



EarthWatch Rhode Island



Topic: Modern Day Treasure Hunting – Geo-caching

Date: Friday, June 6, 2008

Location: George Washington Memorial Camping Area, Gloucester

June has been declared “Great Outdoors Month” by President Bush and Governor Carcieri and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management is encouraging Rhode Islanders to re-discover the outdoors with many events and activities throughout the state. One activity DEM is promoting is geo-caching, a sport that is becoming very popular with people who like playing around with the latest gadgets and exploring the great outdoors.

What is geo-caching? Geo-caching is a high-tech treasure hunt game that is growing in popularity across the country and beyond. Cache containers are placed in various locations where adventurers can combine being outdoors with the use of sophisticated (but easy to use) global positioning technology to hunt for these “treasures.” DEM-owned parks and forest areas, such as George Washington, Colt and Lincoln Woods, are home to many Rhode Island caches.

How is it done? Players can log onto www.geocaching.com to get a list of waypoints, or latitudinal and longitudinal coordinates, that pinpoint where caches are hidden. Anyone with a hand-held GPS unit can enter the coordinates into their device. Next, using the GPS unit, players can see where they are in relation to the hidden cache. By using the GPS units, players are directed towards the cache. Once there, players may find a notable landmark or a container that includes a logbook and small gifts left by previous players and other “finds.” In return, players may leave something in each cache if they choose. Players can log their finds and share messages about their geo-caching experiences. No special skills are required to geo-cache. The website ranks the caches by how difficult the cache is to find and the difficulty of the terrain. Competitive geo-cachers aim to be the first to find a new geo-cache and to find the most caches.

Geo-caching Etiquette. DEM is encouraging people to keep geo-caching fun and safe by following some common sense rules and ethics of the sport. When placing or seeking geo-caches make sure that you:

- Never remove or relocate a cache. Once you find the cache, claim your prize and leave the cache for others to find exactly where you found it.
- Tread lightly on the land - minimize impact on the environment. Caches were placed above the ground in relatively well-traveled areas. There should be no need to disturb natural features to find a cache.
- Do not endanger yourself or others.
- Observe all laws and rules of the park. If you have trouble locating a cache, ask the park ranger for hints and tips.
- Respect property rights.

- Be considerate of others. Avoid causing disruptions.

RI.D.E.M Geo Cachers and Geo-Camping Event at George Washington Campground

Felicia Celeberto and Paul St. Pierre are DEM employees who became aware of geo-caching through their jobs at DEM, and are now geo-caching enthusiasts. On their own time, Felicia and Paul have formed the RI.D.E.M. Geo-Cachers and have organized a geo-cacher's weekend at George Washington Campground from Friday, June 13 through Sunday, June 15. They hope to network with other geo-cachers and to encourage more people to become geo-cachers.

The weekend begins with a pot luck dinner on Friday evening and includes geo-caching activities all weekend as well as a safe kayaking and canoeing demonstration on Saturday morning. GPS coordinates for new geo-cachers will be revealed during the weekend. Details can be found on www.geocaching.com by searching for cachers by State and clicking on Rhode Island. All activities are open to the public. Camping is not required for the weekend; however, DEM suggests that those who wish to camp reserve in advance through its ReserveAmerica system at www.reservamerica.com. Walk-in campers are also welcome on a first come, first serve basis.

Interviews:

- Paul St. Pierre, DEM Forestry provided details of the camping weekend at George Washington.



Paul St. Pierre being interviewed by Channel 10's Kelly McGee.