

POLK COUNTY PHOTOGRAPHY POLICY

This policy applies to all recreational and commercial photography on real property owned or leased, in whole or in part, by Polk County, Florida ("county property"). The term photo, photographer and photography shall be deemed to include video, videographer and videography. The term recreational photographer shall mean when the activity is undertaken for a person's personal collection or like use and where photographer has no intent to use the photographs for profit or gain. The term commercial photographer shall mean when the activity is intended to be used for profit or gain, and includes those who sell their work product for money, or charge a photo shoot fee or session fee. Additional fees and a vendor contract may be required to engage in commercial photography. The county reserves the right to impose reasonable terms and conditions, as well as charge a reasonable fee and for any staff time or costs incurred by the county arising out of or resulting from a photographers proposed activities on county property.

The county encourages the use of its Polk County Parks (including the Polk County History Center) and Environmental Lands for recreational and commercial photography. Recreational and commercial photography on property used for county operations is not permitted except for official, ceremonial, news reporting, or other incidental purposes.

Photography on county property for news reporting shall be allowed without a permit; provided, such news reporting shall be limited to such times and such areas so as to not unreasonably interfere with the day to day activities or emergency operations undertaken on the county property, restrict county employees or citizens from entering or leaving the county property, interrupt county employees in the carrying out of their day to day job duties, and is otherwise conducted in compliance with all other applicable laws, rules, and regulations. News organizations are requested to provide reasonable advance notice to Polk County's Communications Division of anticipated news reporting activities on county property.

A permit is required for all commercial photographers who visit Polk County Parks and Environmental Lands' properties before taking photos on County Parks and Environmental Land sites. There shall be two types of special use permits available: (1) a general permit which allows photos when no props, special equipment, or special access is required; and (2) a specific permit for any photo session when props, special equipment, or special access is required. All commercial photographers must have an approved permit in their possession when conducting commercial photography. No permit = no photo shoot. The permit holder shall obtain all required waivers and/or releases from third parties. Permission for commercial photography in the Polk County History Center may be included in their Facilities Use Agreement.

Violating the Polk County Photography Policy or county ordinances may result in suspension or revocation of a permit or the issuance of a violation notice, or both. Photographers are required to become familiar with and abide by County Parks and Environmental Lands Program regulations and policies. Permittees are strictly responsible for the conduct of their employees, assistants, and guests' while on county property.

A special use commercial photography permit may be obtained from the Polk County Parks and Natural Resources Division (863) 534-7377 (for Park properties); at the Polk Nature Discovery Center (863) 668-4673 (for Environmental Lands Sites) or the History Center (863) 534-4386 for the Historical County Courthouse. In addition to this policy, each site may have specific rules that must be followed by the photographer.

GENERAL RULES FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS:

1. Appropriate clothing must be worn at all times – no nude or topless photos. Body paint in lieu of clothing does not qualify as meeting the appropriate clothing standard.
2. For your safety and the long term protection of the wildlife, do not pursue, chase, or follow wildlife. Animals must not be blocked or pursued by foot, vehicle or bicycle.
3. No feeding wildlife or baiting wildlife.
4. Animals (other than trained service animals) may not be brought onto or released on park properties (this includes and is not limited to the following: wildlife, cats, bunnies, chickens, etc.).
5. Parking is allowed only in designated parking areas. Questions about designated parking areas should be submitted to Parks & Natural Resources staff.
6. Photography props and portrait photographs are not allowed inside County Buildings. Special permission (such as through a Facilities Use Agreement with the History Center) may be granted on a case by case basis.
7. Attracting animals with food, calls, scents, using personal blinds, or altering vegetation around wildlife is strictly prohibited in order to protect the water, wildlife and wilderness. In addition, this behavior may be considered a form of harassment and may violate state and federal laws.
8. Allowing a wild animal to approach you or investigate your property (i.e. your gear, tripods, cameras, backpack, food containers or water bottles) increases the risk of these animals developing unnatural behavior. Do NOT encourage this behavior; it puts the wild animal's life in danger in future situations. Attempt to dissuade the animal from approaching by backing up and moving away.
9. Intentional harassing, disturbing or feeding of wildlife is prohibited by Federal Regulation. For the purpose of this policy, harassment is defined as "any human action that causes unusual behavior or significant change of behavior by an animal." Disturbance is defined as "to intrude upon, inconvenience or interfere with." A professional wildlife photographer is responsible for knowing the point at which human presence becomes harassment.
10. If Polk County staff or a volunteer informs you that you are too close to wildlife or that you are violating the Parks & Natural Resources Lands Rules – you must follow their recommendations; failure to do so may result in the termination of your Special Use Permit.
11. Do not interfere with other visitors' enjoyment of park areas and wildlife by monopolizing viewing areas. When the public, school groups or tram tours are in the area, please step aside and allow their passage.

12. Do not enter closed areas. It is the photographer's responsibility to stay off closed trails and stay out of closed areas. Vehicles must remain on paved roads or in designated parking areas. Closures will vary from year to year, or in the case of emergency closures, from day to day.
13. Activities are limited to the normal posted hours for each site. Any after hour's photography must have prior approval.
14. At the conclusion of the photo shoot, the entire site must be cleaned up and left in its original condition.

Rules Pertaining Specifically to Environmental Lands Sites

1. Decorations, balloons, adhesive tape, streamers, banners and confetti, are not appropriate at these sites and are not allowed.
2. All props which includes furniture must stay within the designated areas. Check with the Polk Nature Discovery Center Office at Circle B Bar Reserve to obtain a map for locations where photography props are allowed. Photography props cannot be setup in a manner that: impedes traffic, takes away from the ambience of the nature reserve or presents a safety hazard. Photography props cannot be left unattended. Unattended props will be disposed of promptly.
3. Photographers must remain on the marked and maintained trails (as shown on the Site Trail Map) or stay within the designated photo prop areas.

The County reserves the right to deny photography permits if it deems that the activity is not appropriate for public facilities, may result in health or safety issues, will intrude upon the general public's ability to enjoy and utilize the facilities or impact county staffing requirements.