



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore
1100 N. Mineral Springs Road
Porter, Indiana 46304-1299

Frequently Asked Questions Special Events, Activities, Commercial Filming and Photography Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore

Special Park Uses are activities that take place within a national park outside typical and ordinary use. These events may include activities such as weddings, commercial filming and sales activities. Persons interested in hosting an activity within the park may be required to obtain a Special Use Permit. The decision on whether a permit is required for a particular activity rests with park management. Specific questions related to proposed activities can be answered by contacting the Chief Ranger's Office at 219-395-1644.

Q: How do I know if I need a permit for my activity?

A: If your activity meets the following criteria, you will need a permit:

- The activity is not something that visitors typically do during a visit to the park
- The activity is primarily private and limited to a particular group of people
- The park needs to manage the activity to properly protect park resources and the public
- The activity is not initiated, sponsored or conducted by the National Park Service

Q: Are there things that I will not be allowed to do?

A: While the National Park Service permits as many proposed activities as we can, policy and law prevents us from approving some requests. An activity cannot be permitted if it will:

- be unlawful
- damage park resources
- present a clear and present danger to public health and safety
- unreasonably impair the atmosphere of peace and tranquility maintained in wilderness, natural or historic areas of the park
- interfere with park programs, normal visitor activities or the running of the park
- impair the operations of NPS approved concessioners or contractors
- result in conflict with other existing uses
- normally be managed under a Commercial Use Authorization or concession contract
- ordinarily be managed under a lease
- be contrary to the purposes for which the park was established
- not contribute to visitor understanding of the significance of the park

- not have a meaningful association with the purpose of the park (does not pertain to filming/photography permits). The proposed activity must show a direct relationship to the park purpose:

To preserve, restore, and protect outstanding ecological and biological diversity along with the geologic features that characterize the southern shore of Lake Michigan. To provide access for a large diverse populations to experience natural scenic open spaces, historic features, educational scientific, inspirational, and recreational opportunities.

NOTE - The term “inspirational, and recreational opportunities” does not refer to ALL possible recreational activities. The relationship of proposed activities must be considered within the context of the park purpose.

Q: How far in advance can I apply for a permit?

A: Your applications must be received a minimum of three weeks prior to the date of the activity. We cannot accept applications for events more than six months away.

Q: I think my activity will be OK, how do I get a permit?

A: You begin the permit process by obtaining an application form. You must submit the completed application form, along with a check or money order for the permit application costs submitted before your application is considered.

Q: Where can I get the application?

A: Applications are available from several sources:

U.S. Mail – Chief Ranger’s Office – Permit Coordinator
Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore
1100 N. Mineral Springs Road
Porter, Indiana 46304

Internet – <http://www.nps.gov/indu/planyourvisit/permits.htm>

In Person– Applications may be obtained at Park Headquarters, located at the park address, during normal business hours (8:00 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday, exclusive of Federal holidays).

Q: How much does a permit cost?

A: The cost of your permit depends upon your activity. Activities that are small in scope and simple in nature are termed a “Basic” permit and a payment of \$65.00 is required. Requests that require the involvement of multiple park divisions are termed a “Complex” permit and a payment of \$200.00 is required. Applicants must make payment by check, money order or cashier’s check, payable to the National Park Service.

Q: If my application is denied, do I get a refund?

A: Unfortunately no. The payment is to cover the costs of evaluating your permit request, not a payment for the actual permit.

Q: Where do I send my application and payment?

A: You should return your completed application, along with payment via mail or in person during business hours to Park Headquarters:

Chief Ranger's Office – Permit Coordinator
Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore
1100 N. Mineral Springs Road
Porter, Indiana 46304

Q: How long does it take to evaluate a permit application?

A: The park will make efforts to evaluate permit applications in a timely manner. Our goal is to make a final determination on a permit application within ten working days. However, in instances where the activity is particularly complex or the information provided on the application is incomplete, additional time may be required. If an environmental assessment is required, the additional time needed may be extensive.

Q: I sent payment with my application, is that my only cost?

A: In some cases, additional payment will be required. Because Special Park Use activities are outside of normal park operations, you may be required to pay for government expenses associated with your activity. You may also be required to post a performance bond.

Q: What are some of the expenses I may be required to pay?

A: These expenses may include but are not limited to expendable supplies, employee salaries, benefits (including overtime), and utilities. The park bases these cost recovery charges upon the actual expenses for each activity. An itemized list of these charges will appear on the permit. If additional charges are necessary, you must pay them before we can approve the permit.

Q: What is the performance bond?

A: Some activities may have a potential to cause damage to park resources or create unexpected additional expenses to the government. In these cases, you will be required to post a performance bond. We will return your bond if these unexpected expenses don't occur.

Q: Do I have to have insurance for my activity?

A: Some activities have the potential to expose the government to liability claims. In these cases, the permit holder will be required to obtain liability insurance naming the "National Park Service" as "additionally

insured". The minimum amount of liability insurance required is \$300,000.00. Most insurance companies will issue special short-term insurance policies for events at a small cost. If insurance is required, a copy of the coverage must be forwarded before the permit is issued.

Q: Are there special charges for filming?

A: Yes. Congress requires the National Park Service to obtain location fees for commercial filming and photography. The location fee is based upon the number of people involved in the production. Information regarding the specifics of commercial filming and photography are available from the Chief Ranger's Office.

Q: How will I know if these extra costs apply to my activity?

A: When your activity receives initial approval from the park, we will develop the permit document. We will show all permit requirements, including any additional payment needed as well as insurance and bond requirements on the permit.

Q: You sent me a permit, but it isn't signed. What do I do?

A: Once we review and write your permit, we send it to you for your review. You should read it carefully and, if you agree to the terms, sign and return the form, along with any additional payments and required documents back to the park. If all is in order, the Superintendent will sign your permit and we will send your copy to you.

Q: I have a completed permit, what do I do with it?

A: You are required to have your approved permit at the site of the activity. You must be able to present the permit to any authorized park employee upon request.