

Drone/Unmanned Aircraft Policy

Approved By:  Date: 4/20/2018
Parks & Recreation Director

BACKGROUND

The Arizona State Legislature enacted legislation regulating the use of unmanned aircraft (UA), commonly referred to as drones. A.R.S. 13-3729, effective August 06, 2016, prohibits local governments from enacting their own drone regulations, with the exception of the authority to implement take-off and landing restrictions in parks or preserves, as long as one park or preserve is available to drone users.

The new law made it a crime for drone operators to interfere with police and fire operations and also made it unlawful for drone operators to photograph or film critical facilities, such as wastewater treatment plants and municipal courts, in furtherance of a criminal offense. A.R.S. 28-8280, which declared careless or reckless operation of an aircraft as a misdemeanor, was amended to include drones.

Arizona municipalities are required to allow drone/UA operations. The Town of Sahuarita is authorized to enact or adopt ordinances, and the Parks and Recreation Director is authorized to establish rules and regulations for park property and activities, for the take-off and landing of unmanned aircraft at parks owned and operated by the Town.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Drone/Unmanned Aircraft Policy is to regulate drone/UA take-off and landing, which will be allowed at two (2) Town parks as follows:

North Santa Cruz Park; 14455 S. Rancho Sahuarita Boulevard
Quail Creek-Veterans Municipal Park; 1905 N. Old Nogales Highway

DEFINITIONS

Drone; any form of an unmanned aircraft, or UA.

Recreational Play Areas; any areas open to the general public for recreational purposes and designed in part to be used by children and youth that has play or sports equipment installed or that has been designated or landscaped for play or sports activities and is located within Town owned or operated parks, including sports fields.

Sports Fields; fenced areas designed and constructed for the purpose of playing organized athletic games including, but not limited to, baseball, softball, football and soccer.

Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA); a non-profit organization whose purpose is to promote model aviation as a recognized sport and worthwhile recreational activity. The AMA is the official body for model aviation in the United States. Arizona is located within AMA District 10.

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POLICY & RULES

In order to manage the safe operation and use of drones/UAs at Town parks, North Santa Cruz Park and Quail Creek-Veterans Municipal Park are designated for use by the public for take-off and landing of drones/UAs. Furthermore, the take-off and landing areas within the two parks are restricted to the fenced rectangular sports fields used for soccer, football, lacrosse, and similar. This designation will provide for safe drone/UA operation by the user as well as provide safety for park patrons using other recreational play areas within the park. According to Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) information, an area the size of a soccer field (approximately 100 yards X 50 yards) is all that is needed to fly a drone safely.

The drone/UA operator shall follow all Town of Sahuarita park rules whether posted or not, as listed in Title 12 of the Sahuarita Town Code and all other posted signs at the parks. The drone/UA operator shall use reasonable caution so as not to injure other people or damage property. The drone/UA operator shall be responsible/liable for all actions and operation of the drone/UA. The drone/UA operator shall be in control of the drone/UA at all times while at the park.

Drone/UA operators are allowed on the rectangular sports fields at the two identified parks on a first-come, first-served basis, unless the sports fields have been reserved for use by others. All non-permit holders must yield to permit holders who have received an approved reservation for a sports field.

Anyone wishing to reserve space at designated parks and at an approved sports field for the purpose of operating a drone/UA may apply for a permit at Anamax Recreation Center, located at 17501 S. Camino de las Quintas, during business hours.

COMPLIANCE

Park rules are in effect 24 hours a day, and are enforceable by any Town Official.

REFERENCES

Sahuarita Town Code: Chapters 12.10.010, 12.20.020, 12.35.010 & 12.40.020

Arizona State Statutes: A.R.S. 13-3729 & 28-8280

AMA website <http://www.modelaircraft.org/membership/membership/overview.aspx>