



Drone Policy

About Unmanned Aerial Systems

For this policy, unmanned aerial systems (UAS) are defined as aircraft that does not carry a human pilot and may be controlled by radio frequency via a pilot on the ground. They include such things as remote-controlled aircraft and “drones.” This policy only addresses sUASs (small unmanned aerial systems) flown for hobby or recreational purposes. UAS’s flown for business or monetary purposes require an FAA-certified part 107 pilot, and therefore controlled by specific local, state, and federal regulations and are not controlled by this policy.

Purpose

The Town of Smithfield Parks & Recreation Department (SPRD) recognizes that operating an sUAS is a popular recreational activity. SPRD evaluated properties within the park system to determine which may be conducive to sUAS craft to take off and land from for recreational activity. SPRD determined sUAS recreational flying would not be compatible use for areas classified as “nature preserves,” “nature parks,” or “wetland centers” or appropriate for cemeteries or lakes solely owned, managed, or leased by the Town of Smithfield.

SPRD has identified specific park locations for recreational sUAS craft to take off and land. Please see Table 1 for these locations and the times available for sUAS use. To launch or land an sUAS within the park system, all recreational pilots must abide by the operating regulations outlined in this policy.

Operating Regulations

Persons operating an sUAS within park system properties for recreational use shall:

- Comply with all applicable local, state, and federal laws;
- Not operate while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs;
- Not take off or land sUAS in parks outside of designated park hours;
- Not operate to harass wildlife or members of the public.

sUAS less than or equal to 400 grams (.88 pounds) may take off from or land in all SPRD properties, except those designated as “nature preserves,” “nature parks,” “wetland centers,” cemeteries, or lakes. sUAS larger than 400 grams (.88 pounds) may take off and land from the designated areas of parks listed in Table 1. sUAS larger than 7000 grams (>15 pounds) and capable of speeds of 70 miles per hour must

receive permission from SPRD in advance of taking off from or landing in any of the designated areas of parks listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Parks with Designated UAS Areas for sUAS greater than 400 grams

PARK NAME	ADDRESS	LOCATION IN PARK	DAYS AND TIMES FOR sUAS USAGE
Johnson Park	1222 West Market Street	Field / Fenced Area	Dawn to Dusk

*See Appendix for locations of designated sUAS areas within parks.

- The designated areas of the parks listed in Table 1 offer non-exclusive use to sUAS recreational pilots, meaning the fields or spaces, while available for sUAS flying, may also be used by other park patrons at the same time.
- These fields may be rented for exclusive use. In the event the field is rented, the field is not available for sUAS activity unless that is the purpose of the rental. If the field is occupied, Pilots are encouraged to contact SPRD to determine if the field is available for flying sUAS.
- Park locations where sUAS is permitted will be available on the Town of Smithfield’s website. This list may be subject to change.
- A “Drone racing event” is defined as two (2) or more sUAS participating in a speed-based competition for prizes, awards, or compensation that requires navigating around a course made up of flags or other manmade objects. A “drone racing” requires field rental and payment of rental fees for exclusive use to take off and land from the space. Flags or other objects may be placed in the field; staking objects is not allowed. Trees may not be used as obstacles to race around.
- sUASs participating in a “drone racing event” must be less than or equal to 800 grams (1.7 pounds) in total weight.
- sUASs participating in a “drone racing event” must only use propellers made of plastic.
- Additional sUAS locations may be added at the discretion of the department director.

sUAS that become entangled in the trees or land on roofs or structures of SPRD buildings and can no longer operate must be reported to SPRD within 24 hours.

Users who violate this policy may be asked to leave the park and may have privileges to take off and land their sUAS from the park system revoked. Park visitors who witness unsafe sUAS practices are encouraged to inform SPRD staff or contact Smithfield Police Department.

This policy, or any portion thereof, may be waived at the discretion of the Parks and Recreation Director.

This policy will be reviewed at minimum every four (4) years once adopted.

APPENDIX

JOHNSON PARK
122 W. MARKET ST.
SMITHFIELD, NC 27577



Adopted this the 1st day of February, 2022.

M. Andy Moore, Mayor

ATTEST

Shannan L. Parrish, Town Clerk

