

R5 EXAMPLE OF UNIT GEOCACHING LETTER/APPROACH

We are often asked what the "National Policy" is on geocaching and how the field should respond to geocaching in specific situations. This week, the Lake Tahoe Basin issued email letters with an excellent message and tone to geocache enthusiasts who had cached boxes on the unit. I want to share this letter with you so that you may take note. The email was factual and educational, with a sensitivity to the resources and shows an understanding of the customer. The LTBMU has received responses back from the geocache community. The responses have been apologetic and appreciative of the Deputy Forest Supervisor's approach. Great job!

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From: tkelley01@fs.fed.us  
Subject: Inappropriately Placed Geocache  
Date: Fri, 05 Aug 2005 23:15:16 -0000

File Code: 2300  
Date: August 5, 2005

Groundspeak  
Operator, Geocaching website

Re: Geocache Hidden at the Taylor Creek Visitor Center, South Lake Tahoe, California

Dear Groundspeak:

While Taylor Creek Visitor Center staff members were conducting routine maintenance, they discovered a geocache hidden on the trail to the Stream Profile Chamber. The Taylor Creek Visitor Center is located on lands administered by the US Forest Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU).

While the LTBMU understands geocaching/letterboxing as popular activities, the Forest Service has not yet adopted an official policy regarding these activities on Forest Service administered lands.

In the meantime, the LTBMU requires that all geocaches/letterboxes be hidden in appropriate areas that do not impact historic buildings, archaeological sites, interpretive displays, landscaping, riparian, wildlife, and/or wilderness areas. Appropriate areas are those that are at least 50 feet from any Forest Service structure, historic structures, archaeological sites, interpretive signs and displays, and near trails that are not located within riparian, wildlife, and/or wilderness areas.

I have had the geocache, Stream Profile Nature Walk (GCQ082), removed. The geocache was inappropriately placed within a sensitive riparian and wildlife

area and was also located too close to the weather station. In addition, other geocachers trying to locate the geocache have caused further damage to the riparian and wildlife area.

If the geocaches/letterboxes are replaced or hidden in other inappropriate areas, the geocacher/letterboxer may be in violation of Title 36 CFR 261 Subpart A 261.9 (a), which prohibits damaging any natural feature or other property of Forest Service administered lands; Title 36 CFR 261 Subpart A 261.9(g), which prohibits digging in, excavating, disturbing, injuring, destroying or in any way damaging any prehistoric, historic, or archaeological resource, structure, site, artifact, or property on Forest Service administered lands; and/or Title 36 CFR 261 Subpart A 261.10 (f), which prohibits abandoning any personal property on Forest Service administered lands.

Your website does note that geocachers need to contact the managing agency before placing a geocache on public lands and further asks geocachers to be sensitive about where they place the geocache. On behalf of the Forest Service, I thank you for posting these notices on the website. I also ask that should you find any members registering geocaches on your website that are located on Forest Service lands in inappropriate areas that you notify them as soon as possible as to possible violations of federal regulations and policies. According to your website, you do try to do this as much as possible, and again, I thank you.

I have notified 47Dad47 by email regarding the geocache. I am holding the geocache at the office listed above and have offered to work with 47Dad47 to find an appropriate place for the geocache. I have also asked 47Dad47 to consider listing this as a virtual geocache.

If you have any questions, please contact Cathy Bickenheuser at (530) 543-2673. She will talk or meet with you and assist in finding an appropriate locations for the geocaches/letterboxes, including virtual geocaches, on Forest Service, LTBMU administered lands.

Sincerely,

/s/ Tyrone Kelley

TYRONE KELLEY  
Deputy Forest Supervisor