

## AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES POLICY

### 'GEOCACHING, LETTERBOXING, WAYMARKING, QUESTING' ON AGENCY LANDS

#### Background and Philosophy:

Geocaching, Letterboxing, Waymarking, Questing, and similar pursuits have become a new and growing recreational activity on many ANR lands. "Caches", quests, or letterboxes (typically a plastic box with various items in it) with established locations are posted on the Internet. Global Positioning System receiver (GPS) are then used to find the location coordinates, and sometimes puzzles and clues, to find hidden objects. Letterboxes are found utilizing clues and/or orienteering directions. Once found, a cache may provide a wide variety of exchangeable cache items, or be so small so as not to contain anything but a small 'log book'. The cache visitor may take items from and leave items in the cache, and sign the cache log book. The geocache, quest, and letterboxing communities use the Internet extensively for posting locations and notes about their experiences. Letterboxes include a log book and rubber stamp used to stamp the finders' log book. The finders stamp the letterbox log book with their personal stamp. Waymark locations typically have no cache or letterbox, but an item of interest to see. Questing is typically a series of educationally based clues or questions used to find the final location, where there is a box to find. For purposes of this policy, the term "Geocaching" shall refer to all such activities.

These versions of orienteering can offer participants a rewarding outdoor recreation experience. In many situations on ANR lands, such use is compatible with and could even complement state land management objectives. In other situations, such use may conflict with management goals to the extent that it may not be appropriate (as is the case for state wildlife management areas where such use is prohibited). While the Agency encourages this legitimate and valuable use of its lands whenever appropriate, the activity must be carefully managed in order to minimize potential resource damage and land management conflicts, and to ensure such activity does not pose any safety or health risks to participants and the general public.

#### Policy:

The Agency believes if properly managed, geocaching and similar pursuits are an appropriate activity for many ANR lands. It is the policy of the Agency to manage this use in a manner consistent with its role as a statewide natural resource/outdoor recreation agency, while protecting the resources at the site and providing for the safety and security of site visitors. Responses to requests for placement of caches, quests, or letterboxes must weigh the relative impact of this use of Agency managed properties against the potential impacts that may be anticipated on the resource, the public and Agency programs. The Agency encourages virtual caches (i.e., waymarks, use of a unique natural feature, park sign, etc.) in lieu of physical caches where appropriate. All geocache proposals for state forest and state park lands will be considered on a case by case basis in accord with the procedure and guidelines outlined below.

Geocaching is considered an incompatible use of state wildlife management areas and is therefore prohibited in these areas by the Department of Fish and Wildlife. Such activities will not be permitted within state wildlife management areas or fishing access areas.

## **Procedure for Implementation:**

### **Installation and establishment**

Anyone wishing to place a geocache, quest, letterbox, or similar item or to establish a waymark location on ANR lands must complete a **'Geocaching Activity' Identification Form** (see Attachment A) and submit it to the District Stewardship Forester or Parks Regional Manager responsible for the requested placement property. The following guidelines will be used in considering such requests:

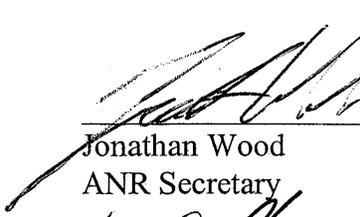
- Geocaches, quests, or letterboxes, and similar items and waymarks will not be permitted in any sensitive natural or cultural area, or in any dangerous or inappropriate areas.
- Geocaches, quests, or letterboxes, and similar items may not be buried, nor any vegetation or stones disturbed when placing the items.
- Geocache or letterbox, or similar item containers should preferably be transparent and have some form of latch or other closure to deter wildlife. If military 'ammo' boxes are to be used they must be re-painted in a non-military color and properly labeled with the appropriate activity label.
- Geocaches and letterboxes, and similar items shall not be placed in plastic or metal pipes. Geocache or letterbox, or similar item name and owner name must be clearly visible on the exterior of all containers. The geocache or letterbox, or similar item name must be the same as indicated on the Identification Form and any web site posting.
- A log book is required in all geocaches, quests, letterboxes, or similar items.

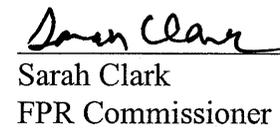
### **Monitoring, inspection and removal**

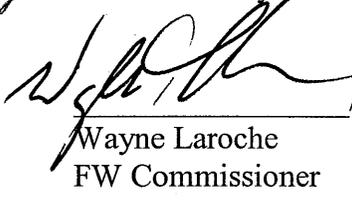
- Contents of geocaches, quests, and letterboxes, and similar items are subject to inspection by Agency staff at any time. Agency staff have the responsibility and authority to remove any items deemed unacceptable.
- Geocaches, quests, letterboxes, or similar items shall be removed by the responsible party (i.e., geocache or letterbox, or similar item owner) no later than three (3) years from date of placement, the site restored to its original condition, and the appropriate Agency staff notified in writing of its removal. Requests for extensions beyond three years are to be made to the appropriate Agency lands administrator.
- The responsible party shall archive and delete site location(s) from all publications and/or web sites within seven days of removal of a cache or letterbox, or similar item on ANR lands.
- Geocaches, letterboxes, or similar items and their contents that are removed by Agency staff are to be documented in an incident report, and the owner notified.
- Unauthorized geocaches, quests, letterboxes, and similar items on ANR lands will be removed and treated as abandoned property, and the responsible person may be cited for littering.

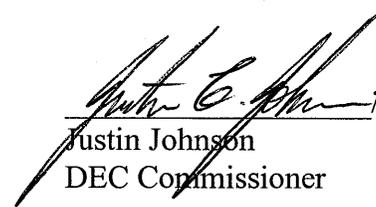
Agency staff should periodically review appropriate websites to monitor caches and letterboxes, and similar items or waymark locations on ANR lands.

Short term similar activities sponsored by Agency staff for state park programs, conservation camp activities or other like purposes should also adhere to the above guidelines.

 12/7/2010  
Jonathan Wood      Date  
ANR Secretary

 12/6/2010  
Sarah Clark      Date  
FPR Commissioner

 12/6/2010  
Wayne Laroche      Date  
FW Commissioner

 12/6/2010  
Justin Johnson      Date  
DEC Commissioner