

Caroline County Recreation and Parks

Athletic Field Allocation and Use Policy

Athletic fields within parks and open space properties owned and maintained by the Commissioners of Caroline County through its department of Recreation and Park must be reserved for league and other organized community-based athletic play according to the reservation policies outlined below:

- I. Definition of terms
- II. Field locations
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I. Definition of Terms

- a. The “Department” refers to the Department of Recreation and Parks located at 107 South Fourth Street in Denton, MD and on-line at www.carolinerecreation.org; telephone 410.479.8120
- b. “Community-Based leagues” shall be defined as an organized non-profit sports league that is self-insured whose principal place of activity is Caroline County and whose membership base is 2/3 Caroline County residents.
- c. “Non-community-based league” or organization is a group that does not meet one or more of the descriptive standards noted in the definition of community-based leagues.
- d. “In season sports” refers to the schedule of competitive play outlined by the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) at www.mpssaa.org, which includes spring sports (baseball, softball, lacrosse, tennis and track and field), and fall sports (cross country, field hockey, soccer, football, golf and volleyball). Out of season play would be sports practice and game play set in alternative seasons other than those outlined above.
- e. “Certificate of Insurance” refers to written documentation provided by the community-organization’s insurance provider that specifies the level of liability and property damage coverage provided by that company. The property owner of the athletic field reserved for use must be listed as the certificate holder and as the “other insured”. The property owner for Elementary and Lockerman Middle Schools is Caroline County Board of Education, 204 Franklin Street, Denton, MD. For the community-based fields under the management operations of Caroline County Recreation & Parks, the property owner is Caroline County Commissioner, 109 Market Street, Denton, MD 21629.
- f. “Adopt-A-Field” represents an optional program available to any community-based leagues that wish to secure a priority position on the reservation calendar timeline for league activities, and wish to financially contribute to an increased standard of turf conditioning and care at a particular athletic field.
- g. “Field-Use Application” is the form used by an individual, age 21 or older, to submit a reservation request for athletic fields on behalf of an organization or league.
- h. “Preference period” refers to a calendar timeframe to accommodate priority use requests from certain community-based sports leagues before other use requests are scheduled.
- i. “Spring/Summer-use” refers to a calendar period of April 1 to June 15.
- j. “Fall-use” refers to a calendar period of August 16 to November 1.
- k. “Special event use” applies to organizations whose primary function is not organized athletic programming, but use athletic activity for fellowship, special service and fundraising for non-profit benefit.

- l. "Permit confirmation" is a written confirmation transmitted electronically to the league, or organization for the reserved use of the athletic field under department jurisdiction.
- m. "Concession permit" unless otherwise specified refers to a Temporary Food Service Permit available through the Caroline County Environmental Health Department at www.carolinehd.org . The pdf address for the on-line form is <http://www.carolinehd.org/html/EHS/C2FSF.PDF> and should be submitted three weeks in advance of the event directly to the Environmental Health office located at 403 South Seventh Street in Denton; 410.479.8045
- n. "Concussion Awareness Form" is a one-sheet amendment to the Field Use Application necessary to certify the requesting user's intent to communicate concussion awareness information to its coaching leadership, program participants and their parents or guardians. It is required to satisfy Maryland State Law.

II. Field Locations under the direction of the Department include the following:

- a. Henderson Community Park located on Bee Tree and River Bridge Roads in Henderson: one little league baseball field.
- b. Cedar Lane Park located on Cedar Lane within the Town of Greensboro: one senior league ballfield, concession stand.
- c. HAPS open space located behind the Health and Public Services Building on Seventh and Sunnyside Ave within the Town of Denton: one multipurpose field.
- d. Harmony Community Park located north of Preston within the village of Harmony on Route 16: one little League baseball field.
- e. South County Regional Park located on Seippes and American Corner Road near Federalsburg: three oversized multi-purpose fields, soccer goals.
- f. Preston Elementary School : Clark Harrison Memorial Park located behind the school on Noble Avenue within Preston: the baseball fields, two t-ball fields, two multipurpose fields, concession stand, two tennis courts.
- g. Denton Elementary School located on Sharp Road within Denton: two Little League baseball fields, three multipurpose fields, concession stand.
- h. Lockerman Middle School Park on Lockerman Street in Denton: one Senior League baseball field, lighted; concession stand, one multi-purpose field, ¼ mile cinder track.
- i. Ridgely Elementary on Central Ave and Seward Road in Ridgely: two Little League baseball fields, two multipurpose fields.
- j. Greensboro Elementary School on Main Street within Greensboro: one Little League baseball field.
- k. Federalsburg Elementary School on University Ave. in Federalsburg: 2 baseball fields and 1 t-ball field.

Reservation requests for other athletic field locations within the incorporated town limits of Greensboro, Ridgely, and Federalsburg, unless specified above, should be directed to the respective Town Office.

Authority to coordinate the reservation requests for athletic fields located on the Board of Education properties listed above was transferred by Caroline County Public Schools to the Department of Recreation & Parks, effective August 2011.

III. Field reservations are required under two conditions:

- a. If the league or organization must communicate a regular schedule of practices, games and/or events in advance of the activity to participants; or
- b. The group assembling at the athletic field is 25 participants or more.

When no reservation is required, park athletic fields may be used on a first-come, first served basis for their intended use, unless otherwise restricted.

IV. Notification Requirements for Concussion Awareness

In accordance with action by the Maryland State Legislature in 2011, sections of the Maryland Annotated Code were amended to require youth sports programs that use publically owned parks and facilities to verify distribution of concussion information to parents/guardians annually, and receive verifiable acknowledgement of receipt.

Although the Department will not dictate precisely how an independent league or youth sports program should comply with this new law, the Department can be available to these organizations to advise them of its own administrative procedures for Department-sponsored programs and offer recommendations.

To satisfy the requirements of the athletic field use reservation process, the requesting user must complete the Concussion Awareness Form attached to the Field Use Application.

- V. **Priority-Use policy** refers to the relative priority that Field Use Applications are invited and considered in scheduling field reservation. Priority-use is accommodated by scheduling a calendar submission date *before* other applications are considered for scheduling. After the preference period has expired, use is granted on a first-come, first-served basis with the exception of Adopt-A-Field Agreements.
- a. First Priority is assigned to programs under the direction of the Department and scheduled at any athletic field by February 1 for Spring/Summer-use and May 1 for the Fall-use. First priority use is also reserved to execute the maintenance program for facilities and turf directed by the Department.
 - b. Second Priority is reserved for community-based leagues that are engaged in a formal Adopt-A-Field Agreement with the Department.
 - c. Third Priority is assigned to community-based leagues that propose a schedule of in-season athletic play.
 - d. Fourth Priority: reservations for out-of-season play submitted by community-based leagues and community organizations requesting special event use.
 - e. Fifth Priority: reservations requested by non-community based leagues and organizations for all other athletic uses.

Regardless of priority status, the Department reserves the right to restrict field use at any time based on field conditions due to weather, maintenance activity, or previous use performance of league or organization on any Department-managed athletic field.

VI. **Permit Application Schedule**

- a. Spring Field Use
 - i. Adopt-A-Field partners may submit field use requests on or before February 15 for April 1- June 15 athletic play.
 - ii. Applications that are consistent with the Third and Fourth Priority use categories are reviewed and assigned from February 15 to March 1; field reservation requests for in-season athletic play are always accommodated before fourth priority uses are addressed regardless of the relative date of submission within the 2/15-3/1 time period.
 - iii. Application for all other priority uses are reviewed and assigned after March 1 on a first-come, first-served basis. Additional restrictions may apply for fields under an Adopt-A-Field partnership.
- b. Fall Field Use
 - i. Adopt-A-Field partners may submit field use requests on or before May 15 for August 15- November 1 athletic play.
 - ii. Applications that are consistent with the Third and Fourth Priority use categories are reviewed and assigned from May 15- June 1; field reservation requests for in-season athletic play are always accommodated before fourth priority uses are addressed regardless of the relative date of submission within the 5/15-6/1 time period.
 - iii. Application for all other priority uses are reviewed and assigned after June 1 on a first-come, first-served basis. Additional restrictions may apply for fields under an Adopt-A-Field partnership.

VII. **Application Procedures**

- a. Required information for field-use reservations on Department athletic fields include:
 - i. A completed Field Reservation Request Form,
 - ii. A completed Concussion Awareness Form
 - iii. Evidence that the applicant is 21 years of age or older,

- iv. Certificate of insurance issued to the property owner by the sponsoring organization's insurance provider for the duration of the reservation request. The Certificate must reference the Caroline County Commissioners and/or the Caroline County Board of Education as "other insured" and detail the coverage limits for liability and property damage.
 - v. The specific game and practice schedules for the league organization *for that field*.
 - vi. The names and contact information for the league coaches/team managers assigned to use requested fields under the jurisdiction of the organization submitting the use request.
- b. The Field Reservation application is not complete without the required information. Department staff **can not** reserve the field for the requested use. Incomplete Field Reservation applications will no longer be accepted after September 1, 2011.
 - c. The Field Reservation Request Form may be accessed electronically at www.carolinerecreation.org or requested/acquired at the Department. There are no fees associated with the field reservation process.
 - d. Reservation requests will not be accepted until February 1 for spring sports play and May 1 for fall sports play; reservation requests will be reviewed for scheduling for each Priority use category detailed in section IV of this document.
 - e. A permit confirmation will be transmitted to the applicant within two weeks of the Department's scheduling process to confirm reservation.

VIII. Standard of Care for Maintenance Operations

Caroline County fields are maintained for the Spring/Summer season as of April 1 for spring sports and as of August 15 for fall sports. Maintenance includes general repair of available utilities, grass-cutting and trash pick-up for county-supplied receptacles. It does not include sports field lay-out and infield conditioning; therefore, no guarantees are made as to the condition of fields prior to the above dates. Use of the fields at any time shall be at the sole risk of the user and shall be subject to all field use guidelines contained in this policy.

Periods for sports turf conditioning and repair are generally scheduled from November 1-March 1 and from June 15 to August 15. Although public use within these periods is not prohibited (unless specified), the department will make every effort to accommodate the maintenance schedule with the public use

IX. Field Use Requirements

- a. Permit reservations for athletic fields are:
 - i. Non-transferable to another league, organization or team other than the one specified on the permit confirmation.
 - ii. Recommended to be on-site in the possession of the league coach, manager or contact point.
 - iii. Restricted to daylight hours. Field must be vacated by dark unless otherwise specified.
 - iv. Team practice times should be limited to 2 hour periods or less per team.
- b. Permit-holders - including their players, coaches, managers *and* spectators - are required to adhere to the following behavior standards:
 - i. Consumption and visibility of beer and alcohol is prohibited;
 - ii. No urinating or changing clothes in public;
 - iii. No loud noises permitted (boom boxes, horns, car alarms);
 - iv. No littering (trash must be picked up, placed in provided containers or carried out);
 - v. Trash accumulated in league-provided trash cans must be removed from the site after each use;
 - vi. The use of tobacco products (including cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, and snuff) is not permitted on the benches, playing areas, and those areas in proximity to the playing field;

- vii. No selling of food or beverages without a concession permit- a Temporary Food Service Permit from the Caroline County Health Department (refer to definitions on page 1);
- viii. Parking allowed in designated parking areas only;
- ix. Loud music, bands, or excessive noise which disturbs the peace is prohibited.
- c. Field use in inclement weather is restricted if any of the following conditions exist:
 - i. a steady rain is falling;
 - ii. a lightening or electrical storm is occurring;
 - iii. water is standing on the field;
 - iv. The ground feels "spongy" and/or soil is frozen.
- d. Permit holders are prohibited from fixing wet fields in order to play games.

X. **Permit Denial / Revocation** Applications may be denied by the Department in the event of the following:

- a. Violation of Field Use Requirements;
- b. Failure to use permitted field consistently within a season;
- c. Non-compliance with permit application process;
- d. Damage or vandalism directly related to league or organization's current or previous use of any Department facility or athletic field;
- e. Field renovation or repair, or for any other reason, deemed necessary by the Department.

XI. **Adopt-A-Field** program is an agreement established between a community-based league and the Department to increase the mowing frequency of the athletic playing fields, increase the revenue potential for the league through advertisement postings at the site, leverage capital grant funding for athletic field improvements, and ensure priority consideration for field use scheduling for seasonal play.

This is an optional agreement that is best negotiated face-to-face with representatives of the Department.

- a. Fields eligible for Adopt-A-Field agreements include Harmony Community Park, Cedar Lane Park, HAPS multi-purpose field, and Henderson Community Park. South County Regional Park is not eligible for such an agreement at this time.
- b. Adopt-A-Field requirements include, but are not limited to, the following conditions:
 - i. Department management of contract services for mowing, trash removal, landscaping and repair of turf areas and facilities.
 - 1. Grass cutting is scheduled every 2 weeks; trash removal from Department supplied receptacles 1-2 times per week based on public use.
 - 2. Increasing the frequency of grass cutting to improve playing field conditions is a service cost contributed by the league or organization, payable to the Department based on the per visit service cost of the contracted vendor.
 - ii. League/organization authorization to erect temporary signage on behalf of program sponsors or advertisers and retain 100% of revenue generated, provided the sign meets Department approval for construction, content and location.
 - iii. League/organization receives priority consideration for field scheduling requests before all other community requests if submitted within the timeframe recommended in this document. Adopt-a-field agreements do not include exclusive use of the athletic field.
 - iv. Agreements may be negotiated for 6 months or one year period. Annual agreements can be renewed based on Department and league satisfaction with previous performance.
- c. Adopt-A-Field agreements are best negotiated with Department representatives directly. Contact Sue Simmons, Director or George Jamar, Parks and Facilities Chief for more information.