



TOWN OF MARBLEHEAD

Recreation & Parks Department



Subject: Field Use Policy
Rain and wet fields

Effective: April 1, 2015

Park fields	School fields
Gatchells	MHS lower
Seaside Park	Veterans
Reynolds	Village lower front
Orne	Village lower back
Hobbs	Village upper
Gatchell's Green	Hopkins

Our grass playing fields in the Town of Marblehead include both park and school district properties. While the Recreation and Park Department and the School Department have jurisdiction over their individual properties, the Recreation and Park Department, by agreement, are the stewards of the fields. The Recreation and Park Department lines, cuts, fertilizes, seeds, schedules, determines when fields are closed, and otherwise maintains the properties.

The above properties represent a substantial investment for the Town of Marblehead having a cumulative value in the tens of millions of dollars. There is a significant amount of money spent on routine maintenance and capital improvement year-to-year. The budget for improvement comes solely from the Recreation and Park Department's routine maintenance allocation for either a school or park property. There has never been budgeted money in either department for large repairs and improvements.

There are certain environmental conditions that contribute to the damage of turf, and when athletic play happens during those conditions, damage can result. The primary concern is water retention after a heavy or sustained rain event. Playing on an athletic field that is saturated with water causes significant damage.

To clarify, it does not have to be standing water. A properly irrigated soil has a significant amount of air containing oxygen in the root zone. With heavy or sustained rain, water displaces the air and the grass struggles. Heavy play damages the waterlogged grass. It can take up to thirty days to recover.

Every field in town drains differently. It is entirely possible that one or two fields may not be playable, while other fields are. The fields will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

General criteria for evaluating playability and potential closure due to rain

Athlete safety

There may or may not be standing water on the field

You should hear no sound under your feet as you walk across the field

You should not leave a footprint anywhere on the field

The top 2 inches of soil should not be generally muddy

Consideration for turf density

Duration of the rain event and weather forecast for the immediate future

A decision to close a field or fields for athletic play will be made by staff at the Recreation and Park Department. In the case of an MIAA scheduled event, staff will communicate with the athletic office. A decision will be made by 12 noon on the day in question. For use of a field by youth sports, a decision will be made by 2 PM on the day in question.

As soon as a field is closed it will be posted on the Recreation and Park Department website. When the field is ready for play, the posted message will be removed.

It is anticipated that this policy will work with cooperation from everyone. In years past there was a policy that included a penalty phase for violation. At this time, we feel that a strict penalty need not be outlined. It should be known that if any group violates a closure and damages a field, it will be assumed that they are financially liable for repair.