

Read the passages and answer the questions that follow. Then respond to the writing prompt.

Passage 1

Geocachers Find Hidden Treasures Scattered About in Montgomery County

by St. John Barned-Smith

1 Maryland's geocaching trail could have you wiggling through a cave or paddling through the Potomac.

2 At least that's what Susan Kelley, director of the Maryland Geocaching Society, found herself doing while exploring Maryland's statewide geocaching trail earlier this year.

3 As the Maryland Municipal League debuted its second statewide treasure hunt on Saturday — called Discovering Maryland MML Geotrail — Poolesville, Gaithersburg, Rockville and Washington Grove have created new caches for the new trail.

4 According to Geocaching.com, the hobby is "a worldwide game of hiding and seeking treasure. A geocacher can place a geocache in the world, pinpoint its location using GPS technology and then share the geocache's existence and location online."

5 Maryland made news in 2009 when it became the first state in the nation to create a statewide geocache trail. It stretched through 82 towns and cities, a model emulated in several other states.

6 The Discovering Maryland geotrail will include 49 towns and cities. The league will reward the first 200 people who find and record at least 20 geocaches with a commemorative trackable geocoin. To be eligible, participants must record the location, date and code of the find in the Official MML Geotrail Passport and post a

picture at each cache. Completed passports must then be mailed to the MML offices.

7 The city of Gaithersburg — which also participated in the 2009 trail, called the Maryland Geotrail — is contributing its own geocache and prize to the list this year. The first person to find the cache will receive two one-day passes to Fitness Zone in the activity center at Bohrer Park, according to the city. Other prizes such as water park passes might be added to the Bohrer Park cache.

8 Eleven more caches within Gaithersburg are maintained by private citizens who had them approved by the city and added to the trail.

9 “It’s a fun hobby. [Geocaching] is a good way to get outside, get outdoors,” Kelley said. “It’s taken me to places I would never have found otherwise.”

10 Kelley said the 82 caches in the first geotrail were visited in excess of 30,000 times, by several thousand geocachers. Some geocachers visited more than one cache, she said.

11 Would-be geocachers who missed the official launch can access a list of the trail’s coordinates after registering at www.geocaching.com.

12 “Having places like Maryland setting up geotours, they’re basically inviting the global community to come visit Maryland and have this interactive outdoor adventure where they can learn something about the history, be educated, learn more about what Maryland has to offer,” said Bryan Roth, a founder of the site.

13 Connie Yingling, public relations coordinator for the Maryland Office of Tourism, said the trail gets people out to a number of Maryland’s tourism destinations.

14 “There’s a definite tourism and economic impact,” she said.

15 Poolesville joined the first geocache trail in 2009, said Cathy Bupp, a town official who helped set up the town’s cache.

16 The MML “sent us an invitation and we joined up,” she said.

- 17 They placed decks of cards, Poolesville pens and other trinkets
in the cache. Visitors to the cache replaced them with other objects,
she said.
- 18 Bupp said she hid the new cache near one of the town's local
historic sites.
- 19 About 200 people had visited that first cache so far, she said,
and the town has just added the second one.
- 20 After visiting the first cache, one geocacher was pleased to have
explored the town, according to comments on a Web site run by the
town: "Poolesville looked a lot different from the last time we were
here. It seems to have a lot of new development. The new Town
Hall is beautiful."

"Geocachers Find Hidden Treasures Scattered About in Montgomery County" by St. John
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Passage 2

Excerpt from "Geocaching Craze Pushes Officials to Set Guidelines"

by Fredrick Kunkle

- 21 The Fairfax County Park Authority is drawing up guidelines to
accommodate people who participate in geocaching, a freewheeling
form of treasure hunting that relies on global positioning devices to
locate hidden objects in parks and other public places.
- 22 As geocaching grows in popularity nationwide, county park
officials hope to balance the interests of geocachers with the need
to protect the parks from damage, parks spokeswoman Judy
Pedersen said last week. The geocaching guidelines have been in

the works for several months and are expected to be completed this fall, she said.

23 "We want to accommodate this activity," Pedersen said. "We know it's been getting popular over the past five years. We think it's great. It gets people out in our parks. But we need to have some restrictions."

24 Until now, geocachers were required to get written permission from park managers before placing a cache there, and rules could vary from park to park. Pedersen said park officials hope to issue blanket rules that would open up about 100 parks, a quarter of the parks the authority oversees.

25 The move comes at a time when the National Park Service is also reviewing its policies on geocaching.

26 Geocaching offers a modern twist on the scavenger hunt. Participants, known as geocachers, hide objects in public places and list their coordinates online. Other participants then use Global Positioning System devices to try to find the caches. These might be plastic containers buried in the ground or magnetic boxes attached to a park bench. Often the boxes contain a logbook and trinkets, such as a key chain or plastic toy.

27 Geocaching etiquette calls for finders to sign the log. If they take a trinket, they are supposed to leave something behind. There are other variations, such as a virtual cache that might require a seeker to find the answer to a question related to a historical site. Some caches have been put underwater for scuba divers and others on a mountain ledge. Some caches contain items that are intended to travel from place to place, such as special tracking tags or a Mr. Potato Head. Geocachers post the coordinates of new caches and report their visits on Web sites such as <http://www.geocaching.com>.

28 GPS technology was developed by the military in the 1960s. It uses signals from satellites to fix a location on Earth and provide its latitude and longitude. The devices can be accurate to within six feet. The first geocache was placed in Oregon in May 2000 after civilians received access to the satellite signals.

29 William Tobalske, a board member of the Northern Virginia Geocaching Organization, said there are more than 3,000 caches

within 50 miles of the District, or about twice as many as there were about two years ago.

30 "It's a way to get out and see things and do things with people," he said. Tobalske, 61, of Reston, said the organization has attracted 428 members since its founding in October. . . .

31 Members of the Northern Virginia geocaching community welcome the Fairfax park authority's efforts to collaborate with geocachers on working out some rules, Tobalske said. Both sides met in March to discuss guidelines. But Tobalske said there is also frustration at the officials' slow pace and a feeling that the county has been slow to catch on to the widespread interest in geocaching.

32 "It just seems to be taking a long time for them to make up their minds," Tobalske said. He also said geocaching is a way of enjoying the environment and interacting with the outdoors, not damaging it, and so geocachers strive to leave the land undisturbed.

33 Pedersen said the park authority's draft guidelines would prohibit placing any cache more than 25 feet from an authorized trail and would require placement near a parking facility to prevent people from blazing their own trails into wild areas. . . .

34 The draft guidelines would also prohibit geocachers from attaching anything to a "living or non-living resource," such as by tying a container to a tree.

35 The National Park Service has also headed in a similar direction.

36 Chick Fagan, acting director of the National Park Service's Office of Policy, said geocaching is not illegal in the nation's parks. But he said geocachers must obey all park rules, including prohibitions against digging or otherwise disturbing the environment and entering sensitive areas that are off limits because they shelter wildlife or vulnerable plants.

Excerpt from "Geocaching Craze Pushes Officials to Set Guidelines" by Fredrick Kunkle, September 27, 2007. Copyright © 2007, The Washington Post Company. Used by permission of the publisher via Copyright Clearance Center.

Writing Prompt

You have just read two passages about geocaching. Write an informational essay explaining the potential benefits of and drawbacks to geocaching.

Manage your time carefully so that you can

- plan your essay and do some prewriting using your scratch paper.
- write your essay in the response box in Nextera.

Be sure to

- use evidence from **both** passages.
- avoid over-relying on one passage.

Your written response should be in the form of a multi-paragraph informational essay.

Write your essay in the response box in Nextera. **Anything you write that is not in the response box in Nextera will NOT be scored.**