Filming

Changes to Commercial Filming Permits on Park Land

On January 22, 2021, the US District Court for the District of Columbia issued a decision in *Price v. Barr* determining the permit and fee requirements applying to commercial filming under 54 USC 100905, 43 CFR Part 5, and 36 CFR Part 5.5 are unconstitutional. The National Park Service has issued interim guidance as of February 22, 2021, to manage filming activities. Under the interim guidance, filming activities may require a permit if they pose a threat to park resources or the visitor experience. The National Park Service intends to update regulations addressing filming activities that are consistent with the outcome of *Price v. Barr*. Once effective, those regulations will replace and supersede the interim guidance.

As regulations regarding commercial filming permits are being reassessed, **those interested in commercial filming activities on land managed by the National Park Service are encouraged to contact the park directly for more information about filming in the park** and to discuss how to minimize potential impacts to visitors and sensitive park resources.

**Do I need a permit to film?**

Under the interim guidance, the National Park Service is not distinguishing between types of filming, such as commercial, non-commercial, or news gathering. Low-impact filming activities will not require a special use permit, but non-low-impact filming may require a permit to consider its potential impacts on park resources and visitor activities.

**Low-Impact Filming**

“Low-impact filming’ is defined as outdoor filming activities in areas open to the public, except areas managed as wilderness, involving five people or less and equipment that will be carried at all times, except for small tripods used to hold cameras. Those participating in low-impact filming activities do not need a permit and are not required to contact the park in advance. If low-impact filmers have questions about areas where they want to film, they should contact the park directly.

All applicable laws and regulations governing activities and public use in parks still apply, including park hours and areas open and closed to the public. Videographers, filmers, producers, directors, news and other staff associated with filming are reminded that rules and regulations that apply to all park visitors still apply to filming activities even if no permit is needed for their activity. Check with the park staff for more information on closures, sensitive resources, and other safety tips.

**Non-Low-Impact Filming**
Filming activities that do not meet the description of low-impact filming requires at least ten days advance notice to the National Park Service by contacting the park directly in writing. The park’s superintendent will determine whether the filming activity will require a special use permit for filming. Based on the information provided, a permit may be required to:

- maintain public health and safety;
- protect environmental or scenic values;
- protect natural or cultural resources;
- allow for equitable allocation or use of facilities; or
- avoid conflict among visitor use activities.

Some requests that may require permits: entering a sensitive resource area, filming in areas that require tickets to enter, or filming in visitor centers, campgrounds, or other visitor areas. The decision to require a permit rests with the park superintendent based on the threat to park resources, values or the visitor experience.

Contact the park directly if unsure whether or not a filming activity is considered low-impact or will require a permit.

### Filming in Wilderness Areas

The National Park Service manages and protects more than 44 million acres of Congressionally-designated wilderness areas under the Wilderness Act of 1964. These areas have additional laws and policies to preserve their wilderness character for future generations. Filming activities in wilderness areas must follow all applicable laws and regulations that govern wilderness areas in the park, including prohibitions on structures, installations, motor vehicles, mechanical transport, motorized equipment, motorboats, or landing aircrafts.

Special use permits for filming are required for all filming activities in wilderness areas, except casual filming by visitors, no matter the group size or equipment used.

### Are filmers still required to pay fees to film in parks?

As of January 22, 2021, and under the interim guidance the National Park Service is not collecting application or location fees, or cost recovery for filming activities.

### Still Photography

**When is a permit needed?**

*Price v. Barr* had no impact on how the National Park Service regulates still photography, so there are no changes in how the National Park Service regulates that activity. Still photographers require a permit only when:
1. the activity takes place at location(s) where or when members of the public are generally not allowed; or

2. the activity uses model(s), set(s), or prop(s) that are not a part of the location's natural or cultural resources or administrative facilities; or

3. a park would incur additional administrative costs to monitor the activity.

How do I apply for a permit?

Permit applications are available through each park's administrative office or website. Contact information for parks can be found on their websites; visit Find a Park to locate the park where you would like to photograph. You should submit a completed application along with the application fee to the park where you want to film or photograph as far in advance of your planned date as possible. In addition, you should request a meeting with park staff if your proposed activity is unusual or complex. Early consultation with park staff will help them process the submitted application in a timely manner.

What fees will I have to pay?

The National Park Service will collect a cost recovery charge and a location fee for still photography permits. Cost recovery includes an application fee and any additional charges to cover the costs incurred by the National Park Service in processing your request and monitoring your permit. This amount will vary depending on the park and the size and complexity of your permit. The application fee must be submitted with your application.

In addition, the National Park Service has been directed by Congress to collect a fee to provide a fair return to the United States for the use of park lands. The National Park Service uses the following still photography fee schedule:

- 1–10 people - $50/day
- 11–30 people - $150/day
- Over 30 people - $250/day

Are there other permit requirements?

You may be required to obtain liability insurance naming the United States as additionally insured in an amount commensurate with the risk posed to park resources by your proposed activity. You may also be asked to post a bond to ensure the payment of all charges and fees and the restoration of the area if necessary.

What about photography workshops?
If you are planning a photography workshop, you may need a commercial use authorization. See the [commercial use authorization page](#) for more information.