

**STATEMENT OF POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR SLACKLINING, HAMMOCKING  
AND ACTIVITIES THAT INVOLVE TETHERING TO TREES IN PARKS**

**AUTHORIZATION**

The Madison Board of Park Commissioners is the approving authority for determining the appropriateness and acceptance of the activities that require tethering to trees, e.g. slacklining and hammocking in park and recreation areas within the Madison parks system. This policy is intended to provide guidelines and procedures that will ensure that such activities are done in a manner that prevents and mitigates damage to City of Madison trees and is respectful of the rights of all park users.

**DEFINITIONS**

1. SLACKLINING: The sport of walking a narrow, flat nylon webbing suspended horizontally between two anchor points.
2. HAMMOCKING: The act of hanging a bed or couch made of canvas, netted cord, or the like, with cords attached to supports at each end.

**GUIDELINES**

1. Tethering installations are allowed from sunrise to 30 minutes prior to sunset. Sunrise and sunset times are as determined by the National Weather Service (NWS) of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The NWS website is located at [www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov). Equipment cannot be installed prior to sunrise and must be removed before sunset.
2. All installations shall be temporary and may not be left unattended. The owner of the equipment is responsible for setting up and taking down the equipment. Unattended equipment will be removed.
3. All equipment associated with the activity shall be maintained in an operable and safe condition. This is the sole responsibility of the users. The City may direct equipment that appears to be unsafe or improperly set up to be removed, held and disposed of in accordance with MGO 8.44.
4. Lines may only be affixed to appropriately sized trees and select tree species in the following manner:
  - a. Only trees greater than one foot (1') in diameter measured at 4.5 ft. above ground level may be used as anchor points.
  - b. Trees must not be altered. No branches shall be cut, pruned, thinned, braced, broken, or screws or nails used in the tree. Such damage is unlawful under Madison General Ordinance Section 23.24 *Breaking or Injuring Trees, Shrubs*.
  - c. Tree species that cannot be used as anchor points include:
    - i. All Oak trees. Oak trees are susceptible to Oak Wilt, a deadly fungus that is spread by insects that introduce the pathogen through openings in tree's outer bark.
    - ii. All Hickory trees. Native Hickory trees have scaly, raised bark that is easily damaged by abrasion.
    - iii. All Birch trees. Birch trees have delicate and papery bark that is easily damaged by abrasion.

- d. Tree protection is required for all anchoring equipment:
    - i. Minimum tree protection shall consist of fabric padding placed between the tree and anchoring lines. The fabric padding must completely encircle the trunk of the tree and be a minimum of ¼" thick and 10" wide. Appropriate padding material may include carpet squares or similar material.
    - ii. Anchoring straps must be a minimum of 2" wide. Anchoring straps shall lay flat against the fabric padding and shall not be twisted or folded reducing the overall width of the strap. Anchoring straps and their associated hardware shall at no point directly contact the tree.
  - e. Trees and/or landscape areas showing damage from such activities may be restricted from future use at the discretion of Madison Parks.
5. Installations may only be attached to City trees as described above, and may not be affixed to any other city fixture including but not limited to buildings, light poles, handrails, art objects, park equipment, bike racks or fences.
  6. Tethering lines shall not be higher than four feet (4') off the ground at the center of the span.
  7. Tethering lines shall not be longer than fifty feet (50') measured from trunk surface to trunk surface.
  8. The area beneath the tethering line must be a clear and flat landing surface under its entire length and must have a minimum 8 feet clearance on both sides.
  9. At no time shall such installations impede the access and activities of other park users.
  10. No installation is permitted within fifty feet (50') of events or activities occurring at reserved park shelters and park spaces.
  11. Slacklining and hammocking shall not be permitted in parks designated as conservation areas. Conservation parks are listed at <http://www.cityofmadison.com/parks/parks/conservation>.
  12. Park Rangers have the authority to order the removal of any slackline or hammock which they deem as harmful to the tree or as a danger to safety of park users.

### **ASSUMPTION OF RISK**

For activities associated with such installations, participants and spectators assume any and all risks associated with this activity including, but not limited to, death, paralysis and serious injury.