



MONTGOMERY PARKS

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
2425 Reedie Drive | Wheaton, MD 20902
MontgomeryParks.org

Montgomery Parks Athletic Field Use Permit Policy

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Appendix A - Montgomery Parks Athletic Field Conditions of Use

1. Policy statement

The purpose of this policy is to establish an orderly, consistent, and fair procedure for the reservation of athletic fields for practices, games, tournaments, and special events. This policy seeks to balance high demand for such organized uses with the maintenance, renovation, and rest necessary to protect the long-term playability of fields and ensure user safety and high-quality experiences.

2. Montgomery Parks athletic field classification system

Montgomery Parks classifies athletic fields into three categories: **Game Only fields**, **Practice/Game fields**, and **Year-Round Synthetic Turf fields**. Each field has a designated use based on its design. For example, diamond fields are designated for either baseball or softball, while rectangular fields are designated for soccer, football, lacrosse, and similar field sports.

A. Game Only fields- Game Only fields are intended for organized competitive play and are not intended for practice or walk-on play¹. Game Only fields are Montgomery Parks highest quality fields and receive the highest level of maintenance the department offers.

- I. **Permit required:** A permit is required for use of Game Only fields, which can only be permitted for official league games that have paid officials and player uniforms. Sports organizations, leagues, or teams may be required to submit a Certificate of Liability insurance naming M-NCPPC, 2425 Reedie Drive, Wheaton, MD 20902 as additional insured. The required coverage limits are \$1,000,000 per accident/ \$500,000 per person. Leagues that do not carry liability insurance must instead provide a copy of the liability waiver that participants are required to sign.
- II. **Permit availability:** Game Only fields can only be permitted for games or tournaments for designated field use. Tournaments need a special event permit. **Practices are not allowed** on Game Only fields.
- III. **Available dates:** Game Only fields are available for permitting from **April 1² to August 15 and September 1 to November 30²**.
- IV. **Usage restriction:** Play is strictly prohibited from **December 1² to March 31²** and **August 16 through August 31** on all Game Only fields, as well as during

¹ Walk-on play refers to public use without a permit.

² If the first day of seasonal permitted use (March 15 of Practice/Game fields, and April 1 for Game Only fields) falls on a Sunday, permitted use will be allowed on the preceding Saturday. If the last day of permitted use falls on a Saturday, permitted use will be allowed on the following Sunday.

field maintenance, renovations, inclement weather, or when posted signs prohibit use.

B. Practice/Game fields-Practice/Game fields offer flexible use for practices and games (both permitted or walk-on use) during the playable seasons (see usage restrictions below). Practice/Game fields receive routine maintenance.

- I. **Permit takes priority:** These fields are available for walk-on use and permitted play, but walk-on users must yield to permitted users during their scheduled times. Permits guarantee exclusive use of the field during the permitted date and time.
- II. **Permit availability:** Practice/Game fields are available for permitting games, practices, camps, or tournaments for designated field use and can be used for non- designated field use with a special use permit. Please note that camps and tournaments need a special event and special use permit.
- III. **Available dates:** Practice/Game fields can be permitted from **March 15² to November 30²**. While these fields open on March 15, they are not guaranteed to be game ready (lined or draggued) until April 1, weather depending.
- IV. **Usage restrictions:** Play is strictly prohibited from **December 1² to March 14²** on all Practice/Game fields, as well as during field maintenance, renovations, inclement weather, or when posted signs prohibit use.

C. Year-Round Synthetic Turf fields- Year-Round Synthetic Turf fields are available throughout the year by permit for a variety of uses to include both games and practices.³

- I. **Permit required:** These fields are available by permit only. Sports organizations, leagues, or teams may be required to submit a Certificate of Liability insurance naming M-NCPPC, 2425 Reedie Drive, Wheaton, MD 20902 as additional insured. The required coverage limits are \$1,000,000 per accident/\$500,000 per person. Leagues that do not carry liability insurance must instead provide a copy of the liability waiver that participants are required to sign.
- II. **Permit availability:** Year-Round Synthetic Turf fields can be permitted for games, practices, camps, or tournaments for designated field use. Camps and tournaments also require a special event or special use permit.
- III. **Available dates:** Year-Round Synthetic Turf fields can be permitted year-round, though they may be closed for maintenance, repairs, freezing conditions, or severe weather.

³ Montgomery Parks complies with Montgomery County Council “Resolution 18-58: Use of Plant-Derived Materials for infill in Artificial Turf Playing Fields”

IV. **Usage restrictions:** Play is strictly prohibited during field maintenance, renovations, inclement weather, or when posted signs prohibit use.

3. Permitting order of consideration

A. Contractual agreement permits

Contractual agreement permits are administered by the Montgomery Parks Permits Office in accordance with the terms of the contracts and may include provisions that supersede this policy.

B. Priority use or special events, camps, and tournaments

Priority Use: Priority Use Hours are allocated to sports organizations based on earned hours from past permitting seasons. This allows for consistent permitting for sports organizations which provide a large portion of Montgomery County's sports recreation. Sports organizations receive an email with their eligible hours prior to the Go-Live Event date for the upcoming season and must respond per the instructions in the email to receive these hours.

- I. **Eligibility:** Priority Use Hours are available to organizations in good standing. Priority use will not be granted to individuals or teams: only eligible organizations may qualify. Priority Use Hours are reserved exclusively for organizations that can demonstrate their participating teams consist of at least two-thirds of Montgomery County residents.
- II. **Limitations:** Priority- Use can only be granted for up to 3 weekdays and 1 weekend day per week per organization per field. Leagues may permit additional time during Go-Live.
- III. **Earning Priority Use:** To earn Priority Use Hours, an organization must permit the same field at the same time of year, during the same time of day, for two consecutive years. Sports organizations must provide permit confirmation documentation from the past two years to qualify for new Priority Use Hours, must be in good standing, and cannot exceed the maximum allowable Priority Use Hours set forth by this document.
- IV. **Team Data and Roster submission:** To qualify for Priority Use, organizations must submit their past year's team data annually to the Montgomery Parks Permits Office by **December 15**. The Team Data must include organization name, league name, team name, team age group, team sport, team gender (Male, Female, Co-Ed), team level (recreation or travel), team numbers of hours of field usage, team location, and number of participants. Montgomery Parks reserves the right to ask for full rosters data at any time for internal purposes.
- V. **Payment requirements:** Sports organizations must pay an additional Priority Use Fee for each field receiving a Priority Use Permit and all other applicable permit usage fees.

VI. **Adjustments:** Priority Use Hours may be altered at the discretion of Montgomery Parks due to special events, tournaments, or other circumstances.

Special events, camps, and tournaments: Special events, camps, and tournaments must be applied for annually by submitting the appropriate request form. Users must be in good standing, and all requests are subject to approval by Montgomery Parks. In addition, Montgomery Parks may request roster submissions similar to those required for Priority Use. Requests must be submitted by the following deadlines to be considered in conjunction with Priority Use, all requests after these deadlines will depend on field availability:

- I. **December 1** for events scheduled during the **spring and summer season** (April 1 - August 31)
- II. **May 1** for events scheduled during the **fall season** (September 1 - November 30)
- III. **October 1** for events scheduled during the **winter season** (December 1 - March 31)

Only Year-Round Synthetic Turf fields will be considered for request during the winter season.

Note: Submitting a request does not guarantee approval and past approvals do not guarantee future approvals of the same event.

In the case of conflicting scheduling requests between Priority Use and Special Events, camps, and tournaments, Montgomery Parks Permits Office reserves the right to make a final scheduling decision based on the needs and interests of the department and the community.

C. Montgomery County Agencies

Montgomery County Agencies are local government agencies providing affordable recreation opportunities to county residents. To help facilitate their programming, Montgomery Parks allows these agencies to request additional dates above their Priority Use times prior to the Go-Live event. Montgomery Parks accommodates these requests at its discretion.

D. Go-Live Event

During the Go-Live Event all available field time is uploaded to **ActiveMONTGOMERY** and can be viewed by the public. During this event, **Practice/Game fields** can be permitted directly through the website by organizations, leagues, teams, or individuals. **Game Only fields and Year-Round Synthetic Turf fields** will display available times, but organizations, leagues, or teams must submit a request to the Permits Office to confirm usage for these fields.

Individuals may not permit Game Only fields but can permit Year-Round Synthetic Turf fields. For individuals to permit a Year-Round Synthetic Turf field they must submit a request to the Permits Offices to confirm usage. The Permits Office will process these requests on a first received, first served basis starting on the Go-Live date and time. Field use requests will not be accepted before the Go-Live date and time.

Go-Live events are held three times a year (these dates are subject to change):

- I. **2nd Monday in February for the spring/summer season (March 15 through August 15)**
- II. **2nd Monday in July for the fall season (August 16 through November 30)**
- III. **1st Monday in November for the winter season (December 1 through March 14 for Year-Round Synthetic Turf fields only)**

[ActiveMONTGOMERY - Splash](#)

4. Permitting seasons

A. Spring/summer season

I. Practice/Game fields	March 15 ² – August 15
II. Game Only fields – August 15	April 1 Error! Bookmark not defined.
III. Year-Round Synthetic Turf fields	March 15 – August 15

B. Fall season

I. Practice/Game fields	August 16 – November 30 ²
II. Game Only fields	September 1 – November 30 ²
III. Year-Round Synthetic Turf fields	August 16 – November 30

C. Winter season

I. Practice/Game fields	Closed
II. Game Only fields	Closed
III. Year-Round Synthetic Turf fields	December 1 – March 14

5. Priority Use Hours Release Deadline

Priority Use Hours are allocated to sports organizations based on earned hours from past permitting seasons. Sport organizations should release any unneeded Priority Use Hours to ensure as many groups as possible have access to field time. Users will not be charged a cancellation fee for this field time if it is returned to Montgomery Parks by February 1 for the spring/summer season and by July 1 for the fall season. All returns must be submitted in writing. All returns after these dates will be subject to the terms in the cancellation policy.

All Priority Use Hours that are returned will be removed from the organization's Priority Use Hours. For more information, please visit Montgomery Parks conditions of use.

6. Holiday use regulations

Practice/Game fields may be reserved by permit or used on a first-come, first-served basis, unless the field is closed during winter closure, weather closure or when posted on site. Permit holders have priority and walk-on users must defer to permit holders during their permitted time at the field.

Permits for Game Only and Year-Round Synthetic Turf fields will not be issued during established M-NCPPC holidays listed on the Montgomery Parks Athletic Field webpage or any additional holidays established by M-NCPPC. Contractual agreements may be exempt from this restriction, according to the terms of the applicable agreement.

7. Field closure guidelines

A. Weather Closure

Montgomery Parks closes fields for a variety of weather-related events to include but not limited to rain/wet conditions, thunderstorms, and frozen conditions. Montgomery Parks provides updates on the Rainout Line which is described in more detail under the Conditions of Use section in Appendix A.

B. Renovation Closure

Fields designated for renovation will be added to the field closure list that is posted on the Montgomery Parks Athletic Field webpage. These fields will be closed for the period stated on the website. Fields will not be permitted during these closures.

C. Winter Closure

All natural grass fields (Practice/Game fields and Game Only fields) are closed for the winter starting on December 1 to protect the turf during its dormant period and prevent damage while soil moisture levels are high. Exceptions may apply through contractual agreements. Practice/Game fields reopen March 15 and Game Only fields reopen April 1.⁴

D. Summer Closure

Game Only fields are closed on August 16 through August 31, for rest and repairs so that staff can prepare the fields for the upcoming fall season. During this period Game Only fields are not available for permit. Exceptions include contractual agreements.

⁴ If the first day of seasonal permitted use (March 15 of Practice/Game fields, and April 1 for Game Only fields) falls on a Sunday, permitted use will be allowed on the preceding Saturday. If the last day of permitted use falls on a Saturday, permitted use will be allowed on the following Sunday.

8. Permitting order of overlay Practice/Game fields

Montgomery Parks has several fields in its inventory that have multiple dimensioned and striped fields on the same playing surface, such as a rectangle field overlapping the outfield of a softball field. These are called overlay fields and allow for different sports to be played at different times on the same field surface. Montgomery Parks is only able to permit one of these fields at a time. Spring and summer seasons are prepared for diamond sports while fall is prepared for rectangle sports. Non-prepared sports can still permit the field, but field permits may be denied based on safety concerns during certain seasons and the Permits Office will work to help find other field options.

9. Conditions of use and revocation

All athletic field use must follow the M-NCPPC Rules and Regulations, M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks Athletic Field Use Permit Policy, as well as the Montgomery Parks Athletic Field Conditions of Use. These three documents are posted on the Montgomery Parks website, and the Athletic Field Conditions of Use is attached to each permit and attached to this document as Appendix A. Violation of these policies and conditions will result in fines and penalties, including the loss of future permitting and use privileges. A permit may be denied or revoked if the permit holder or any member of the permitted user group violates any of sections of the M-NCPPC Rules and Regulations, M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks Athletic Field Use Permit Policy, or Montgomery Parks Athletic Field Conditions of Use. An appeal process is available to users that have had permits revoked or denied. Montgomery Parks reserves the right to revoke or deny a permit if a field is deemed unsafe or requires immediate repairs. In such cases, permit holders will be notified as promptly as possible.

10. Payment Guidelines

The Montgomery Parks Permits Office will not issue permits to organizations, leagues, teams, or individuals with a balance due on their account.

Athletic field fees follow the M-NCPPC user fee schedule, as approved by the Montgomery County Planning Board. A copy of the current approved fee schedule can be viewed at www.ParkPermits.org. These fees are subject to change without notice.

11. Cancellation and Change Request

Cancellations and change requests must be submitted in writing via email to ParkPermits@MontgomeryParks.org. If an organization returns field time from its Priority Use Hours allocation list, those fields will be removed from the organization's priority use and made available for other groups.

12. Pilot Programs

Montgomery Parks may run pilot programs to explore potential changes to existing policies. These small-scale, temporary initiatives are designed to test new approaches and gather insights. As experimental efforts led by Montgomery Parks, pilot programs may operate outside the standard policy framework. If successful, they may inform future policy amendments. Montgomery Parks may also seek stakeholder input before implementing any permanent changes based on the results of a pilot program.

Appendix A:

Outdoor Athletic Fields Condition of Use

All users must follow the M-NCPPC Park Rules and Regulations and the Montgomery Parks Athletic Field Permit Policy.

Practice/game fields are open for play March 15-November 30 and closed from December 1-March 14*.

Game only fields are open for play April 1-August 15 and September 1-November 30, and closed from December 1-March 31 and August 16-August 31.

Year-round turf fields are open for play January 1-December 31.

All game only and year-round turf fields are closed on Official M-NCPPC holidays.

Valid permits:

- The permit must be in the permit holder's possession or organizational representative possession at the field site and all permit holders must be over the age of 21.
- This permit is valid for use only by the team or group designated and only for the field and time indicated on the permit.

Permit rules and restrictions for all fields:

- Consumption and distribution of beer and all other alcoholic beverages are prohibited.
- The use of glass containers is prohibited.
- “Ghost permitting”— permitting a field and not using the field — is strictly prohibited. Users should return any foreseen unneeded field time. Any observed ghost permitting should be reported to customer service, and will later be investigated by a representative from Montgomery Parks. Montgomery Parks may also selectively monitor fields to help curtail ghost permitting.
- Transferring or subletting a permit to another league, organization, or individual is prohibited. All unneeded permits should be returned to the Permits Office.
- Vehicle parking is allowed in designated parking areas only. Vehicles are not permitted on natural turf. Parking may be limited.
- All trash MUST be bagged and placed in the nearest trash or recycling cans. Any additional trash bags that do not fit in the onsite cans must be taken offsite for proper disposal or recycling.
- No grills of any kind are allowed on any park field including all playing surfaces, player areas, and spectator areas. Personal charcoal grills are permitted in areas designated for picnics and must follow commission rules and regulations.
- Application of paint or permanent markings is prohibited.
- The use of portable lighting is prohibited.

- Use of stakes or other items that may damage natural turf is prohibited.
- Smoking, vaping, and chewing tobacco or use of any other smokeless tobacco products are prohibited on park property.
- No exchanges of monies or collection of fees are permitted on park property.
- Storage of personal equipment may be allowed with prior approval from Montgomery Parks. Please contact the Permits Office at least 10 business days before your event is to be considered.

Additional rules and restrictions for game only fields, year-round turf fields and the miracle league field:

- All game only, year-round turf fields, and the Miracle League Fields require permits for usage. Drop-in play is prohibited in these fields.
- Pets are prohibited from these fields with the exception of service animals. A service animal is any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not considered service animals.
- No use of stakes, pop up tents, or chairs on these fields. All canopy tents and personal chairs must be outside the fenced athletic field.
- Games and events may only occur during the designated time on the permit.
- **Game only fields:** Only official games or tournaments with paid referees in uniform.
- **Year-round turf fields and the Miracle League Field:** Proper athletic footwear must be always worn.
- **Year-round turf fields and the Miracle League Field:** No food, sunflower seeds, candy, gum, or drinks (other than water) are permitted on these sites.

M-NCPPC inclement weather policy: Montgomery Parks uses the Rainout Line to announce field statuses. This information is accessible through the website Rainoutline.com or by calling the Rainout Line at 301-579-5610 (extensions required, which are found on Rainoutline.com). The Rainout Line is updated daily at 3 p.m. on weekdays and 7 a.m. on weekends.

- Use of natural turf athletic fields is prohibited when:
 - A steady rain is falling
 - A lightning or electrical storm is occurring
 - Water is standing on the field
 - One-half inch of rain or more has fallen within the previous 24 hours
 - The ground is muddy and soil clumps or clings to shoes
 - The ground feels “spongy” and/or soil is frozen
- Use of year-round turf fields is prohibited when:
 - Lighting is present
 - Organic infill is frozen
 - Park Managers deem additional conditions unsafe.

Permit holders, representatives or game officials must cancel all games and practices if any of the above conditions are present.

Weather cancellations: Field time cancelled by park staff due to inclement weather or other reasons are entitled to refunds. Refund requests for park closures may be submitted in writing no later than July 15 for scheduled field time between March 15-June 30 and by December 15 for scheduled field time scheduled between July 1-November 30. Any refund requests received after those dates will not be honored. Field users are responsible for tracking these cancellations and must submit a list of all refund requests to ParkPermits@MontgomeryParks.org for consideration. These lists will be compared against staff cancellation lists and refunded accordingly.

Please note the year-round turf fields can get hot on warm, sunny days. If you experience symptoms of a heat-related illness, such as dizziness, weakness, headache, vomiting or muscle cramps, move to a shaded area. Drink water, rest and seek medical attention if you do not feel better. If the permit holder decides to cancel play due to high heat, please contact the Permits Office to be considered for a refund.

Cancellation and change requests: Field cancellations must be submitted in writing at least 10 business days prior to the date of the event and an admin fee of 25% of the reservation fee is required at the time of the request. Reservation changes must be submitted in writing at least 5 business days from the requested date and an admin fee of 25% is required for each change. Cancellation and change requests can be submitted via email to ParkPermits@MontgomeryParks.org. If an organization returns field time from its priority allocation list, those fields will be removed from the organization's future priority use and made available for other groups.

Each approved permit represents a financial obligation. Facility fees are non-refundable unless cancellation is made in accordance with the established cancellation policy. If adequate notice is not provided, all facility fees will be retained. No refunds or credit will be issued for permits that are not cancelled in a timely manner, regardless of whether the facility was used.

To report an issue or concern

We encourage all park users to report any issues so we can maintain a safe and enjoyable environment. Please follow the guidance below based on the nature of your concern:

- *Reserved Space Conflicts:* If another individual or group is occupying your reserved space, please present your permit and kindly ask them to leave.
 - If the situation significantly impacts your use of the space:
 - During business hours: Call customer service at 301-495-2595
- *General Concerns* (e.g., excessive trash, tall grass, routine maintenance issues): Contact Montgomery Parks Customer Service at 301-495-2595 or email

Info@MontgomeryParks.org during regular business hours (Monday–Friday, 8:30 AM–5:00 PM).

- *Safety Hazards* (e.g., broken equipment, hazardous conditions):
 - During business hours: Call customer service at 301-495-2595
 - After hours: Contact the Park Police non-emergency dispatch at 301-949-8010
- *School and Recreation Department Fields*:
For fields managed by schools or the Department of Recreation, please contact CUPF (Community Use of Public Facilities) after hours at 240-490-2873.

Any violation of the above rules, including damaged facility will result in all applicable fines and penalties, including potential loss of future permitting and use privileges.

Changes to the condition of use:

Montgomery Parks Outdoor Athletic Fields Condition of Use are subject to change at the discretion of Montgomery Parks. Permit holders will be notified when changes are made. Montgomery Parks may also run pilot programs that may supersede some of the terms of the Outdoor Athletic Field Condition of Use.

** If the first day of seasonal permitted use (March 15 for practice/game fields, and April 1 for game only fields) falls on a Sunday, permitted use will be allowed on the preceding Saturday. If the last day of permitted use falls on a Saturday, permitted use will be allowed on the following Sunday*