



OPEN SPACE AND PARKS PHOTOGRAPHY AND FILM POLICY

Photography and Film Permit overview

- Photography and film is defined as the recording on any medium of still or motion images
- Permits are not required for personal photography and film
- Permits are required for low-impact photography and film
- High-impact photography and film are not permissible
- Please allow a minimum of two weeks (14 calendar days) for permit approval and processing
- Permit fees apply
- Parking is limited, and vehicles generally are not permitted outside of designated parking lots and roadways
- The use of drones is not permitted
- To protect wildlife and habitat, access is limited to designated trails (see exclusions below) and established use areas such as turf and picnic areas

Personal Photography and Film—No Permit Required

Permits are not required for photography and film that meets all the following requirements:

- Non-commercial (still, motion picture, video, digital, and other)
- No impacts to vegetation, habitat, wildlife, or visitor use
- 24 or fewer people
- Duration of one hour or less
- No exclusive use of parks and preserves (blocking trails, parking spaces, roads, pathways, or any public access)
- In compliance with all municipal codes and park regulations. Municipal Code and Park Regulations may be found here:
<https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/Departments/Community-Services/Open-Space-Parks/Open-Space-Preserves/Rules-Regulations>
- Examples of personal photography and film include photography that does not require additional permits, small professional group shoots with limited subjects and crew (e.g., one photographer, 1-5 subjects) such as an engagement or immediate family photography session, and shoots with no impact to vegetation, habitat, wildlife, or visitor use.

Photography and Film--Permit Required

Low-impact photography and film may be permitted. This is generally associated with smaller shoots that do not significantly impact City-owned property, the public right-of-way, and other visitors use of the park or preserve. Permits cannot be issued for



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Open Space and Parks

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shoots that will have any significant impacts to vegetation, habitat, wildlife, or visitor use.

Low-impact photography or film requires that a completed Photography and Film Permit application be submitted to the manager of the desired park or preserve. The application will be reviewed, and a permit may be granted once all fees and forms have been submitted. Wedding photography and film may, depending on the circumstances, require a permit and fees.

Permits are required for photography and film that includes:

- Commercial shoot (as defined in Palo Alto Open Space and Parks Regulations R1-21A)
- Duration of up to two hours
- Multi-camera shoot
- Additional lighting, sound, and other equipment

Permits for photography and film will not allow the following:

- Commercial shoots that significantly impact City-owned property or the public right-of-way, either by utilizing a large area of City-property, negatively impacting the property, or requiring traffic control/street closures. Typically, these shoots include a crew with multiple photographers/cameras, and assistants and talent.
- Shoots on weekends and City holidays
- Shoots during park closure hours
- Duration of shoot for more than two hours, including set up and tear down
- Exclusive use of a significant area within a park or preserve

Photography and Film Permit Application Conditions

All permit applicants shall accept and agree to comply with the following photography and film general conditions:

1. Utmost care will be exercised to ensure that wildlife, habitat, and natural/historic/cultural resources are not disturbed or impacted.
2. Photography and film of wildlife will be permitted only when such wildlife will not be approached within 100', fed, harmed, or otherwise disturbed from their natural behavior.
3. Drones are not allowed.
4. No employee of the City of Palo Alto may work for the permittee in any capacity whatsoever while in uniform or if directly involved in supervision of the permittee.
5. Amplified sound such as gunfire, sirens, public address systems, and other similar noise-producing equipment are not permitted under any circumstances. Other amplified



Community Services Department
Open Space and Parks

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sound such as music requires an additional noise abatement permit for a level more than fifteen dB above the local ambient at a distance of twenty-five feet or more. PAMC 22.04.180/PAMC 9.10.050

https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/paloalto/latest/paloalto_ca/0-0-0-83686#JD_22.04.180

https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/paloalto/latest/paloalto_ca/0-0-0-66214#JD_9.10.050

6. Production vehicles shall park according to an approved parking plan.
7. Areas of filming shall be cleared, and the site left as found at end of each day's shooting.
8. Smoking, vaping, or any open flame are not permitted.
9. Exclusive use of any significant areas is not permitted, including:
 - Closing roads and trails
 - Off-trail access
 - Access to trails less than 48" (must allow at least 5' of trail width for other park visitors to pass)
 - Use of generators requires an additional permit and fees (see Special Event Permit Application)
11. Fees will be determined during the permit review process and will be discussed with applicant prior to permit issuance. A refundable deposit of up to \$1,000 may be required to ensure compliance with permit conditions. The amount, if any, to be refunded to the permittee is solely at the discretion of the City of Palo Alto.
12. A permit is required for all groups of 25 people or more
<https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/Departments/Community-Services/Open-Space-Parks/Open-Space-Preserves/Rules-Regulations>
13. Permit fees for Parks and Open Space range \$344 - \$2,667