

Parker River National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Private Ceremonies and Events

We occasionally receive requests from members of the public to hold private ceremonies (e.g., weddings, memorial services, parties, fundraising, races, or other events of a personal or organizational nature) on a refuge. Please use the list below to ensure you follow the refuge rules and regulations. Ceremonies or events that are not in compliance with the rules below may be asked to leave or assessed a fine. Questions and approval for private ceremonies and events can be directed to parkerriver@fws.gov

1. Please provide the refuge the date, time, requested location, number of people, and any other information about the ceremony/event.
2. Events **MUST** be outdoors; refuge buildings are off limits. This means that the visitor center or the conference room at HQ cannot be used for weddings, birthday parties, graduations, memorial services, etc. This is not a comprehensive list, just one where large numbers of people are commonly gathered for a specific purpose.
3. All aspects of the proposed event must be compatible with the refuge's existing permitted uses. The refuge will not issue special use permits for uses that are not already compatible with the refuge use and mission.
4. Fundraising is not allowed on the refuges except in pre-approved instances where 100% of proceeds are directed to USFWS.
5. Refuge or partner –sponsored events that have already been scheduled for the same day in the same general area as a proposed public event are given priority for use. Private events or ceremonies that were not pre-approved and result in a conflict with a refuge or partner-sponsored program will be asked to relocate or leave.
6. Construction or any other refuge activity (trail maintenance work party, invasive species work, biological surveys) being conducted in the area where the proposed event is being planned may lead to private ceremonies being asked to relocate or leave. We will not disrupt ongoing refuge activities for personal events, and these activities may arise even after approval has been given for a private event.
7. Parking could be a problem depending on where the event is proposed to be held. Group size should be small (no more than 25 people) to 1) ensure there is adequate parking and 2) not prevent refuge visitors from being able to park on the refuge to engage in compatible wildlife-dependent public uses. No more than 10 vehicles are permitted for private events. Attendees are encouraged to park off-refuge and carpool, bike, or walk in. Parking is available at the refuge visitor center for free to consolidate vehicles – the refuge visitor center is located at 6 Plum Island Turnpike, Newburyport MA.
8. Approval of the proposed event or ceremony does not guarantee that participants will be able to access the refuge on the planned date and time if the refuge has been closed due to limited parking capacity and/or inclement weather.

9. All participants must be able to walk to the event site from established refuge parking lots. Gates will not be held open for participants. Special parking areas will not be established. We will not allow event organizers to drive on a refuge trail to bring materials or participants to the event site.
10. The event may not disrupt the normal use of the refuge by visitors. The event organizer must accept that refuge visitors may stop to observe the event out of curiosity. The event will not be conducted in parking lots or on boardwalks, trails, and observation decks/platforms.
11. If there is music, it may not be amplified. It must be acoustic and quiet.
12. There should be no alterations to the refuge to accommodate the ceremony.
13. Simple food may be served but tables and chairs will not be allowed. All food scraps, plates, utensils, etc. must be removed off-refuge by the requester. Man-made materials cannot be permanently placed on the refuge. Balloons and live flowers or other vegetation will not be allowed under any circumstance.
14. Possession and/or consumption of alcohol on the refuge is prohibited.
15. Ashes may be scattered in waters or lands adjacent to a trail, but no memorial will be erected. No Federal or State permits are required to scatter ashes, but the Project Leader must approve the disposition of cremains on the refuge.