

Good Morning Leona,

I understand (via conversations with several people) that you and George were surprised to learn about the Park Commission's need for group use permits. While word of mouth notification may not be the surest way to inform our park users and group leaders of this new regulation, we are working on a solution to that with the updated rules and regulations for the Park Commission. With this permit rule, it is not our goal to hinder the use of our parks by the public, but to make sure both the individual and group users have positive experiences and that our parks are used properly. Knowing where our groups are in a given day also helps Rangers with planning their park patrols.

Below are questions I received regarding the permits and permit application for group use. Your original questions are in black text, my answers in green.

If you have further questions, or want to discuss these matters, please feel free to reach out to me Leona. I am happy to meet with you and help this along. We value the experiences you provide for the community and for the efforts given forth to Roebing Park. I'd hate for something as trivial as a permit to break our partnership.

Best,

Jenn

Where are the guidelines and requirements – it is land, water or both at Roebing Park - group size?? How about Spring Lake where folks boat and sometimes fish? Who initiated this – the Friends EC or the County or perhaps it's Kelly?

Permits are for all county park land – earthen terrain, pond, lake, marsh and stream. Trail use, paddling, bird watching, etc. are all activities that would need a permit if an outside group wants to host an organized event.

It's not group SIZE, but an organized group outing sponsored by a NON PARK agency.

Permits are not required for individual people.

The Park Commission has been incorporating this policy over the past few years, doing our best to reach groups as we can to alert them to this requirement. The process will be formalized within the year with updating of the Park Commission's Rules and Regulations.

As I wrote other groups currently have trips scheduled – how is this enforced in the broader community? I plan ahead of time so my SC outings are published 3 months ahead.

Currently the Park Commission is asking organizations and groups to fill out permit applications on an ad hoc basis. Washington Crossing Audubon Society, Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space and Sourland Conservancy complete the permit application process.

In the future we will advertise this policy on our website, in kiosks and by Park Rangers on patrol.

Do I need a permit if George and I and a friend just want to paddle to Roebing on a non-scheduled basis? Paddlers do this all the time – how is this managed? How far ahead do this permits need to be completed? And then who gives the okay it's approved? Is that Kelly?

No. Permits are for large groups and formal outings hosted by an outside organization. Also, before groups publish their schedule/programs, a permit request should be approved.

How about the local community who enjoys Watson Woods for their birthday parties and family events?

Community can enjoy Watson woods as long as the group is under the designated size restriction. If it's larger, then they will need a permit.

You mentioned safety – on the water – will patrol boats be on the water with County staff when folks are paddling since they'll know that from the permit?

Jenn mentioned safety in general, not specifically on water. There will not be patrol boats.

Hopefully, the “decision-makers” have all this addressed and it’s somewhere documented – and perhaps planning kiosks with permit forms at all Roebing Park locations and Bordentown Beach too.

Documentation is coming 😊 -- notification on this and all new regulations will be in park kiosks and the Park Commission website

Where is the original formal notification for this requirement? And what date did this go in effect? Where’s the signage so all users can comply? Will the Park Rangers have access to approved permits so they can validate if a group is in compliance?

There is no formal notification for this requirement, yet. The policy has been in the works for about three years. Our rules and regulations are catching up and will be finalized by end of this year.

Yes, Rangers will have access to approved permits so that they can give the attention needed at group events.

And how does the rest of the paddling community comply – we were singled out by Kelly because we plan and document and have trips and cleanups in advance and have insurance!!. That’s the reward for being organized. I told her other groups have trips scheduled and her eyes widened – really!

You were not singled out. It’s more that you are the paddling group that we do have contact information for/communicate with.

By the way – these meet-ups have no insurance – let the County know – a death or accident is on the COUNTY!! Especially since your e-mail said they are doing this for safety. Please send the definition of how this is safety is addressed with a permit.

Keeping park users and the park safe through the permit process is a general form of protection. These permits are not water specific.

From George: “Form”, we were not clear how it applies to the Sierra Club, Pineypaddlers, or just a group of friends paddling to Roebing park on a nice tide and weather day.

The following include some of the questions that the County policy documentation must include in their formal public response;

I am especially concerned about the words “Safety” provided by the County with regard to water activities from Bordentown Beach to Watson Woods.

The Park Commission cannot be addressing safety issues outside of their park boundaries for outside groups. Safety refers to groups having liability coverage and ensuring that our Rangers know where groups of people will be on a specific day.

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