

# Benton County Parks

## Parks Policy: Geocaching

This policy for park use was developed by the Benton County Park Board with the assistance of Parks Department staff, partnering organizations, and the public. The Geocaching Policy was adopted at the regular meeting of the Park Board on 11 April 2017.

The Benton County Parks Geocaching Policy is built on the “Area-Wide Geocaching Policy” adopted by the cities of Kennewick, Pasco, and Richland in 2011. Benton County assisted with the development of that policy and borrows generously from it here.

### Geocaching

An outdoor activity, Geocaching is an evolved form of orienteering and treasure hunting in which participants use Global Positioning System receivers, other mobile devices, and/or other navigational techniques to hide and seek containers, called "caches", at specific locations marked by coordinates all over the world.

A typical cache is a small waterproof container containing a logbook and sometimes a writing instrument. The “geocacher” enters the date they found the cache and signs the logbook with their established code name in order to prove that they found it. After signing the log, the cache must be placed back exactly where the person found it. Larger containers such as plastic storage containers or ammunition boxes can also contain items for trading that are generally of more sentimental value than financial. As it pertains here, Geocaching includes benchmarking, letterboxing, waymarking, Wherigo, and other similar endeavors. These pursuits are generally low-impact, explorative, require problem-solving, and involve both the mind and the body. Geocaching is a family-friendly activity supported by Benton County Parks.

### Park System – General Geocaching Policy

Benton County permits Geocaching in most of its ten parks. The purpose of this Policy is to establish rules and management guidelines so as to minimize impacts on the natural and cultural resources managed by the County.

- Cache containers must display the words “Official Geocache” clearly on the outside of the container as well as the username, contact information, GC number, and coordinates.
- A definition/explanation of geocaching is to be included inside the container.
- In general, cache sites should be accessible from existing trails and no more than 10 feet from the trail, unless specifically approved by the Parks Department. Bushwhacking to access a cache is not allowed, and more restrictive rules apply to specific parks (see below).
- Caches should be covered in such a way to make them unnoticeable to non-cachers. However, caches may not be buried.

- Avoid dangerous areas such as steep slopes, areas prone to rock slides, sites near water, or sites that require climbing.
- If the location of a cache poses a risk to park visitors or the environment, the cache owner will be asked to move their cache to a safer/less damaging location, or, if necessary, the cache will be removed by park management.
- It may also be necessary to change the location of a geocache if a social trail is beginning to form or other adverse impacts occur.
- Cache owners are to monitor the sites monthly and maintain family friendly contents. This means the caches are not to contain food, alcohol, firearms, drugs, inherently dangerous items, or adult-themed items.
- The placement of a paid “Premium Member” caches are not permitted within County parks.
- As with all activities on park land, Geocachers assume all risks in undertaking their activity. Benton County is in no way responsible for any damage to or loss of caches or equipment that is caused by others.
- Geocachers must abide by all Parks Department rules, regulations, and other restrictions. This includes park access times and any additional rules specific to individual park properties (see below).

## Individual Parks – Specific Geocaching Policies

The Park System General Geocaching Policy applies to all of the parks within the system where geocaching is allowed. In addition to the General Policy, there are rules specific to each park:

**Badger Mountain Centennial Preserve:** *Geocaching is not allowed anywhere* within the Badger Mountain Centennial Preserve. This is because of the particularly fragile nature of the native landscape, which is easily damaged by off-trail use and the measures usually taken to secure/conceal caches.

**Candy Mountain Preserve:** *Geocaching is not allowed anywhere* within the Candy Mountain Preserve. This is because of the particularly fragile nature of the native landscape, which is easily damaged by off-trail use and the measures usually taken to secure/conceal caches.

**Horn Rapids Park:** Caches may not be placed in the area of the office/compound complex, within 20 feet of the river, or on any of the steep faces of bluffs and hills. This is for reasons of safety and security.

**Horse Heaven Cemetery:** Caches must be placed outside the fence.

**Horse Heaven Vista:** No additional park-specific rules or restrictions.

**Hover Park:** Caches may not be placed within 50 feet of the railroad tracks or irrigation waste way. This is for safety reasons.

**Rattlesnake Mountain Shooting Facility (RMSF):** *Geocaching is not allowed anywhere* on the grounds of RMSF. This is for safety reasons, and RMSF is a secured facility.

**Two Rivers Park:** Caches may not be placed within 20 feet of the Office and Maintenance Compound for security reasons; and Geocaching is not allowed within 20 feet of the water's edge or the boat launching site for safety reasons.

**Vista Park:** No additional park-specific rules or restrictions.

**Wallula Gap Preserve:** *Geocaching is not allowed anywhere* within the three separate properties that comprise the Wallula Gap Preserve. It is either illegal (trespassing) or unsafe (topography and railroad tracks) to access the properties.

If the Parks Department determines that the above policy is not being followed, staff will make reasonable attempts to contact cache owners to discuss the concerns. If the situation is remedied to the satisfaction of the Department, the subject cache(s) will be removed from park premises.

Dated this 11th day of April, 2017.

**BENTON COUNTY PARK BOARD**

---

Robin Emmingham, Chair

---

Richard Nordness

---

John Becker, Vice Chair

---

Donna Raines

---

Diana Ruff, Secretary

---

Yessica Rosas

**PARKS ADMINISTRATION**

---

Adam J. Fyall, Sustainable Development Manager