



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Lower Potomac Field Station
10406 Gunston Rd
Lorton, VA 22079
www.blm.gov

LETTER OF AGREEMENT
FOR ORGANIZED GROUP ASTRONOMY PROGRAMS
between
LOWER POTOMAC FIELD STATION, MEADOWOOD SRMA
and
NORTHERN VIRGINIA ASTRONOMY CLUB

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is responsible for the balanced management of your public lands and resources. Management is based upon the principles of multiple use and sustained yield, a combination of uses that takes into account the long-term needs of future generations for renewable and non-renewable resources. These resources include recreation, range, timber, minerals, watershed, fish and wildlife, wilderness, and natural, scenic, scientific and cultural values.

Special Recreation Permits (SRPs) may be required for recreational activities by organized groups using public lands. Criteria used to determine if a permit is necessary include; concern for public health and safety, need to properly manage lands and resources and need to coordinate with other public land users. Based on our evaluation of your planned activity, such a permit does not appear to be necessary.

The Northern Virginia Astronomy Club (NOVAC) is a non-profit organization supporting active astronomy observation and education by our members and the public. NOVAC invites anyone to join their programs from people just starting to be curious about astronomy to highly experienced amateurs to professional educators and researchers. NOVAC provides free educational astronomy programs and public observing events across northern Virginia including Loudoun, Fauquier and Fairfax counties. NOVAC plans to add Meadowood SRMA as a new observing site for free public observing sessions and NOVAC member individual observing starting in the spring of 2025.

SUMMARY:

Organization: Northern Virginia Astronomy Club (NOVAC)

Type of Activities: Astronomy: Free public observing sessions and individual observing

Place: Giles Meadow, Belmont Meadow, and Mustang Meadow at Meadowood Special Recreation Management Area. See attached map for detail about parking and programming locations.

Dates: May 1st, 2025 to April 30, 2026

Number of Vehicles: Up to the number of spots in the designated parking lots.

- Giles Trailhead: ~ 6 cars
- Mustang Trailhead: ~ 20 cars
- Hidden Pond Trailhead: ~ 7 cars

Number of Programs: Up to 1 public observing session per month and independent observing on clear sky nights
Activity Contact Person: Kevin Lindsey

Phone: 571-263-5264
Email: lindsey.kevin@gmail.com

BLM Contact Person: Ryan Jackson
Phone: (703) 339-3460
Email: rsjackson@blm.gov

Your activity has been analyzed, and it has been determined that you do not require an SRP. The BLM Recreation Permit Administration Handbook (H-2939-1) states, "The authorized officer may waive permit requirements when: An organized group activity or event is not commercial, has no paid public advertising, poses no appreciable risk for damage to public land or related water resource values, and requires no specific management or monitoring. (43 CFR 2932.12)". An SRP may be required in the future if the number of programs, participants, and vehicles increase the current demand and/or increase of activity may cause impact to the environment. An SRP may be required for future programs outside the scope of NOVAC astronomy programs stated in this letter.

Certain activities are necessary to have a safe and successful event with a minimum impact to the environment:

1. All participants (the public) must park at designated trailhead parking lots. Parking is only allowed at each trailhead; no parking is allowed on the side of the roads or trails. NOVAC may request to park at locations closer to the program to drop off, set up, and take down telescope related equipment and tables for the program. See map for more details.
2. All participants must stay on designated trails and areas before, during, and after programming. See map for more details.
3. NOVAC must place temporary signage to direct the participants to each program location.
4. Any items or temporary structures and signs used during a program must be removed from public land at the end of each program. No installations or structures will be constructed on public land.
5. Use of the Gile's Meadows control lines flying circle is off limits. No use, participants, vehicles, or equipment is allowed on the two control line circles. See map for more details.
6. Portable restrooms may be required to be rented by NOVAC for programs or events.
7. All garbage generated from the programs is collected and disposed of properly off public lands. Visitors should follow the Leave No Trace principles while at Meadowood SRMA.
8. NOVAC individuals observing at night may utilize the designated parking lots and locations past hours to enhance their astronomy skills to assist with future NOVAC programs during clear night skies. These individuals must follow Meadowood's rules and regulation and the stipulations in this agreement.
9. All programs must be submitted and approved by the BLM 14 days prior to the date of the planned program. If program is cancelled or rescheduled, NOVAC must inform the BLM staff.
10. A yearly report will be submitted to the BLM that identifies number of programs and participants, pictures, summary of program, and any incidents.
11. This Letter of Agreement does not grant exclusive use. Disorderly or otherwise objectionable conduct such as harassment of wildlife, livestock, or other lawful users of public lands will not be tolerated and could be the basis for denial of similar agreements in the future.
12. The participants assume all risks for natural phenomena that may be encountered. All participants must be advised of conditions which might be encountered. Known hazards in the area includes loose footing, trip hazards, insects, poisonous plants, dangerous wildlife and other natural phenomenon.

13. In case of emergencies, please contact 9-1-1. The BLM does not assume responsibility for any accidents or injuries that occur during this activity.
14. The participants assume all risks for man-made phenomena that may be encountered. Hypodermic needles, broken glass, dead animals, trash, and other potentially harmful objects may be encountered anywhere on public land. A pre-trip sweep of the area is advised.
15. Participants must take reasonable precautions to protect natural resource values, cultural or historic objects, aesthetic values and any improvements on public lands.
16. Do not touch or place any material on top of or near any small whorled pogonia plants (*Isotria medeoloides*).
17. All vehicles, equipment, animals, clothing, and anything else onsite that could potentially convey seeds on and off site should be checked and cleaned of all invasive exotic seeds prior to getting to site and when leaving area.
18. If participants have any questions concerning regulations on public lands and related waters, they should contact the BLM immediately.

This agreement is not an authorization to use public lands. Failure to abide by all activity parameters in this agreement may result in permits being required for future activities.

Signatures:

Paul Derby
Activity Organizer Signature

4/22/25
Date

PAUL DERBY, U.P.
Northern VA Astronomy Club

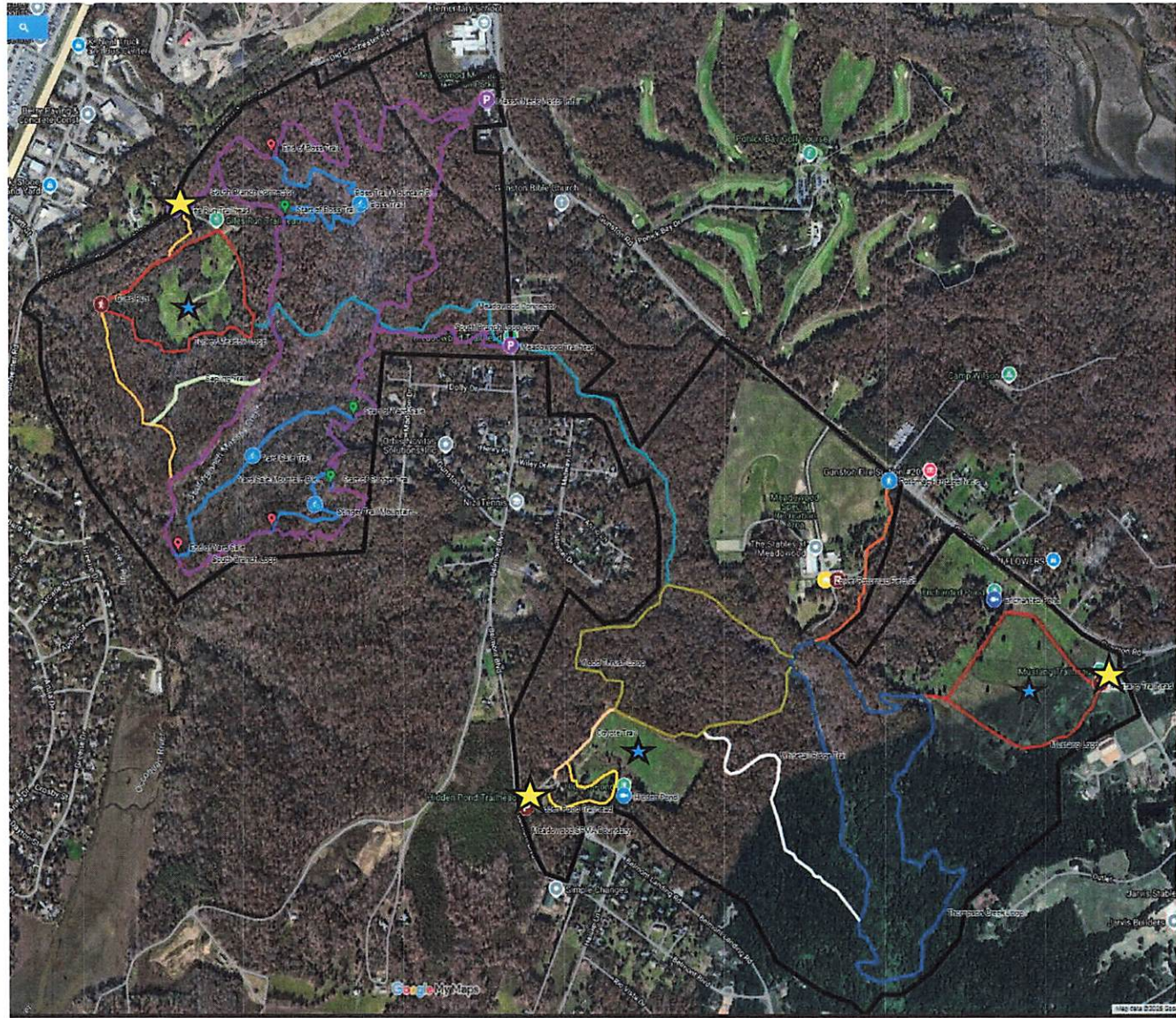
Lower Potomac Field Station Manager

Date

Attachments:

1. Map of locations for programming and parking

- ★ Parking Area
- ★ Viewing Area



Giles Trailhead



Parking Area



Trail/path to walk



Viewing Area



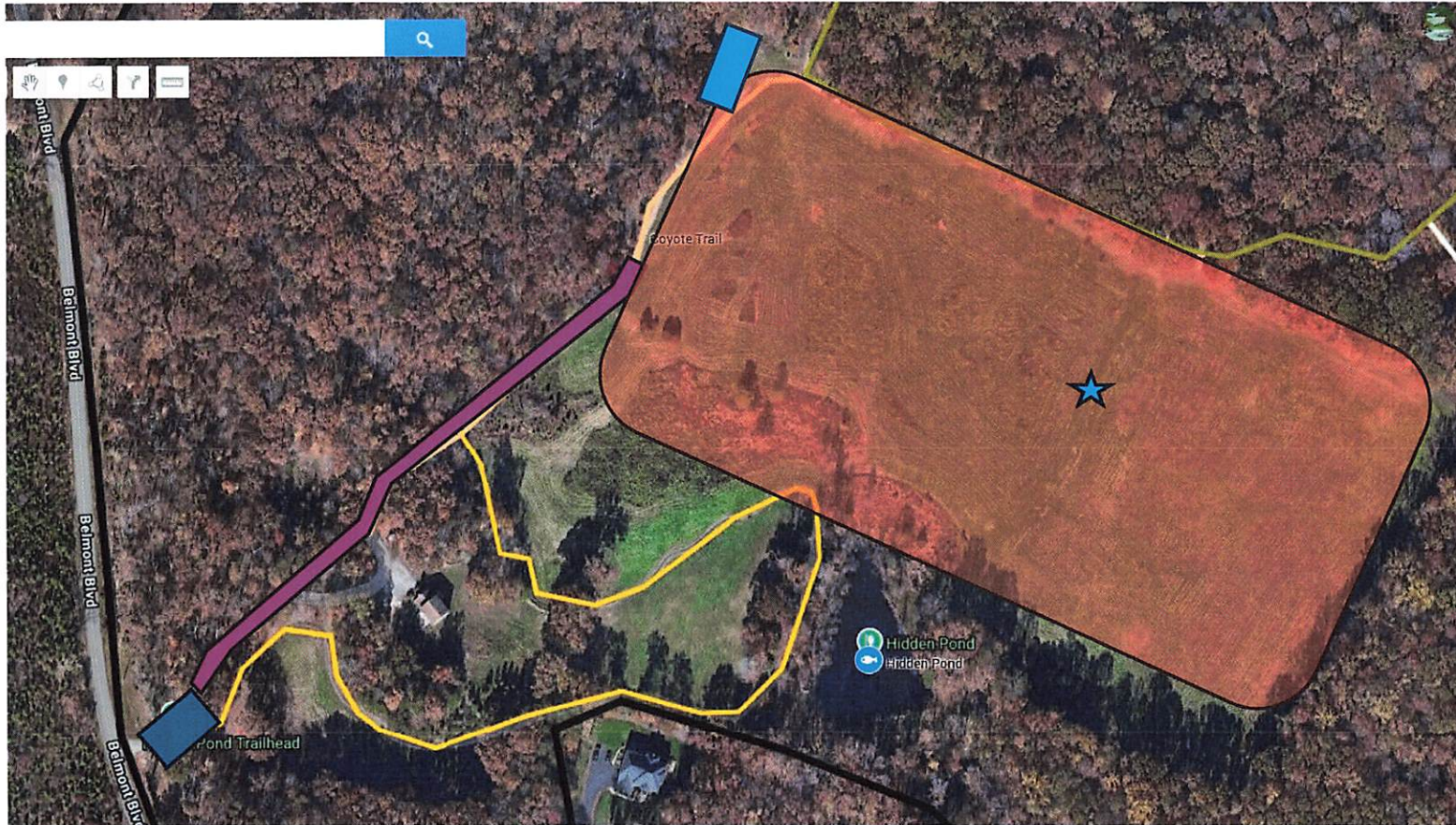
OFF LIMITS



NOVAC set up/take
down car locations*

* BLM may allow NOVAC to park a few vehicles by viewing area for set up/take down. No public vehicles are allowed at viewing site.

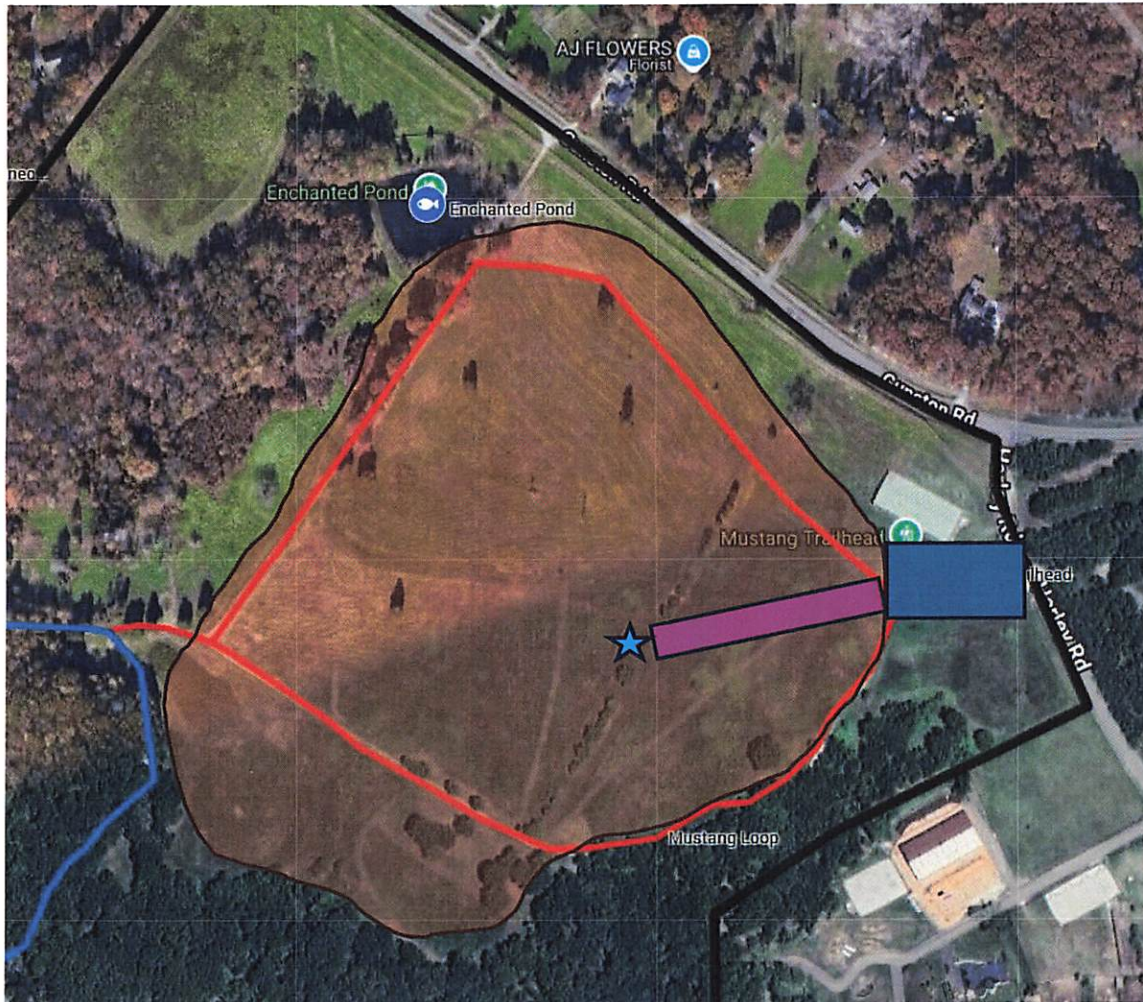
Hidden Pond Trailhead



-  Parking Area
-  Trail/path to walk
-  Viewing Area
-  NOVA set up/take down car locations

* BLM may allow NOVA to park a few vehicles by viewing area for set up/take down. No public vehicles are allowed at viewing site.

Mustang Trailhead



Parking Area



Trail to walk
(mowed trail there to
go into the middle of
the meadow)



Viewing Area