

Unmanned aircraft systems (Drones)

There are several FAA regulations that visitors must adhere to if they wish to operate a drone:

- The drone must be registered with the FAA.
- The registration number must be on the aircraft. The number can be inside the battery compartment if it doesn't require a tool to open it.
- The drone is for recreational use only.
- The drone cannot exceed 55 pounds.
- The drone cannot take off from, land in, or be operated within congressionally-designated wilderness or primitive areas.
- • The drone cannot exceed 400' in altitude.
- It can be operated during daylight only, and must be in view of the operator at all times.

As patrols we may inform visitors of these regulations but we should not become confrontational. A simple “Are you aware you must (XYZ) to operate your drone?” may be all that is needed. Visitors can be referred to www.faa.gov/uas if they need further information.

Additionally, there are plenty of gray areas where we can educate the public on best practices:

- Drones are not permitted to fly in areas that have Temporary Flight Restrictions in place, such as

wildfires. They should never be flown in close proximity to any wildfire operation.

- Drones should not be flown near populated or noise sensitive areas such as campgrounds, trail heads, and visitor centers.
- Drones cannot be flown over or near wildlife. Intentional disturbance of animals during breeding, nesting, rearing of young, or other critical functions is not allowed.
- Drones cannot be used to harass wildlife or to assist in hunting.
- Drones should be launched more than 100 meters from wildlife. They cannot approach animals or birds vertically.
- Privacy laws must be adhered to. Drones should not be buzzing visitors not associated with the operator. There is a desk copy of regulations at the Visitor Center. Contact Sean Cox, Forest Aviation Officer, for more information.