

Geocaching in GRCA Conservation Areas

BACKGROUND

Geocaching is an outdoor activity that is similar to a treasure hunt. The goal of the activity is to find hidden containers known as caches or geocaches using a portable satellite navigation device called a Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver. An individual who practices this activity (generally referred to as cachers or geocachers) place a cache in an outdoor location and post the caches latitudinal and longitudinal coordinates on the Internet. Other geocachers then use their GPS devices to download the coordinates and cache descriptions from the Internet in order to find the caches.

Once the participants have found the cache, they may log their findings on the Internet. There are a number of different types of caches. Physical caches include a logbook, pencil, and trade items (small objects left in the caches for geocachers to trade with one another such as toys and key chains). Another type of cache is an earth cache, which highlights an area's unique natural features.

More information regarding different types of caches and geocaching in general can be found at www.geocaching.com and www.earthcache.org

POLICY

Geocaching activities may be permitted on lands of Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) provided they are in keeping with the provisions of this policy; they are in full compliance with the Conservation Authority Act and its regulations, and they have been approved by the Conservation Area Superintendent or designate. For more Information on Grand River Conservation Authority & Conservation Authorities Act and regulations please visit www.grandriver.ca

1. When placing or seeking a cache, geocachers must travel on marked and maintained trails in natural areas or in publicly accessible areas (e.g. picnic areas) at all times. All caches must be accessible from the trail, no more than 1 meter from the side of the trail, or be within the public area. If marked and maintained trails do not exist, geocachers must check with the Conservation Area Superintendent or designate. All caches must be external to any building or structure on GRCA property.
2. Trade items are permitted in caches provided they are family friendly such as toys or key chains. An educational message or story about the cache's specific location or about the historic site or natural features of the location must be included. These messages will encourage a focus on the special natural or cultural features of the cache location. A cache shall not contain a trade item which attracts wildlife or is potentially harmful to humans, wildlife or the environment. A cache shall not contain food, alcohol, firearms, drugs, dangerous items, adult items or any other items deemed unacceptable by GRCA.
3. Geocachers must pay admission fees where applicable. Fee schedule available at www.grandriver.ca.
4. Caches must be placed so that they do not disturb natural (e.g. vegetation, soil) and/or cultural resources. No digging or disruption of the ground is permitted when placing a cache.

5. Prior to placing a cache on GRCA lands, geocachers must apply for cache placement authorization from the Conservation Area Superintendent.

Geocachers are required to complete and submit a "Cache Information Form", attached as Appendix "A" and also available at www.grandriver.ca. If requested, geocachers may be required to meet with the Conservation Area staff to discuss the proposed location of their cache.

6. Cache containers shall be:

- 6.1 Watertight [*i.e. plastic container with sealable lid*]
- 6.2 Made of material that will withstand wind, rain, frost and other natural elements
- 6.3 As small as possible
- 6.4 Neutral-coloured so that they do not stand out in the natural environment.

7. Cache containers that have been used for food are not permitted as odors could attract wildlife.

8. Caches shall include the following:

8.1 A logbook (in a sealable bag to protect it from humidity);

8.2 A pencil and a pencil sharpener; and,

8.3 A "Note for Cache Finders" (attached as Appendix "B" and also available at www.grandriver.ca) that includes the following:

- a) An educational message about the cache's specific location
- b) Clear message about the requirements of the Conservation Authority Act and its regulations available at www.conservation-ontario.on.ca
- c) Clear message about trade items and directing finders not to leave trade items that may attract wildlife
- d) Instructions for people who find the cache by chance
- e) The cache's GC# and Name to confirm that the correct cache has been found;
- f) Conservation Area staff contact information and the cache owner's name and/or screen name and contact information in the event that the cache is in need of maintenance or needs to be removed from its location.

9. Geocachers are encouraged to assist GRCA with its stewardship responsibilities such as abiding by the "cache in, trash out" (CITO) practice which contributes to the maintenance of our Conservation Areas. For more information about this clean up practice, please refer to www.geocaching.com. Geocachers are also encouraged to visit the Leave No Trace website at www.leavenotrace.ca. This website offers helpful principles for planning safe and environmentally respectful outdoor recreational activities.

10. GRCA may request that a cache be removed if any provisions of this policy are not adhered to. If the cache owner does not remove the cache as requested, GRCA will notify the local geocaching administrator to request immediate removal and delisting of the cache in question.

11. GRCA shall have the authority to monitor and limit the number of caches in specific locations on its lands. This policy and further information is posted at www.grandriver.ca and www.geocaching.com.

This GRCA policy is based upon the Geocaching Guidelines of Parks Canada & Niagara Parks Commission.

APPENDIX "A"

CACHE INFORMATION FORM

Name: _____

Geocacher Name: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Cache GC# and
Name: _____

Type of Cache: _____

Cache Coordinates (*in WGS84
Datum*): _____

(Note: UTM NAD83, if possible, too.)

Description of Cache Location:

Remember: Geocachers must stay on marked trails only. It is important to provide details regarding which trail to travel on and where to park.

Educational Message:

CACHE AUTHORIZATION

APPROVED
Explanation:

NOT APPROVED

Signature: _____ Title: _____ Date: _____

Personal information is collected and will be used solely for the administration of the geocaching activities relating to Policy and will be managed in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

APPENDIX “B”

NOTE FOR CACHE FINDERS

Welcome to this location!

Congratulations! You have found **(insert Cache GC#)** identified as **(insert Cache Name)**. Please sign the logbook.

If you have found this cache by chance, please feel free to sign the logbook – but make sure you replace the container in the exact location you found it and in such a way that it is not plainly visible to visitors who are not looking for it.

(Insert site/area-specific educational message or story related to the Grand River Conservation Authority or Conservation Area)

Trade items, such as toys or key chains, are permitted in caches provided they are family friendly.

A cache shall not contain a trade item that attracts wildlife or is potentially harmful to humans, wildlife or the environment. A cache shall not contain food, alcohol, firearms, drugs, dangerous items, adult items or any other items deemed unacceptable by Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA).

Also be aware that the following must be adhered to in accordance with the Conservation Authority Act and Regulations:

- no damage or destruction or removal of any Conservation area tangible or intangible property
- no abuse of a Conservation Authority employee or registered patron in a Conservation Area
- no littering or dumping any material within the Conservation Area;
- no person shall start or maintain a fire in the Conservation Area except in a fireplace ;
- no dog or other animal is permitted to be at large in the Conservation Area (must be under control eg. leashed);

For the complete Conservation Authorities Act Regulations (R.R.O. 106/90), please refer to <http://www.conservation-ontario.on.ca>.

The Grand River Conservation Authority has approved this cache. If you have any questions about this cache or about geocaching within this jurisdiction please contact the Area Superintendent.

Cache Owner Name (or User Name):

Additional Information: www.geocaching.com and/or www.grandriver.ca