



SVAS Blue Canyon Guide
Sacramento Valley Astronomical Society
Henry Grieb (HGO) and Robert J. Mathews
(RJMO) Observatories
RULES, REGULATIONS, AND SPECIAL EVENTS

2024

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Introduction

The SVAS has a “Special Use Permit” issued by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) for use of an area within the boundaries of the Tahoe National Forest for an astronomical observatory. The SVAS area, called the “permitted area” in this document, is adjacent to the Blue Canyon/Nyack airport located near Interstate 80 in Placer County. The airport property also has a “Special Use Permit” that has been issued to Placer County by the U.S. Forest Service. Placer County has granted conditional permission to use the airport tarmac for astronomical viewing. Placer County and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) govern the use of airport property and their rules apply to all members of the public who use the FAA permitted areas.

Rules for all SVAS members

The permitted area is for use by SVAS members for visual observing, and astrophotography/imaging. Common sense, courtesy, and safety are the guiding factors for behavior on the property:

- When entering the observing area, try to arrive before dark. If you arrive after dark, turn off your headlights to prevent destroying other observer’s night vision. White light destroys night vision, which takes our eyes 30 minutes or longer to fully dark adapt or recover. Red light preserves night vision, so all light sources must be red filtered and very dim (some red lights are too bright)! Computer, tablet, and cell phone screens emit white light; they must be covered with red Mylar and or dimmed and hidden from view by an opaque cover or opaque tent! Newer car lighting is mostly controlled by computers, so please do your best to use a minimum of white light when entering or leaving during an observing session. Turn off your interior lights, and only use parking lights. Try to leave the area at a convenient time, generally around midnight or remain overnight. Inform nearby observers when you are about to leave, and ask for someone to guide you to the exit road with a red flashlight avoiding the use of headlights. Be patient with visitors who may not be aware of white light issues, remind them in a “friendly” manor about the rules;
- The use of green laser pointers is generally discouraged as they can adversely affect those members engaged in astrophotography and can also be an annoyance to general observers. Occasional use to help familiarize newcomers with the night sky during scheduled star parties is permissible, but must follow safety precautions and FAA rules. It is strictly against federal law to aim laser light at an aircraft (Public Law 112-95). Users must use common sense and follow FAA guidelines regarding use in proximity to airports ([FAA Laser Hazards](#)).
- Smoking is strongly discouraged. If you must smoke, use an ashtray, not the ground. Alcoholic beverages and recreational drugs are not permitted;

- Bicycles, skateboards, rollerblades, roller-skates, Frisbees, and similar items are not allowed in the permitted area at any time. Children must remain under positive parental/guardian control at all times;
- Pets are not allowed in the permitted area at any time;
- Carry out all your trash. There are no public trashcans;
- Power outlets on the exterior of HGO are for telescopes and accessories only. No coffee pots, heaters, camper hookups, etc. are allowed;
- The gated entrance must be closed behind you when entering or leaving the area.

General Member (GM) Use of the Observatories and Permitted Area

- SVAS members may use the permitted area around the observatories at any time. They are granted full observatory access and equipment use during regularly scheduled SVAS star parties and special events, provided they are properly trained and supervised by the Observatory Director (OD) or Observatory Assistant (OA). On all other days GM's must gain observatory access permission from one of the above responsible persons in charge, follow their supervision and guidance, and abide by their schedule as specified in the "Observatory Access Guide" document. Signing your membership application form each year signifies your understanding and agreement to abide by these guidelines. A copy of your membership application form will be kept on file with the SVAS Board. All SVAS members must have their membership card with them when using the permitted area and be willing to show it to a board member and/or other official authority if requested;
- SVAS members may invite up to four guests in the permitted area. Members wanting to invite more than four guests must obtain advanced approval, in writing, from a SVAS Board member. Guests must agree to abide by these guidelines. SVAS members are responsible for their guests;
- The associated observatories south of HGO are privately owned. Access to these facilities is only with their permission.

There must always be a trained responsible Observatory Director (OD) or Observatory Assistant (OA) on the SVAS property when the observatory is open. All members must agree to vacate the observatory, when the OD or OA in charge decides to close the observatory. When using the observatory, please follow these basic rules:

- Secure the padlock to swinging security bar after opening door;
- Please sign in the logbook when using the observatory;
- No smoking at any time. Alcoholic beverages and recreational drugs are not permitted;

- OA's or OD are responsible for other GM's and any guests using the observatory. Make sure they are supervised and trained in the use of observatory equipment;
- Opening the observatories for any non SVAS sanctioned event, non SVAS clubs, or special interest groups, is strictly prohibited unless you have Board approval. Your four guest limit may not be interpreted as authorization to open HGO for non SVAS groups or clubs;
- This is your observatory. Please help to keep it clean and safe for others to use. Please carry the trash with you when you can, there is no trash pickup at HGO;
- As an OA you are responsible to help maintain and repair HGO. Please volunteer when asked. You are considered a club leader; assist, train, and make GM's feel welcome whenever possible;
- When leaving, ensure all heaters are unplugged, close all windows, lock down the sliding roof, ensure dome opening is pointing north and closed, turn off all lights, and turn off all circuit breakers (exterior outlets included). Ensure all exterior door locks are secure!

Open Fires

- Open FIRES or charcoal grills are not allowed at any time anywhere in the area. Propane grills or stoves on the permit area only, check fire regulations.

Security and Public Safety

Incident Notification - The holder of the Special Use Permit is required to contact the authorized U.S. Forest Service officer as soon as practicable after the following incidents that occur on National Forest System (NES) lands within the authorized area:

- Any incident resulting in death, permanent disability, or personal injuries that are life-threatening or that are likely to cause permanent disability;
- Any failure of a structural, mechanical, electrical component and its primary connection, or operator error, which impairs the operation or function of a passenger ropeway in a way that could affect public, safety, or any ropeway incident that requires reporting to State authorities;
- A search and rescue operation to locate a person; or
- Any incident that had or has high potential for serious personal injury, significant property damage, or significant environmental or other natural resource damage, including but not limited to avalanches, landslides, flooding, fire, structural failures or release of hazardous substances.

Method of Notification - For any accidents that require immediate medical attention, dial 911. Additionally, for any accidents that require medical attention, contact Grass Valley Emergency Command Center at (530) 477-7237 or (530) 477-7238 and request that they contact District Ranger Mary Grim. Permit holder shall provide a follow-up summary report of each accident and submit the report(s) in writing to the District Ranger at the Foresthill office within 1 week of the accident.

Contents of Notification - The holder shall document all specifics of the incident such as when, where, and how the incident occurred and who was present or affected by the incident. All emergency requests involving criminal activity will be through the Placer County Sheriff's Department at (530) 889-7949 or 911.

Special Events

Special events include scheduled monthly star parties, SVAS Annual Star-B-Q, special observation events such as meteor showers, and special programs such as the Messier Marathon challenge.

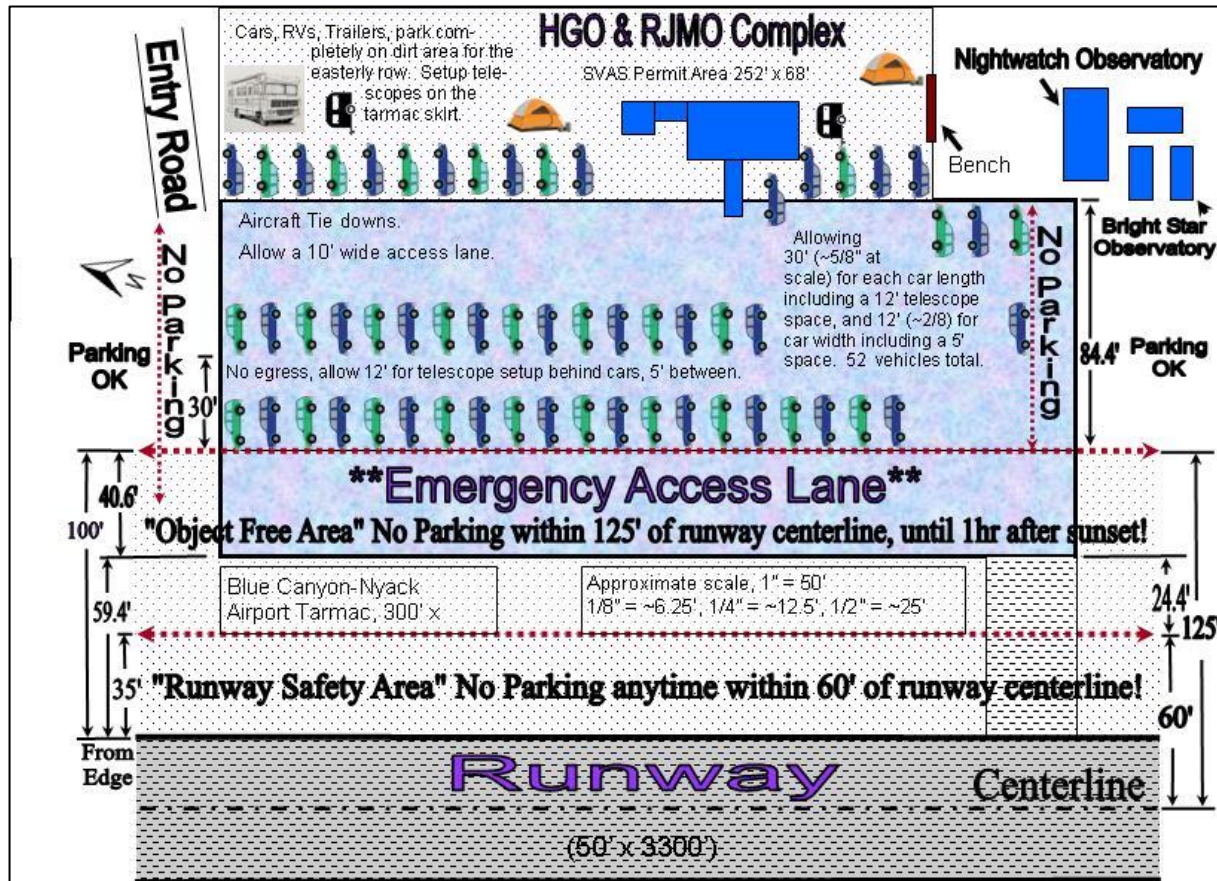
- During special events the SVAS will acquire special approval to use the Placer County permit area adjacent to ours. SVAS officers will be in charge of the area use. If fund-raising activities (such as a raffle) constitute part of the special event, SVAS must pay for a commercial-use permit from the U.S. Forest Service with a fee of 5% of raffle proceeds or a fixed fee of \$60, whichever is greater. Expenditures for purchase of raffle prizes can be deducted from the permit fee. To limit the non-SVAS members presence at the site during special events, the U.S. Forest Service will not issue permits for other events to occur at the at the same time; scheduling of special events with the U.S. Forest Service will be on a first-come first- serve basis;
- Access to the observing tarmac during scheduled star parties will be in accordance with the following priorities:
 - SVAS Members will have priority parking;
 - Guests and the general public will be instructed to have access on a "space available" basis between sunset and one hour after sunset and will be asked to park outside the facility until the appointed time;
 - Guest vehicles will not be allowed on the tarmac without telescopes during events when space is limited. Parking is available in the cul-de-sac;
- Park with a maximum of 3-4 feet between vehicles. Set up your telescope and seating area in front of or behind your vehicle, never to the side. Please review the parking plan in this document;
- Airplane traffic has priority at all times, you may be asked to move your observing site if aircraft parking space or access is required;

- RV/5th wheel/pop-up campers are limited to SVAS MEMBERS ONLY. All camping vehicles must be parked entirely on the dirt permit area and as close together as possible. Guests with vehicle campers will be required to set up outside the airport property. There is no RV hookup or power available, and water or sewage dumping is not allowed. A maximum of six RV/5th wheel/pop-up campers will be allowed on the property on a first come basis and must remain all night. Please check with the Observatory Director for availability and parking instructions.

Special Event Parking Plan and Guidelines (2022 Placer County Update)

- Aircraft always have priority; the airport is open 24hrs-7days a week for emergency landings;
- No parking ever on the runway, or the dirt **Runway Safety Zone**, within 35' from the runway edge;
- No parking in the **Object Free Area** within 100' of the runway edge until 1 hour after official sunset or 1 hour before sunrise;
- Aircraft tie downs must be immediately accessible on request (located on north east corner of the tarmac);
- No RV's, camping trailers, or tents are allowed on the tarmac, they must be located completely on the dirt SVAS property. RV power hookup and water or sewage dumping, are not allowed;
- Only gas grills are permitted on the SUP area. No open fires or charcoal allowed! Be sure to check current fire restrictions! A shovel, axe, and a 5 gal container of water are required fire gear;
- No alcoholic beverages or recreational drugs allowed;
- Maximum of four guests is allowed per member; guests may not park RVs and trailers without special permission;
- Guest parking is on a space available basis, and if necessary they may be instructed to park elsewhere during special events.
- Overflow parking is permitted by Placer County along Airport Road and in the cul-de-sac so as not to block traffic or access into the airport.
- Emergency evacuation plan must be in place and filed with Placer County and the U.S. Forest Service. Keep emergency access lanes open at all times.
- These parking rules may be temporarily pre-empted by those authorized via a Special Event Permit.

HGO PARKING PLAN



Directions to Blue Canyon

- From Interstate 80, 36 miles East of Auburn, take the Blue Canyon Exit 155 and turn south.
- Drive to the end of the road and turn right onto Blue Canyon Road.
- Drive 0.1 mile to enter the cul de sac. You can park here for the evening if you want. It's just over 100 yards to walk into the airport, or,
- Open the leftmost gate that has a sign: "Pilots, passengers and authorized visitors only beyond this gate". The gate is not locked. Drive through, closing it behind you. Proceed another 100 yards to the airport.



Version	Effective Date	Description of Change
1	July 2019	Initial Document
2	July 2020	Use of laser pointers; FAA rules
3	October 2022	Placer County parking update
4	February 2024	Observatory guides reference

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