



YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

Commercial Filming, Photography & Sound Recording Permit Guidelines

INTRODUCTION

While Yellowstone National Park encompasses some of the most unique, spectacular and ecologically and culturally significant in the world, these resources are extremely fragile and irreplaceable. These include not only tangible resources, such as wildlife, plants, bodies of waters, thermal and other geological features, historic buildings and archeological sites, but also intangible values such as tranquility, solitude, wide open spaces, sounds of nature, and clear night skies. The National Park Service (NPS) is mandated to protect all resources, "*to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations*" (16 U.S.C. 1). For this purpose the Department of Interior developed RM-53, to govern filming, photography and sound recordings in national parks.

Under the guidance of RM-53, all NPS units have direct authority and responsibility to manage, permit and/or deny filming, photography and sound recordings in ways consistent with park management and missions. For this reason, you may find Yellowstone's guidelines and the way in which permits are managed different from other parks -- all parks have different resources and, hence, different concerns. While Yellowstone offers a vast range of unparalleled film and photographic opportunities, these activities are subject to certain restrictions and considerations and require close supervision in the interest of protecting the park's rare and delicate resources, while ensuring visitor experiences are not impacted.

PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

Permits are required for any project that generates an electronic media, film or video production for television, the motion picture industry, public interest or private multi-media which consists of production crews and vehicles, broadcast equipment, props/sets, talent/actors, construction, trailers, housing, animals, or aircraft. Projects may involve feature films, documentaries, game shows, soap operas, shopping networks, religious telecasts, talk shows, docudramas, travelogues, commercials, infomercials, public TV presentations, or DVDs, CDs, CD-roms or videos for training, sales, education, promotions, entertainment, etc.

Documentaries filmed specifically for sale to a news station or educational channel are considered a commercial venture and require a permit. News media crews not covering newsworthy/news making events, but shooting human interest, staged events, or other topics are required to obtain a permit before proceeding with filming.

News media crews filming **breaking news** (an event that cannot be covered at any other time or location) are not required to obtain a permit, but are subject to the same restrictions and conditions necessary to protect park resources and public health and safety, and to prevent derogation of park resources and values. Photographers of breaking news events or documentaries involving breaking news events and sound technicians working with news photographers are also exempt from the permit requirements, if no advertising, and no set, props, or models are used and there is no derogation of park values or disruption of park visitors.

Private individuals engaged in still photography for their own personal use and enjoyment generally do not need a film permit. Commercial still photography **may** also be exempt, unless it involves **product or service advertisement**; or the **use of models, sets or props**; or when **proposed photographic activities indicate potential for resource damage or undue disruption of visitor activities**.

FILMING APPLICATION

The enclosed Filming Application must be completed in **full detail** and returned to the Film Permit Coordinator. Filming applications will be returned to the applicant if submitted incomplete, cannot be approved as submitted, or are received without payment or without a Social Security Number or Federal Tax Identification Number (required per the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996). To avoid possible delay or denial of a permit, it is important that your application be as detailed as possible concerning your proposed activities. You are also encouraged, and may be required, to attach copies of storyboards, treatments or scripts. **You will not be permitted to arrive and then select locations on the day of shooting**. If you are not familiar with the park, we highly recommend an advance trip to scout locations. An advance scouting trip with the Film Permit Coordinator or a representative **may be required** for certain productions before a permit will be issued. You may want to utilize information, maps and photos on the park's official website at <http://www.nps.gov/yell> when planning your shoot.

The information on the application will be used by the Film Permit Coordinator to evaluate the impact of the proposed activity on park resources and visitors. **A minimum of ten business days is required to process a permit**, although it may require several weeks to review a request and render a decision, especially during the high visitor season of late spring through early fall. Due to the lack of park staff available to assist with scouting, monitoring, consulting, providing interviews, etc., it may be necessary to allow only one crew in the park at a given time. Applications are handled in the order in which they are received. **Priority will not be given to urgent requests.**

COSTS

Since Yellowstone's costs are based on the services we provide, we do not differentiate between profit and non-profit documentary projects.

A \$200 non-refundable administrative processing charge is required for all applicants and must be received before a permit will be considered, regardless of whether or not a permit is ultimately issued. This charge covers up to three hours of administrative time which includes, but is not limited to, review of application and associated materials, research done by and consultations with park staff, technical review of treatments and scripts, permit processing and billing. Additional charges will be incurred if the permit process from start to finish requires over three hours of administrative time. **This payment must accompany the application, and be made payable to the NATIONAL PARK SERVICE.** Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Discover cards are also accepted.

NPS staff is usually required to monitor all permitted activities in thermal areas. Rates are calculated at \$65 per hour per monitor and are not prorated. **Additionally, if at the request of the Permittee, NPS staff assists with permitted activities in such ways as scouting, monitoring, providing interviews, etc., the Permittee shall be billed \$65/hour/employee.** All charges will include travel time between filming location(s) and employee duty station(s).

If an on-site monitor is not required the Film Permit Coordinator may assign a National Park Service (NPS) representative to spot-check filming activities to ensure adherence to the conditions of the permit and to other rules and regulations. The Permittee will be responsible for paying all costs incurred as a result of any spot-checking activities at a cost of \$65 per hour per spot-check and includes travel time between filming locations(s) and employee(s) duty station(s).

Prepayment of estimated costs for NPS staff assistance will be required before a permit can be issued. These charges will be calculated at a rate of \$65 per hour per monitor and will be based on the estimated number of hours NPS staff will be required or have been requested to be involved with a specific project (i.e., scouting, monitoring, providing interviews, etc.). Payment must be made in the form of a certified check, traveler's check, cashier's check, cash, Visa, MasterCard, American Express or Discover card. **We will not accept a personal or company check for prepayment.** Any overpayments will be returned to the Permittee. Any additional costs above the initial cost estimate will be billed to the Permittee by Bill for Collection upon completion of filming.

Failure to make payment in full to the National Park Service within 30 calendar days from the date a Bill for Collection is issued may result in a referral of your debt to the Internal Revenue Service and the U.S. Treasury for further collection action. Your delinquent account may also be announced to other NPS units, which may result in the denial of future permits or revocation of any existing permits issued by NPS units.

INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

If your request for a permit is approved, a certificate of insurance **issued by a United States company** will be required showing general liability coverage commensurate with risks involved in the project proposed. General commercial liability insurance will help protect the Government from judgments connected with injury or damage resulting from the actions of the Permittee or his/her agents, contractors or employees. One million dollars (\$1,000,000) is the usual minimum; however, the Film Permit Coordinator is authorized to increase this amount for certain high-hazard situations. This certificate **must name the United States Government, National Park Service** as an additional insured.

PERFORMANCE BONDS

A performance bond may be required. The amount of the bond will be determined from the information provided on the application. This bond will be returned, upon completion of filming, if all conditions of the permit have been met and resources have not been damaged.

The Film Permit Coordinator has the option to waive the bond requirement if she anticipates that no resource damage will result, or that the activities permitted will not require any cleanup.

PERMIT

All projects will be reviewed to ensure protection of the park's resources and values, and that no disruption of normal visitor use will occur. A permit within areas administered by the NPS may be denied or revoked if the project: 1) creates a threat to the park resources; 2) places unreasonable burdens on the monitoring capacity of park staff; 3) would conflict unduly with the public's normal use of the park; 4) the Permittee does not agree to pay assessed cost recovery; 5) the project depicts activities that are not permitted within the park; 6) the application does not contain sufficient information on which to base a permit. In addition, a permit may be revoked if the Permittee fails to comply with the permit and/or conditions as written.

PRE-PERMIT CONFERENCE

Permits will only be issued after a briefing by the Film Permit Coordinator or representative has been given. Permits must be obtained in the Visitor Services Office in Mammoth Hot Springs **by appointment only during normal business hours** between 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

The permit must be thoroughly reviewed and signed by the Permittee and the Film Permit Coordinator or her representative. Copies of the permit will be given to the Permittee, as well as NPS permit monitor(s), private guide(s), and concessioner(s), when applicable. The signed original will be kept on file in the Visitor Services Office. Permittee must have a signed copy of the permit in his or her possession **AT ALL TIMES** when filming, photographing and/or recording sound in the park. Failure to do so may result in the termination of filming and possible fines.

Notification of delays, schedule changes, or cancellations must be provided to the Film Permit Coordinator **at least 48 hours** in advance of filming, photographing and/or recording sound. Should the Permittee fail to provide this advance notification, the Permittee is responsible for paying all costs incurred by the NPS. Any schedule changes must be approved by the Film Permit Coordinator or her representative and rescheduled, if possible, according to NPS staff availability.

ON-CAMERA APPEARANCES BY EMPLOYEES

On-camera appearances by employees are allowed only under the following conditions: 1) the employee is selected and/or approved by park management and is depicted performing his or her normal duties or serving as a subject matter expert; 2) the employee's appearance supports NPS goals and has a beneficial effect for the Service; 3) the role is not scripted; 4) the employee is paid by the park as part of his or her regular working hours. The permittee will reimburse the park for this cost, including time necessary for preparing/researching for the appearance as part of cost recovery; 5) if the filming requires overtime or back filling of positions, the NPS will be reimbursed for any such additional costs; 6) NPS employees cannot sign talent or location releases supplied by applicants.

HOW TO APPLY

To apply for a permit, please return the completed application with the \$200 application fee to the address below. Faxed copies of the application may be submitted, but the permit will not be considered until the park has received payment of the application fee. Upon review of the application, estimated staff costs associated with scouting, monitoring, interviews, etc., will be calculated and must be paid by the Permittee before a permit to film will be issued.

MAILING ADDRESS:

Film Permit Coordinator
Visitor Services Office
P.O. Box 168
Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming 82190
307-344-2115
307-344-2112 (fax)

PHYSICAL ADDRESS:

Film Permit Coordinator
Visitor Services Office
First Floor, Administration Bldg.
Mammoth Hot Springs
Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming 82190
307-344-2115
307-344-2112 (fax)

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