

Texas A&M Forest Service

Guidelines for Geocaching and Related Activities

Background Information

Geocaching is a recreational activity involving the use of a hand-held GPSr (Global Positioning System receiver) unit to locate containers, known as geocaches (or caches), holding various “treasures”. The most common form of geocaching involves individuals or groups hiding a geocache container and sharing the specific coordinates of the locations on the Internet (www.geocaching.com). Participants retrieve the location coordinates from the website and attempt to locate the geocache using their personal GPSr device and any clues provided. Once found, participants sign the logbook found in the geocache container. They may also place and remove appropriate items from the geocache container. They can then post their “find” in the online logbook for that geocache.

Purpose

The purpose for establishing these guidelines is to protect the resources of properties managed by the Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS) and to sustain the sport of geocaching. This document is intended to provide management guidelines for geocaching and related activities while ensuring resource protection and visitor safety and encouraging a responsible and healthy recreational activity.

Geocache Permits

- Permits are generally **NOT REQUIRED** for geocaches placed on Texas State Forests or other property managed by TFS (**with the exception of W. Goodrich Jones State Forest**).
- Anyone desiring to place a geocache on W. Goodrich Jones State Forest must submit a Geocache Permit Application and have it approved by TFS personnel before the geocache can be placed.
- The Geocache Permit Application must include the name of the person placing the geocache, along with a valid address, telephone number, and email address; the exact geocache location, including coordinates; a physical description of the geocache container; and the website address on which the geocache will be posted.
- The location of any geocache on W. Goodrich Jones State Forest must be approved by TFS personnel, whose main concern will be public safety and the prevention of undesirable impacts to natural, historical, and cultural resources.
- Individuals wishing to place a geocache on TFS property where a permit is not required should still notify TFS personnel regarding the intended location prior to placing the geocache. Contact information can be found at <http://tfsweb.tamu.edu> under the “Contact Us” tab.

Geocache Containers and Contents

- Geocache containers must be non-breakable and must have some form of latch or other closing mechanism to prohibit content exposure to wildlife.
- Geocache containers may not contain inappropriate or dangerous items. Such items include, but are not limited to, food, medications, alcoholic beverages, personal hygiene products, pornography, lighters/matches, fireworks, or weapons of any type.
- Each geocache container must have an identifiable label affixed to the outside identifying it as an approved geocache.

Geocache Locations

- Geocaches may not be placed in locations that may lead to the creation of spur trails.
- Geocaches may not be buried, nor may living vegetation or any historic or cultural feature be disturbed in the process of placing, accessing or maintaining a geocache.
- Geocaches may not be placed in dangerous, inappropriate or protected areas and habitats, on cliffs, underground, or underwater.
- Any applicable hours of operation as well as additional waypoints for trailheads and parking areas must be included on the online geocache page.
- Geocache locations and searches must not be in violation of any Texas Law or any rule or regulation relating to that property.
- Geocaches may not be placed in a location that is visible to the casual site visitor or that will degrade scenic views.
- Geocaches on W. Goodrich Jones State Forest may not be placed in or within 50 feet of Red-Cockaded Woodpecker cavity trees. Always check with TFS personnel if unsure.
- Metal detectors or digging devices may not be used in geocache searches.
- TFS is not responsible for the protection of geocaches placed in areas subject to active resource management like prescribed burns and timber harvest, or in areas planned for future facility development.

Geocache Monitoring, Inspection and Removal

- It is the responsibility of the geocache owner to maintain the container and contents in good condition. This includes removing excess items and items that are not family friendly
- All geocaches are subject to random inspection by TFS personnel, which have the authority to immediately remove any geocache item, or the geocache container itself, if it is deemed unacceptable or not in compliance with approved guidelines.
- TFS retains the right to remove any geocache that it feels is in an inappropriate location, is not maintaining family friendly items, is causing undue impacts on resources, or is for any reason deemed inconsistent with the mission of TFS.
- In the event of geocache removal by TFS personnel, the container and contents will be held for the geocache owner for ten (10) days before being disposed of.
- When a geocache is removed, the geocache owner must deactivate or archive any online postings related to the removed geocache within seven (7) days of removal.

Compliance

- Failure to comply with these guidelines will result in the revocation of any effective Geocache Permit and/or the removal of affected geocaches.
- If geocaching or related activities as a whole are found to have a negative impact on a particular resource or if safety becomes an issue, TFS may ban these activities in certain areas.
- Unauthorized geocaches on W. Goodrich Jones State Forest and any geocache violating these guidelines or any TFS rules or regulations will be removed immediately.





GEOCACHE PERMIT APPLICATION

Note: This Geocache Permit Application must be submitted for any geocache to be placed on W. Goodrich Jones State Forest. Please submit in person at the TFS Conroe District Office, 1328 FM 1488, Conroe, Texas 77384.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Website Where Geocache Will Be Listed: _____

Personal Handle/Nickname on Website Above: _____

Name of the Geocache (as it will appear online): _____

Type of Geocache (traditional, multi, etc.): _____

Date Geocache Will Be Placed: _____

Coordinates of Geocache Site (list all for multicache sites):

Physical Location Description:

Geocache Description:

The Geocache I Intend to Place:	Yes	No
1. Will be in a non-breakable container.		
2. Will not contain inappropriate or dangerous items.		
3. Will not be buried or placed in a protected area, but will be placed in an area approved by the Texas A&M Forest Service.		
4. Will have an identifiable "Official Geocache" label.		

I hereby agree to respect and adhere to the guidelines set forth by the Texas A&M Forest Service and W. Goodrich Jones State Forest.

Signature of Applicant

Date Signed