



Athletic Field Use and Allocation Policy

I. Introduction

Pender County Parks and Recreation, hereinafter referred to as “County,” coordinates and issues permits for the use of athletic fields in Pender County to organizations and general public for recreational programs and activities.

The purpose of this policy is to outline procedures and allocation priorities for permitted use of the Pender County athletic fields (owned and/or maintained).

The County will monitor proper use of the allocations and permits. Priority will be given to established Recreation Partners of County, Pender County Schools, Pender County non-profit organizations and Pender County residents. The County may charge to recover public costs to operate, maintain, repair, improve, supervise, and administer the use of athletic fields and other park facilities. Submission of a facility request does not constitute approval.

Requests for additional use or programs not covered by the Athletic Field Use and Allocation Policy should be addressed by completing the appropriate form for the intended use, i.e., Special Event, Fundraiser Tournament, etc. The Parks and Recreation Director or designee will interpret the Athletic Field Use and Allocation Policy.

II. Statement of Philosophy

Pender County is dedicated to creating partnerships with local youth sports organizations to ensure there is the opportunity to participate in athletics at the recreational level. The County’s primary role in these partnerships is to provide athletic opportunities and to make certain our fields are safe and of high quality. The permitting and allocation process provides an organization top priority, but not exclusive, to the athletic fields allocated and approved for their use. The objective of this policy is to create clear and written procedures for field use and allocation that:

- Fairly distributes available fields
- Maximizes playing time
- Incorporates “turf recovery periods” to maintain safe, high quality fields
- Outlines field use regulations
- Communicates financial issues and recovery policy

III. Definition of Terms

Local resident status– is defined as persons living within Pender County boundaries. It is understood that some Pender County residents have mailing addresses that list another county’s city/town.

Youth status – is defined as persons 17 years of age or under at the start date of the permit.

Non-Profit status 501(c)(3) – requires the organization to meet all criteria as identified by the Internal Revenue Services (IRS). The organization must submit a Letter of Determination or Letter of Affirmation from the IRS that indicates non-profit 501(c)(3) status and are required to submit 990 tax returns demonstrating the non-profit status. Visit www.irs.gov for additional information on non-profit status.

Resident Percentage Status – is the percentage of Pender County residents participating based on the total number of participants in the program. Resident Percentage Status (RPS) will be one of the factors used in determining an organization’s field use allocation. County staff will use the prior season’s actual rosters (fall for fall season, spring for spring season) to determine the organization’s RPS. County staff may require team rosters and player addresses to verify residency status and reserves the right to conduct audits of submitted verification documents and of onsite team player roster to establish residency.

IV. Priority Use Categories

Category 1 – Pender County Parks and Recreation programs

Category 2 – Pender County Schools

Category 3 – Existing County Recreation Partners which are youth athletic organizations that must meet all of the following:

- Organizations must assign registrants to teams in an effort to make the teams in each division of equal playing experience and talent (not assigned to teams of different talent levels, and
- Organizations must be recreational in nature and have an “everybody plays, no child is turned away” philosophy requiring that each player suited-up and able to play is entered into games for a significant period of time, and
- Organizations must submit a Letter of Determination or Letter of Affirmation from the IRS that indicated a non-profit 501 (c)(3) status certificate, and
- Organizations must have 80% or greater local residents participating in the program, and
- Organizations must maintain an affiliation with a national, state or local governing body. Those national and state bodies must have governance over the organization, including all requirements for training per each league’s manual, background checks and disciplinary actions.
- Have an established, all-volunteer Board of Directors, and provide a list of board members.
- Provide a single point of contact (name, mailing address, phone number, email address) for all field use – preferably the League President – that will verify all rules and regulations concerning field use are distributed to and clearly understood by all teams/coaches.
- Provide maps showing approved boundaries of specific geographic area served (Category 2 only).
- Provide a copy of the organizations’ mandatory Play rules (if applicable).

- Demonstrate it is financially solvent by submitting an annual budget and financial statement(s) summarizing the previous year's financial activity.
- Provide a copy of the organizations following documents:
 - Constitution
 - Bylaws
 - Player/parent/coach Code of Conduct.

Category 4 – Pender County Resident Private Rental, Pender County Non-Profit organizations. If the Non-Profit organization provides youth athletics and places registrants according to their ability on competitive teams (travel, select, elite, etc.) and registrants may be turned away or not every player suited up may not play in a game, it must have at least 85% or greater residents registered for tryouts.

Category 5 – Non-Resident Private Rental, For-Profit Organizations and Organized Clinics, Trainings, etc. which fees will be collected from registrants, spectators, etc.

V. **Process for Obtaining and Maintaining Field Use Permits**

Requests to use athletic fields owned and/or maintained by Pender County are made through the Pender County Parks and Recreation Department located at 805 S. Walker Street, Burgaw, NC 28425, 910-259-1330. Any organized group of ten (10) or more individuals that wishes to use an athletic field must complete and submit all applicable forms and supporting documents.

Forms and documents may include, but are not limited to:

1. Pender County Athletic Facility Use Form
2. Athletic Field Use Rules and Regulations
3. Public Liability and Property Damage Insurance in an amount no less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence, naming Pender County as additional insured
4. Hold Harmless Agreement
5. Recreation Partner Agreement (Category 2 Only)
6. Player rosters identifying local residents
7. Current list of board members with current contact information

Permits will be issued according to Priority Categories. Submittal of documents does not constitute approval.

*New Leagues or organizations planning to petition for Category 2 status or leagues anticipating a split to form a new league must submit a written request to Parks and Recreation Director or designee, at least six (6) months prior to the estimated starting date for such new league. Additional documentation may be required.

Pender County Parks and Recreation Department reserves the right to make any decisions regarding programming and facilities use that are in its best interests, and the best interest of the residents of Pender County.

VI. **Allocation Process**

The allocation of fields will follow the guidelines stated below:

1. All youth athletic organizations who meet the Eligibility Requirements in Category 2 must submit an *Intent to Provide Youth Recreational Athletics Form* no later than December 15 (Spring season) and June 15 (Fall season).
2. Attendance is required by at least one (1) board member, officer or designee at the appropriate (Fall and/or Spring) Pre-season/field allocation meeting. The meeting for Spring season will be early January and for Fall season will be late June.
3. Requests for additional use, programs or facilities not covered by the Field Allocation Policy should be submitted with the organizations' original request. (Example: Fundraising event, such as a One-Pitch Tournament). Additional fees may apply.
4. Fields will be allocated in a fair and equitable manner, and in the best interest of the County. Allocations will be conducted using a consistent set of criteria including but not limited to:
 - A. All groups will be assigned a Category as outlined in Section IV.
 - B. Traditional sports season have priority:
 - Spring (Late February through June 31) Baseball, Softball, Lacrosse
 - Fall (August 1-November 15) Football, Soccer
 - Requests for out-of-season play will be reviewed after allocations for traditional season sports. Additional charges may apply for out-of-season allocations.
 - C. Participation from previous season will be considered, including but not limited to; overall number of participants, residential percentage, number of teams, number of players per team.
 - D. Past history, including but not limited to; previous allocation/use of fields, prompt return of requests for information, compliance with established Conditions of Use, etc. will be taken into consideration.
 - E. It may not be possible to grant all requests.
 - F. No field use is assigned during the Winter months (Monday following Thanksgiving through the Monday following February 15), as these are designated field recovery periods.
 - G. The County reserves the right to cancel any allocation to accommodate the needs of any Pender County sponsored event.
5. Once Parks and Recreation staff has completed the process of assigning fields, dates and times to the various organizations based on the priorities in this policy, a mandatory meeting will be held with all organizations participating in that season (Fall or Spring) to distribute Field Use Permits. Each organization must have one (1) board member or designee in attendance at this meeting and any concerns with field allocation may be addressed.
6. Organizations must submit the following documents prior to facility use:
 - a. Certificate of Insurance showing its Public Liability and Property Damage Insurance in an amount no less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence, naming Pender County as additionally insured.
 - b. Non-profit status documents (Letter of Determination/Affirmation)
 - c. List of Board members with current contact information
7. Organizations must submit complete practice schedules to the Parks and Recreation Office at least ten (10) days prior to the first scheduled practice. Practices cannot begin prior to submitting the practice schedule.

8. Game schedules must be submitted to the Parks and Recreation Office at least ten (10) days before the first scheduled game.
9. Pender County reserved the right to cancel any permits for field use due to the following:
 - Conflict with a County-sponsored league, program, activity or event
 - Maintenance needs/issues
 - Overuse of a field
 - Field conditions that may threaten the health and safety of participants, including wet/muddy conditions, rain, snow, etc.
 - Non-adherence to: Athletic Field Use and Allocation Policy or County/Park Ordinance or Athletic Field Use Rules and Regulations.
 - a. Permits canceled by the County or due to inclement weather may be rescheduled as availability allows or fees may be refunded, if applicable. Permits cancelled by the user are subject to the current Refund Policy.
10. Organizations/Users may not exchange fields without informing and receiving permission from the County.
11. Organizations/Users may not sublease fields under any circumstances. Subleasing of fields will result in revocation of permits for all parties. (Example: Recreational athletic team lets travel team use their scheduled field space).
12. Any organization that has been permitted to use a field and determines that they will not need to use it must notify the County. Non-use of a field for a total of three times may result in revocation of the permit of the allocated field. Category 2 organizations may be billed for fields that they have reserved and have not used.

VII. Fees

Refer to approved Fee Schedule

VIII. Tournaments

To use fields for tournaments, a Tournament Field Use Form and supporting required documents must be submitted. Submission of form does not constitute approval.

IX. Conditions of Field Use

The County requests that user groups and individuals refrain or limit their use of heavy traffic areas during practices, regardless of weather, to assist in providing the best possible field conditions (i.e., goal areas, pitching areas, etc.). Each assigned user group will be held responsible for compliance with the following policies. Any user failing to comply with this policy, established guidelines and notification to refrain from use due to field closures are subject to pay for all damages or costs occurring to the field, revocation of existing permits and/or denial of future applications.

1. **All official use of athletic field is by authorization only.**
2. The organization's President or designated liaison is responsible for ensuring that coaches are aware of all policies and procedures, etc. provided by the County.
3. The organization's President or designated liaison is responsible to enforce the rules and regulations regarding the conduct of teams while using permitted facilities.

4. No subleasing of fields is allowed under any circumstance. Subleasing of fields will result in revocation of all permits indefinitely.
5. Any unauthorized use by a user group or interfering with another permitted user will result in revocation of all permits indefinitely.
6. The County must be notified immediately if an allocated field is no longer needed, or if there is a change in the organization's schedule.
7. League President or his designee must submit a specific schedule to the County for any field lights to be programmed/used. (Fees assessed if applicable).
8. Parking is permitted only in designated parking areas. Vehicles are restricted to roadways into/through the park and in the parking lots.
9. Smoking, vaping and tobacco products are **only** allowed in the parking lots.
10. Alcoholic beverages and drugs are prohibited on park property.
11. Leagues/Teams must police grounds for trash after each use, especially in the immediate area/field of use; dugouts, infield, outfield, spectators' bleachers and/or seating area, etc.
12. All vendor and food sales on County property require prior approval from the Parks and Recreation Office. Additionally, food vending operations require a valid Food Service Permit approved and issued by Pender County Health Department.
13. Organizations are responsible for adhering to Field Maintenance Guidelines in Section X and Inclement Weather Policy in Section XI.
14. Appropriate sportsmanship and conduct must be conveyed to all league participants, coaches and spectators. Sportsmanship should be monitored by a league representative or official at all times. Negative reports from the public or from the families of participants regarding league activities may lead to the immediate suspension of league play for the season.

X. Field Maintenance Guidelines

Pender County staff will not be able to work on fields every day. These guidelines are to help keep the fields safe during regular use by youth athletic organizations. Each assigned user group will be held responsible for compliance.

1. Do not use fields during or after heavy rain, or when fields are wet and muddy.
2. If the County closes fields for inclement weather, user groups are not allowed on the fields. For additional information, see Inclement Weather Policy in Section XI.
3. Replace turf divots at the end of each day to help re-root grass.
4. Do not overcrowd fields by scheduling multiple practices or games on one field. Allow a distance between fields for safe passage of spectators and participants.
5. Multi-Purpose Field use, especially practices, should be conducted in such a way that the action takes place on different sections of turf, thus reducing excessive damage in one area. Rotate use, and when possible, staff off fringe or bare areas to limit erosion and further damage.
6. No tarps or material that may damage the grass may be placed on the turf.
7. Holes and uneven areas on ball fields may be filled/leveled with appropriate approved material. This includes batter boxes, pitching rubber areas, and any other area needed attention.
8. Fields may be groomed with an appropriate method of dragging or groomer. NO vehicles except small utility carts or zero turn type mowers are allowed.
9. Pushing water with brooms, rakes, etc. is NOT allowed within the infield. You may ONLY use blowers to spread the water within the infield and you should avoid spreading water into the outfield.

10. Appropriate bases and base plugs may be placed as needed for that day's practice/game. It is imperative to put base plugs in when moving bases to another distance.
11. Field liner for foul lines may be applied within the infield.
12. Paint may be applied to mark the outfield lines beginning at the turf areas and continuing to the outfield foul poles, fence, or designated length; whichever one comes first. Painted football and soccer field lines are allowed.
13. All goals must be secured to the ground or some type of pre-approved structure at all times to prevent tipping and must maintain a safe working condition.
14. No chemical applications allowed. This includes all pesticides.
15. Damages discovered on County property MUST be reported in a timely manner to the County. This includes fences, player benches, bleachers, trash cans, or anything else that needs attention.
16. All minor field improvements must be approved in advance by the County. This includes home plates, temporary fencing, fill material, etc. Stockpiling material onsite is prohibited unless pre-approved by the County. For fill material, clay/sand mix can only be used on infields on ball fields. Sand (approved golf course sand) can only be used on turf areas.
17. All major field improvements or other facility improvements, including building or installing a structure of any kind requires the submission of a Facility Improvement Request Form and approval by the County. Submission does not constitute approval.
18. User groups are responsible for excessive use or damage to County fields, equipment and property. If additional maintenance is required after an activity (in excess of routine services/time), the assigned user group may be charged accordingly. Failure to pay for additional maintenance caused by excessive use or damage may result in the immediate loss of existing field allocations/permits, and/or the refusal of future field allocation requests.

XI. Inclement Weather Policy

The County reserved the right to cancel or suspend approved field use permits when field conditions could result in injury to players or cause damage to fields. Permits may also be cancelled when the health and safety of participants is threatened due to impending conditions, including but not limited to: heavy rain, high winds, poor air quality, tropical storms, winter storms, tornados, hurricanes, etc.

During inclement weather, Parks and Recreation staff will assess the playability of all County owned and/or operated fields by 3:00pm daily to determine if use will occur. Any Parks and Recreation staff member (full time and part time) have the authority to close any/all fields. Staff will update the Rain Out Line with Red when fields are closed and Yellow when fields playability may be questionable at the time of your practice/game. Green will be updated only after being a different color the day before.

All users are expected to use good judgment during or after inclement weather. If inclement weather occurs after regular business hours, including weekends, it is the responsibility of the user group to determine if fields are playable and will be held responsible for any damages to the fields. The fields will be deemed unsafe and unplayable, and activities must be cancelled when any of the following conditions exist:

- Steady rain is falling

- Water standing in the baselines, batter's boxes and/or pitching area on the infields of ball fields or goal mouths/midfield of multipurpose fields
- Your feet slip as you walk on the infield
- Mud cakes or clings to shoes
- The depth of your footprint is greater than one (1) inch when walking on the infield
- Water is standing within the majority of a playing position, i.e., goal mouth, midfield
- Turf can be displaced or dislodged from the ground
- Your footprints fill with water within the majority of a playing position
- Your feet suction to the ground as you walk within the majority of a playing position
- The depth of your footprint is greater than two (2) inches in the majority of a playing position

XII. Rest and Renovation of Athletic Fields

An annual rest and renovation program is scheduled for all fields to maintain field integrity and sustainability. Athletic fields will be closed annually from the Monday following Thanksgiving until the Monday following February 15 and the month of July. However, there may be a need to close fields other times throughout the year, including during an athletic season for maintenance concerns/issues (i.e. pesticide application, turf repair, etc.). The County attempts to be flexible in accommodating user groups but ultimately, the health and safety of the user and the condition and playability of the fields take priority. This may require the closure of fields, and/or denial of use of fields. The Rest and Renovation period shall be consistent with the number of days agreed upon with Parks and Grounds Maintenance.

XIII. Violations

Violations of this policy may result in the immediate loss of existing field allocations, the revocation of existing permits, the refusal of future allocations requests, charges for the cost of any modifications/repair to a field or facility related to the violation, and other actions as warranted. Parks and Recreation will provide written notice of any violation and the action taken as a result of the violations.

XIV. Additional Supervision/Security

The County may require a field user to provide additional personnel, security or law enforcement protection when deemed necessary. Any resulting expenses or costs will be billed to the field user.

XV. Traffic and Parking

It is the user group's responsibility to alleviate parking and traffic issues. The user group may be requested to provide volunteers to direct participants and spectators to designate parking areas.

XVI. Questions

For any questions regarding this policy, contact the Parks and Recreation Office at 910-259-1330.