



PROTECT YOUR PARK FROM COSTLY COPYRIGHT VIOLATIONS
Enrollment for the 2022 ARVC Combined Music License Opens in August

Did you know if you play copyrighted music in public at your park, whether it's prerecorded or live, you need to have the proper music licenses from the performing rights organizations, known as PROs? There are three major PROs—ASCAP, BMI and SESAC.

These licenses are necessary for you to be in compliance with federal copyright laws, whether the music played at your park is prerecorded or live.

John Johnson, senior vice president of licensing for ASCAP, says there's a common misconception that if a park plays the radio in public or brings in a band, that it's the radio station (or streaming service) or band that must have a music license, but that's not the case. It's the park that must be licensed.

You may be wondering who benefits from these licensing fees. The PROs each represent a specific group of songwriters, composers and publishers. "They're the ones who create the music," Johnson says. "The money that is paid in the form of these license fees is what puts food on their tables. That's how they make a living."

"A lot of times, the person writing the song is someone that you may not be familiar with," Johnson says. As an example, he says the hit song "All of Me" performed by John Legend was written by songwriter Toby Gad. "These small business operators make up our members along with the Garth Brooks of the world.

"It's very important for parks to be compliant with federal copyright laws. The ARVC Combined Music License Program makes this really, really easy. It covers them for any public performance of music that occurs in their park."

He says the license fee is "part of the cost of doing business to provide an amenity that helps set the vibe of what your campground is all about."

"From guests singing around the campfire to special events and concerts on the central lawn to our camp hosts playing Spotify radio in the office— music adds so much to our park," says Mari Garland, OHM, owner of ARVC member-park Junction West RV Park, Grand Junction, Colo. "Getting an ARVC Combined Music License was a smart decision for us. Now we can play all kinds of music in the office and at our events and we don't ever have to worry about incurring fines for copyright violations."

Since each of the PROs represents a different group of songwriters, composers and publishers, you need to be licensed by all three to be fully protected. When you compare the cost of the ARVC Combined Music License (see sidebar) to the potential fines, it's easy to see the value.

“The penalties under federal copyright law are pretty clear,” Johnson says. “Damages typically range anywhere from about \$750 to up to \$30,000 for each song or musical work that would be infringed. In addition to that, copyright owners are entitled to be reimbursed for legal expenses that would be incurred in litigation. If you're having a band or somebody that's going to be playing at your campground, they're not going to play just one song. It's going to be multiple songs, and with each work that would be infringed during that time, it could add up to quite a bit.

“As far as our enforcement of (music licensing), it's what we consider to be the last resort,” Johnson says. “We would rather people do the right thing (become licensed) because it's the right thing to do.”