metal detectors may not be used in cache searches.
- G. Coordinates may not be written on any structure.

IV. COMPLIANCE

- A. Failure to comply with this policy directive will result in the removal of the geocache. Continued failure by an individual to comply with these guidelines will result in denial of all future requests to place a geocache.
- B. If geocaching activities as a whole are found to have a negative impact on WMA resources or if safety becomes an issue in geocache searches, FWC may ban geocaching from certain areas or from the entire WMA system.