



Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

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DEM ISSUES COVID-19 SAFETY GUIDELINES AS STATE PARKS BEGIN TO REOPEN ON SATURDAY, MAY 9

Rhode Islanders must follow social distancing rules and take precautions to safely enjoy the outdoors

PROVIDENCE – Getting outdoors and enjoying the beauty of nature are great ways to relieve stress and important to public health. The Department of Environmental Management’s Division of Parks and Recreation recognizes the value of spending time in nature. We are committed to ensuring park visitors and staff enjoy safe and memorable experiences at our state parks.

“DEM is pleased to begin a gradual reopening of our beautiful state parks to visitors this weekend,” said DEM Director Janet Coit. “Many diverse and varied outdoor spaces will be open for Rhode Islanders to safely enjoy while adhering to the Governor’s guidance on not gathering in groups and practicing social distancing. This year, as we’re dealing with the public health emergency, we’re also asking park visitors to take additional steps to protect themselves, their families, and the people around them so everyone can safely enjoy the outdoors.”

DEM is reopening state parks in a graduated manner and is staggering park openings, reducing the size of parking areas and restricting hours of operation and activities to prevent crowds. DEM hopes to reopen all parks by the end of May. A second phase of the reopening plan will include the saltwater beaches, which will open later this spring with new restrictions in place.

Beginning Saturday, May 9 the following State Parks will be open daily:

- Beavertail State Park, Jamestown*
- Black Regiment Monument, Portsmouth
- Burlingame State Park, Charlestown*
- Cocumcussoc Park, North Kingstown
- Fort Adams State Park, Newport*
- Fort Wetherill State Park, Jamestown*
- Haines Memorial State Park, East Providence
- John H. Chafee Nature Preserve, North Kingstown
- J.L. Curran State Park, Cranston
- Lehigh High Grove, Portsmouth

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- Lincoln Woods State Park, Lincoln*
- Meshanticut State Park, Cranston
- Pulaski State Park, Glocester*
- Purgatory Chasm, Middletown
- Snake Den State Park, Johnston

*Parking capacity has been reduced to limit the number of visitors at the park to limit crowding and support social distancing.

Large parks – Fort Adams and Lincoln Woods – will close at 6 PM.

During the COVID-19 public health emergency, visiting parks should be enjoyed as a solitary experience, with just the members of your immediate household, and not as a group activity. Keep recreation activities to walking, hiking, biking and others that can be done in small groups. Park visitors must follow social distancing practices and maintain a distance of at least six feet from others. If you arrive at a favorite park and find that crowds are forming or the parking lot is full, please leave and choose a different location or return at another time or day. If parking lots are full, please do not park along roadsides or other undesignated areas.

While enjoying outdoor spaces, residents must continue to follow the CDC and RI Department of Health guidelines for preventing the spread COVID-19:

- If you're not feeling well, stay home! Signs and symptoms of coronavirus include fever, cough and shortness of breath.
- Practice social distancing by keeping at least six feet of distance between yourself and others, even when outdoors.
- For the safety of all visitors, please have a face covering with you and wear it in public areas and if you are within 6 feet of another person who is outside your household. The only exceptions from these rules are for anyone whose health would be in jeopardy because of wearing a face covering or any children under 2 years old.
- Avoid close contact with others outside your household, such as shaking hands, hugging, or high-fives.
- Bring and use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid unnecessary contact with surfaces that are often touched, such as doorknobs and handrails.

People should maintain distance from others while in places where visitors tend to congregate, such as parking lots, trailheads, and scenic overlooks. Park visitors should keep to recreation activities such as walking, hiking, biking and avoid picnicking, cookouts, gatherings, or games and activities that require contact, such as basketball, football, or soccer. DEM also asks that visitors bring a suitable trash bag and leave no trash behind in order to protect park workers and avoid litter.

Please note that public restrooms in parks will remain closed. Porta johns may be available in some locations. Visitors are encouraged to carry hand sanitizer and plan a short, local visit that's close to home.

Boat launch sites are open where conditions allow. Other state park and beach locations will remain closed until further notice. All State Park playgrounds, athletic courts, and sporting fields are closed to ensure

public safety and stop the spread of COVID-19. The Goddard Memorial Golf Course remains closed. All public programming and events have been canceled until further notice.

Due to the COVID-19 public health crisis DEM has closed most indoor spaces including visitor centers, nature centers, and historic houses.

State campgrounds, including all campsites, cabins and pavilions/shelters are closed and will not open earlier than June 1st. All visitors with reservations through May 31 will be issued a full refund. DEM has suspended all new camping reservations through June 30, 2020.

Rhode Island state beaches and swimming areas at state parks remain closed to swimming until further notice. DEM asks the public not to drive to state beaches and closed state parks with shoreline access. The entrances are blocked, there is no public parking, and these facilities are closed to vehicular traffic. DEM is not prohibiting Rhode Islanders from walking to parks and beaches if they are congregated in groups of five or less and are adhering to social/physical distancing rules to prevent the spread of COVID-19. DEM will be patrolling these sites and dispersing groups of people.

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/>

For outdoor recreation updates, visit <http://riparks.com/covid19>

For updates on For information on DEM programs and initiatives, visit www.dem.ri.gov. Follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/RhodeIslandDEM or on Twitter (@RhodeIslandDEM) for timely updates.

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