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Operating Procedure # O - R - 16

Subject: Recreational Activities, Other Non-traditional Activities
(UAV/Drones, Fireworks, Geocaching, Letterboxing, Orienteering, Parasailing)

Effective Date: December 2, 2015

Procedure Statement: Geocaching, Letterboxing and Orienteering are popular and established outdoor recreational activities in Georgia State Parks. Personal and commercial UAV/Drone usage is increasing in popularity nationwide. Fireworks were recently legalized in Georgia necessitating clarification on PRHS properties.

This overview is designed to provide site managers background and direction on how to best monitor and manage these non-traditional recreational activities.

Definitions:

Geocaching: Geocaching is a real-world, outdoor treasure hunting activity using GPS-enabled devices.

Letterboxing: Letterboxing is an outdoor pastime combining navigational skills and rubber stamp journal recording in a treasure hunt style quest.

Orienteering: Orienteering is an activity that requires participants to use a compass and/or map to find their way cross country through unfamiliar territory.

Parasailing: Parasailing is a recreational kiting activity where a person is towed behind a vehicle (usually a boat) while attached to a specially designed canopy wing, similar to a parachute.

UAV/Drone: An unmanned aerial vehicle (**UAV**), commonly known as a drone is an aircraft without a human pilot aboard. A UAV or Drone includes the device and all of the associated support equipment, control station, data links, telemetry, communications and navigation equipment, etc., necessary to operate the unmanned aerial vehicle. The UAV or Drone is the flying portion of the system, flown by a pilot via a ground control system, or autonomously through use of an on-board computer, communication links and any additional equipment that is necessary for the UAV/Drone to operate safely.

Procedure:

FIREWORKS

Out of safety concerns for guests, facilities and resources, the use of fireworks or sparklers are prohibited on Georgia State Parks or Historic Site properties.

Guests may incorrectly assume that since fireworks and sparklers are now legal in Georgia (Beginning July 1, 2015), they can use fireworks and sparklers on PRHS sites. When possible, Rangers should take an educational approach toward enforcing these restrictions.

Official Code of Georgia Annotated 12-3-10 (o), prohibits the private use of fireworks on state parks and historic sites. Fireworks are also prohibited under DNR Board Rule 391-5-1-.05 (5), Explosives and Fireworks. Please also refer to the attached Directive on Fireworks, attachment 1.

GEOCACHING

Geocaching is a real-world, outdoor treasure hunting activity using GPS-enabled devices. Participants navigate to a specific set of GPS coordinates and then attempt to find the geocache (ammunition can/container) hidden at that location. If something is taken from the geocache (trading trinket) the rule is to leave something of equal or greater value. Players can log their find in a log book, and can keep score at geocaching.com. Every cache has a descriptive cache page on geocaching.com (or similar platform).

Geocaching is permitted in Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites under the following conditions and determined at the manager's discretion:

1. The site has enough land base and area suitable for geocaching. This location will be safe for participants, the surrounding wildlife and ecology. The geocache location will endure heavy foot traffic, so caches should not be placed near sensitive or historical areas.
2. All Historic Site caches are should be located in the visitor center or museum unless otherwise approved by management.
3. Caches should be hidden from plain view and should not diminish the attractiveness of park natural resources.
4. Groundspeak, the governing body for geocaching.com, will require final approval for all geocaches and cache pages posted to their site. Groundspeak monitors and coordinates placement of the cache to make sure it is not too close to another and that it is meeting all requirements of the game.
5. Geocaches and cache pages are to be monitored and maintained by the owner. PRHS sites have branded park geocaches that require maintenance when reported on the cache page. Supplies are available from Division Headquarters.
6. Temporary caches and night caching are permitted on an event basis and with prior manager approval. The park will have final word on placement and area of participation.
7. Unreported or unapproved geocaches found on-site will be removed. Management will make efforts to contact the owner and return their cache.

8. Geocaches on PHRS properties should be monitored and inspected regularly for unwanted content such as weapons, drugs, food, or any items in violation of park rules and regulations or state law. Monitor to ensure the cache is not negatively impacting the area and to confirm the container has not been removed and is in good shape.
9. Organized events that charge a fee to geocache will require a concessionaire agreement and liability insurance, and may be required to pay a fee to the department.
10. When moving or removing a state branded geocache, the corresponding cache page should be updated or disabled.

Additional information for the Georgia State Park Geocaching program can be found at:
<http://gastateparks.org/geocaching>

INFLATABLE PLAYHOUSES (“Bouncy Houses”, Inflatable Slides, etc.)

Inflatable playhouses (bouncy houses) or slides are permitted in Georgia State Parks if they are placed in a location where they are restricted from the general public’s use, can be safely used, and where they will not damage the natural resource. Consequently, inflatables are only allowed in areas designated by the Site Manager. Inflatable playhouses are for exclusive use of a group and as such must be supervised by an adult from the group at all times. Furthermore, if a group hires an outside vendor to operate an inflatable for their use, the vendor is required to have insurance and sign a concession agreement where they accept liability for any accidents that may occur.

LETTERBOXING

Letterboxing is an outdoor pastime combining navigational skills and rubber stamp journal recording in a treasure hunt style quest. Participants seek hidden letterboxes by following clues, and then stamp a record of discovery into their personal journals.

In parks where Letterboxing activities occur, the rules governing Geocaching activities also apply with the following exception:

- There is no governing body providing oversight for letterbox activities. Due to the lack of centralized oversight, managers can, but are not obligated to, remove unreported or unapproved letterboxes. Instead park staff should monitor known letterboxes, and remove them only at the manager’s discretion.

ORIENTEERING

Orienteering is an activity that requires participants to use a compass and/or map to find their way cross country through unfamiliar outdoor territory. Individuals or groups may participate in this activity, which can be a race or a leisurely adventure. The control points on an orienteering course are usually marked with flags, stakes or markers. The Georgia Orienteering Club frequently conducts events in parks and is a resource for assisting with the mapping, design and the establishment of permanent state park orienteering courses.

Orienteering is permitted in State Parks and Historic Sites under the following conditions and determined by manager’s discretion.

1. That the site has the land base and has an area suitable for orienteering. This location will be safe for the participants and/or spectators.

2. Orienteering activities cannot be located on a site or in an area where the natural resources could be damaged.
3. The site manager determines if orienteering is an appropriate activity that fits the sites interpretive goals found in the site's Interpretive Recreation Plan.

Organized orienteering events can be held in State Parks and Historic Sites in the following circumstances:

1. The park or historic site has established and maintains a permanent orienteering course, or
2. The park or historic site can allow outside groups to establish a temporary orienteering course for use on a limited basis. Any group establishing a temporary orienteering course is responsible for inspecting the premises including the course itself to insure no unusual hazards exists. The park can provide a staff member to accompany the group inspecting the premises and the course itself. Upon event conclusion the group must remove all course materials.
3. Due to insurance and indemnity issues, outside groups sponsoring orienteering events that charges any type of fee will be required to have a concession agreement with the department. The concession agreement will require the outside group to have insurance.
4. Outside groups that charge participants of an orienteering event may be required to pay a fee to the department.

PARASAILING

Parasailing is not permitted on Georgia State Park managed lakes, reservoirs or waters.

The operation of vessels in waters administered by the US Army Corps of Engineers or the US Fish and Wildlife Service shall be in conformity with applicable federal laws and regulations.

UAV / DRONES

Under DNR Board Rule 391-5-1-.06 (11), UAV/drones or similar remote controlled devices are not permitted in state parks unless the Director determines that they do not threaten the health, safety and welfare of persons using the site. As such, Georgia Veterans State Park is currently the only park where the Director has authorized remote controlled devices.

Georgia Veterans State Park operating procedures: UAV/Drones and other similar unmanned aerial vehicle are approved for flight within the immediate flight area of the designated remote controlled airfield. All UAV/drones must remain in view of the operator and may not stray into other areas of the park. Maximum operating altitude for any single UAV/drone must not exceed 100'.

Authority:

- O.C.G.A. Fireworks- 12-3-10 (o)
- DNR RULES: Fireworks- DNR Board Rule 391-5-1-.05 (5)
- Drones- DNR Board Rule 391-5-1-.06 (11)
- Directive: PRHS Chief's Directive on Fireworks (attachment 1)
- Directive: PRHS Assistant Director Directive on Drones (attachment 2)

Attachments:

Attachment 1 – PRHS Chief’s Directive on Fireworks

Attachment 2 – PRHS Assistant Director Directive on UAV/Drones