

Wednesday, July 28, 2021 2:31 PM

**Subject:** Public Records Request Process

Please share with your superintendents and park staff as you see fit; however, it is important that all rangers and superintendents receive this information in full detail. If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to me directly. Please be patient with me as this is a long email! I'm trying to save you all from a meeting 😊

'Tis the season of endless public records requests. Most of these requests are for PR-63s on incidents that occur in the parks. Our process of fulfilling these requests has gotten a bit disorganized this summer. We want to get this process consistent and streamlined, so I am sending the following guidance in the hopes that we can make progress to that end.

As we move through the process below for each request, please loop in the appropriate staff only when the request process has reached a point that they should be involved. In other words, Jonathan Avery should not be copied on communications about documents that are not ready for his review unless you have a specific question for Jonathan at that point; Keith Nealon should not be looped in before the report is approved by the district superintendent; etc. The reason for this is looping in folks before the prior steps have been completed causes inefficiencies, overlap in work, unnecessary accessing / checking the database, excessive emails, and confusion.

**Our internal / DPR record request fulfillment process is as follows:**

- A request is submitted to park staff verbally or in writing for a public record. If request is made verbally, staff should ask for the request in writing, preferably by email. The email should be addressed to PIO ([katie.hall@ncparks.gov](mailto:katie.hall@ncparks.gov)).

*Note: A public record is an actual printed or electronic document of which DPR is the custodian. For example, a PR-63 about an incident that occurred in a park. A request for information without documentation is not a public records request. However, the PIO should be consulted before staff discloses any information within a PR-63 or associated documents. Dissemination of some information in PR-63s, whether that information is shared verbally, written, or in an email, could subject the department to litigation.*

- Staff member who receives the request notifies PIO of request as well as contact information for the requestor (name, email, and phone number)
- PIO emails or calls requestor to notify them that their request has been received and is being reviewed
- Park staff who received the initial request notifies and requests the superintendent -> the superintendent requests that the district superintendent -> and the district superintendent requests the Chief Ranger review the document and sign off in the Database
- The Chief Ranger notifies PIO when the report has been fully approved
- PIO downloads documents and sends to attorney for review

- Attorney reviews documents; sometimes a second attorney may need to do a follow-up review depending on sensitivity of the documents
- Attorney sends PIO reviewed and, if appropriate, redacted documents
- PIO sends (usually via email) documents to requestor, copying attorney, Chief Ranger, and superintendent of relevant park

I've attached DNCR's memos with their guidance on how we are to handle public records requests. Most of the information contained therein is only relevant to me (PIO) and Jonathan Avery (attorney), but it explains the department's overall expectations in how we fulfill public records requests in case you would like all the details.

Thanks all for taking the time to review this information. Please reach out to me directly if you have any questions.

Katie Hall  
Public Information Officer  
NC Division of Parks and Recreation  
(919) 707-9350 (desk)  
(919-817-3752 (mobile)  
[Katie.Hall@ncparks.gov](mailto:Katie.Hall@ncparks.gov)