

COUNTY OF BERKS

PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT



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OVERVIEW SPECIAL EVENT PERMITS

If you are thinking about holding a special event in a Berks County Park, please take a moment to review the following information. It outlines the steps you may be required to complete before a Special Event Permit is issued. Please note that this is only an overview of the County Parks Special Use Permit process! For additional information, please see the Department's Special Use Permit Requirements.

What is a Special Event? A Special Event includes, but it not limited to, the following:

- walks, runs and cycling events,
- events where participation is controlled by donations or entry fees,
- concerts, festivals or athletic tournaments,
- graduation and birthday parties, baby showers, corporate events and other organized gatherings in excess of 100 people,
- wedding ceremonies and
- events that use tents, canopies, stages, PA systems and sound equipment, and/or caterers.

If your event falls into one of the above categories, you or your organization must apply for a Special Use Permit to utilize a County Park facility including the Union Canal Trail. There are many variables that guide the permit application process:

- Is your event open to the public or is it private?
- Is it a non-profit fund-raising event?
- How many people will be in attendance?
- How much set-up and take-down time will you need?
- Do you have adequate event personnel?
- Will there be rental equipment – chairs, tables, tents, portable restrooms, dumpsters etc.?

Answers to these and other questions will determine the steps you need to take before a permit is issued. It is important to consider the details of your application in advance because it will speed processing time and reduce unwanted surprises.

Permit applicants should be aware that the Berks County Parks Department works in collaboration with other municipalities to assure that special events are in compliance with their rules and guidelines. We do this by requiring that the Applicant secure any needed permits from local municipalities.

The following is a general outline to help you apply for a Special Use Permit. Please note that applicants must contact the Parks Department first to begin the permit application process.

APPLY EARLY

Early application will help you to secure the park and location of your choice and complete all requirements in advance of last minute deadlines.

BE PREPARED

To avoid issues that can delay the processing of your application, please be prepared with as much detail as possible concerning your event. We understand that applications filed months in advance may be lacking in some details. However, it is strongly advised that you finalize your event details as soon as possible.

PROVIDE INSURANCE

Practically all permitted special event activities allowed in the parks will require insurance. Expect that you will be required to secure \$1,000,000 in liability coverage from a third party and an Additional Insured Endorsement that is acceptable to the County Solicitor. These two requirements tend to take the most time so starting this process early is strongly advised. The Department will not issue a permit without the required insurance coverage.

PROVIDE A SITE PLAN

If you are planning on bringing or renting equipment such as tents, stages, chairs and tables etc., you will be required to provide a simple site plan a minimum of 60 days in advance of the event. Applicants applying for races, walks or cycling events must provide a route map for each park/trail area affected as well as the location of water stations, registration tables, portable restrooms, dumpsters and other event equipment if they will be used. The Special Events Coordinator will review site and route plans prior to approval.

SUPPLY PORTABLE RESTROOMS

On-site restrooms are limited and intended to meet the needs of the everyday park user. They are not for the exclusive use of permitted events. For groups of over 100 persons, you may be asked to supply portable restrooms.

DOGS

No dogs are permitted on Berks County Park property except for service animals.

IMPORTANT NOTES

- All applications must be received a minimum of 3 months in advance of the event.
- Events that are new to the Berks County Parks will be required to meet with the Special Events Coordinator before submitting their application.
- Absolutely no alcohol or illegal substances are permitted in any County Park facility.
- The Department has established maximum occupancy limits for each park/facility.
- The maximum number of attendees (participants and spectators combined) allowable for a Special Use Permit is 1900 at Gring's Mill and 2500 at the Heritage Center.
- A \$250 deposit will be required along with the application to secure the date, along with a non-refundable \$25 administrative fee, for a total of \$275.
- All damage costs will be billed back to the Permittee. The most common types of billable damage costs are:
 - Excess litter and debris
 - Damage to pavilions, restrooms, buildings, trails and trees and shrubs
 - Turf damage from vehicle and pedestrian traffic