



ROCHESTER PARK AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

POLICY ON HUNTING, TRAPPING AND HARVESTING IN CITY PARKS

PURPOSE

To establish a policy related to Hunting, Trapping, Fishing, and Harvesting in City Parkland and/or public lands under the stewardship of the Rochester Park Department.

HISTORY

Over the past 6 years staff have continually enforced prohibitions against hunting, trapping, fishing and harvesting in the parks. While the current RCO 45B ordinance does not explicitly address Hunting or Trapping, harvesting or removal of fruit is addressed along with the prohibition of firearms or projectiles (which virtually prohibits hunting). Fishing is not addressed in the ordinance. Because there are some clarity issues and even a lack of governance, there is a need to either refine the ordinance, which provides citation enforcement or adopt a policy to educate park users on what is allowed while still retaining the ability to trespass for infractions, for issues related to the three items that are not authorized, hunting, trapping, fishing, and harvesting.

- Recent history of infractions that I am aware of within the park system include archery hunting in Quarry Hill, Gamehaven Park, and Essex Park. Trapping has been an issue at Cascade lake, Quarry Hill, and along several creek corridors. Harvesting issues have included removal of trees, native vegetation/grasses, seeds and fruit, mushrooms occur in multiple parks (most notably, Zumbro Park South, Essex Park, Northern Hills Prairie, and along the river/creek corridors. This also includes conversion of property from native to mowed turf (however, this is addressed in our encroachment policy)
- Issues
 - Hunting – this activity does create liability and potentially dangerous situations between park users and those that are using firearms, archery, or other forms of hunting tools. The community members should not be placed in harm's way because they wish to utilize the park for the benefit of a few hunters benefit. While there are DNR rules regarding locations where hunting is allowed, we cannot rely upon hunters to follow regulations at the expense of the park user who may not know regulations.
 - Trapping – This activity, while generally is less dangerous, it is still a potential hazard for park users and pets that may wander where traps are set. Again any allowance for this is at the benefit of very few and the potential detriment for many.
 - Harvesting – This includes any removal of fruit, plants etc from the environment. While on the surface this may seem like a harmless activity. Unfortunately, removal of fruit/seed or plant material can and does damage the local environment if not performed correctly and if it not an intended practice. By removal of the seed bank of specific species it can create a monoculture or reduce the viability of the local vegetation which can thus impact the wildlife in the area. This is especially true if we begin to have multiple individuals harvesting at any given location.
 - Fishing, the only conflicts that have existed includes areas at Silver Lake, Foster Arends, and Cascade Lake. This issues surround conflicts of fishing with other uses like Mining

at Cascade Lake, conflicts between users at Foster Arends/Silver Creek Reservoir, and conflicts with rowers at Silver Lake.

POLICY ADMINISTRATION

1. There shall be no hunting, trapping, or harvesting within the Park System unless permitted by written permission of the Director of Parks and Recreation or Park Board
2. Areas set aside for harvesting purposes within the parks by the Park Board could include areas for things similar to the following:
 - a. Edible forest area
 - b. Community and Neighborhood Garden programs (program already developed under separate policy)
 - c. Native seed collection locations
3. If hunting or trapping is allowed the use is additionally subject to Department of Natural Resources (DNR) regulations
4. Fishing will be allowed within the Park System subject to DNR Regulations and other regulations that may be established by the Park Board to manage conflicting park uses
5. Staff may post properties restrictions or prohibitions for hunting/trapping/fishing consistent with this policy and if required shall be consistent with state regulations.
6. Since this policy does not create the ability to issue citations by the Police Department this policy will be utilized as a tool to educate individuals regarding proper park use. This policy may be utilized to trespass individuals from park property should that be required for repeated infractions.

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