



Can I fly a drone over protected land in Puerto Rico?

Protected land preflight - the federal layers, the Puerto Rico layer, and the rule number behind each line.
Rule text checked 6 September 2026.

M MAP CHECK, BEFORE THE DAY OF THE FLIGHT

- ☐ Current FAA aeronautical chart open. Charted refuge outlines are designated there. 50 CFR 27.34
- ☐ Any National Park Service unit involved: read that unit's Superintendent's Compendium, not national policy. 36 CFR 1.5(a)(2)
- ☐ Any national forest involved: find whether a designated wilderness area lies inside it. 16 U.S.C. 1133(c)
- ☐ Puerto Rico layer: 21 state forests, 45 nature reserves, 6 wildlife refuges. DRNA, Areas Naturales Protegidas
- ☐ Coastal work between March 1 and November 30: nesting season is running. USFWS Conservation Measure 6
- ☐ Write down which layers you checked and the date. Job file

W WHERE YOU STAND

- ☐ Launch point and landing point marked on the map, outside every federal unit. 50 CFR 27.34
- ☐ Takeoff or landing on a refuge without authorization is the offense by itself, with no harassment needed. 50 CFR 27.34
- ☐ Landing on National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service or Forest Service land needs that agency's authorization, outside the three exceptions listed under the rule. FAA AIM 7-5-6(a)
- ☐ Inside a designated wilderness area: no motorized equipment, no mechanical transport, no landing of aircraft. 16 U.S.C. 1133(c)
- ☐ Inside a National Park Service unit: launching, landing and operating are closed unless the superintendent approves in writing. Superintendent's Compendium, San Juan NHS
- ☐ In a park, delivering or retrieving any object by airborne means is prohibited outside an emergency or a permit. 36 CFR 2.17(a)(3)

A ALTITUDE - WHAT THE NUMBERS MEAN

- ☐ AIM 7-5-6(b) requests 2,000 feet over parks, refuges and wilderness. Part 107 holds at 400. Move the operation. FAA AIM 7-5-6(b); 14 CFR 107.51
- ☐ The refuge rule carries no altitude. The test is how the animal reacted. 50 CFR 27.34
- ☐ NOAA's 1,000-foot figure is written for crewed aircraft. NOAA Marine Life Viewing Guidelines; 16 U.S.C. 1362(18)(A)
For drones the standard is the statute: potential to disturb.



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continued

W WILDLIFE - THE STANDARD

- ☐ Harassment includes a negligent act or omission. Intent is not required. 50 CFR 17.3
- ☐ Take includes harass, and includes the attempt. 16 U.S.C. 1532(19)
- ☐ Marine mammals: the test is potential to disturb. 16 U.S.C. 1362(18)(A)
- ☐ Whales, 100 yards. Turtles in the water or nesting on beaches, 50 yards. NOAA Guidelines and Distances
- ☐ Animal changes behavior: land, then log time, place, species and what it did. 50 CFR 27.34; 50 CFR 17.3

B BEACH WORK, MARCH 1 TO NOVEMBER 30

- ☐ A qualified monitor must walk each beach work area during the early morning hours. Any nest found must be marked or flagged in place. USFWS Conservation Measure 6
- ☐ Where required, debris removal and construction on a beach start that morning only after the monitor has finished and nests are marked. Outside peak season the floor is at least twice a week; Measure 8 calls April through November the highest. USFWS Conservation Measures 6 and 8
- ☐ Turtle observed, adult or hatchling: hold at least 50 feet, about 15 meters, contact the PRDNER, ask an authorized sea turtle group for assistance, and leave the turtle an unobstructed path to the water. USFWS Conservation Measure 11
- ☐ Take of a sea turtle requires a formal Section 7 consultation to be initiated. USFWS Conservation Measure 16
- ☐ The duty to consult runs to the federal agency, triggered by the federal permit. 16 U.S.C. 1536(a)(2)
- ☐ Monitoring activities and measures taken should be clearly documented and included in the final project report. USFWS Conservation Measure 15
- ☐ Three most common nesting species: leatherback (tinglar), hawksbill (carey), green (peje blanco). USFWS Conservation Measures, species section

Planning aid, not legal advice and not an authorization. The regulations and the permits cited here are the authority; this card points at them. Read against the sources on 6 September 2026. Confirm anything that decides a flight against the source itself before you fly.

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