



Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

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ENJOY THE BEAUTY OF RHODE ISLAND

Take precautions and follow the rules to safely enjoy the out-of-doors

PROVIDENCE – The Department of Environmental Management (DEM) is reminding Rhode Islanders that many diverse and varied outdoor spaces are open to the public and encouraging people to enjoy them safely by adhering to the Governor’s guidance on not gathering in groups and practicing social distancing.



Graphic: National Recreation & Park Association

“There’s no better physical and emotional elixir than fresh air and sunshine, especially during these challenging times,” said DEM Director Janet Coit. “Rhode Islanders are fortunate that our state has a wide array of natural areas that have been protected over the decades. DEM parks and management areas are open for visitors, as are many open spaces managed by land trusts and other partners. Rhode Islanders appreciate a walk on a favorite hiking trail or along the shoreline, but they must practice social distancing in order for these amenities to stay open. There are many places for residents to safely enjoy the outdoors in their local communities and state open spaces, as long as they take the necessary precautions.”

Residents must follow these guidelines for the safe use of parks and open spaces during the COVID-19 public health crisis as follows:

- Do not visit parks, trails or other recreational areas if you feel ill or are exhibiting symptoms of illness.
- Plan a trip to a nearby park for a short, local visit since restrooms are not available at most outdoor areas.
- Maintain a minimum distance of 6 feet between persons.

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- Do not gather in groups of more than 10 people.
- Follow CDC's guidance on personal hygiene prior to and during use of parks or trails. Wash your hands, carry hand sanitizer, cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, and avoid surfaces that are touched often, such as doorknobs, handrails, and equipment.
- While on trails, warn other users of your presence and as they pass, and step aside to let others pass.
- Most areas, including state parks, are carry-in/carry-out for trash. DEM encourages visitors to bring water, snacks and food in reusable containers and a bag to bring your trash home.

DEM reminds visitors to practice good stewardship while visiting outdoor areas. "When visiting open spaces, preserves and parks, we're asking everyone to leave no trace and give yourself space. Each person who enjoys parks, hiking trails, bike paths and other public outdoor spaces has a responsibility to keep them clean and to practice social distancing to keep themselves and others safe. Following these rules promotes a conservation ethic, fosters a sense of stewardship, and leads to better visitor experiences for everyone," said Director Coit.

People are encouraged to look for places to recreate close to home. DEM is working with federal partners, land trusts and environmental organizations across Rhode Island to promote safe public recreation options during the COVID-19 public health crisis. There are numerous opportunities for families and residents to engage in physical activity and explore local parks, preserves, trails and natural areas throughout the state, as follows:

[RI state parks](#) and management areas are open but indoor spaces such as park offices, restrooms and nature centers are closed. Events and programs are cancelled or postponed.

The [US Fish & Wildlife Service](#)'s five refuges in Rhode Island are open but restrooms and visitor centers are closed. Also, pets are not allowed in wildlife refuges.

The [National Park Service](#) continues to welcome visitors to the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park and the Roger Williams National Memorial. The visitor center and public restrooms are closed.

The [Audubon Society of RI](#) has closed its main offices in Smithfield and Bristol through the end of March, but trails and parking lots remain open. Pets are not allowed on the wildlife refuges.

The [RI Land Trust Council](#), through the [ExploreRI](#) website, provides directions to trail heads, trail maps and information about rules (where dogs and bikes are permitted and not) for land trust preserves and trails around the state, with listings by city or town.

[The Nature Conservancy](#)'s Providence and Block Island offices are closed to visitors at this time, but most trails and management areas are open. Sites with boardwalks that cannot accommodate social distancing practices are closed.

Conditions related to COVID-19 are rapidly evolving. Residents must check these websites prior to visiting the sites to make sure the areas are open and to learn the rules.

DEM advises everyone to follow guidance about COVID-19 from Governor Raimondo and the Rhode Island Department of Health. More information about COVID-19 and Rhode Island's response can be found here: <https://health.ri.gov/diseases/ncov2019/>

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