

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 26, 2021

DCNR Announces Operational Changes at State Parks, Forests Following Gov. Wolf's Latest COVID Mitigation Measures

Harrisburg, PA – In line with Governor Tom Wolf's latest orders intended to prevent the spread and mitigate the impacts of COVID-19, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn announced an upcoming return of outdoors programming at state parks and expansion of occupancy limits within park and state forest buildings effective Sunday, April 4.

"Environmental education and other outdoors programs helped our state parks system attain national prominence and we know they were sorely missed by our visitors," Dunn said. "This and other operational changes follow Department of Health guidelines while broadening the enjoyment of state park and forests visitors. Since the pandemic's outset we kept our lands open to all so that people can safely enjoy outdoor recreation to maintain positive physical and mental health."

At Pennsylvania's state parks and forests, the following will be in effect starting Sunday, April 4:

- Outdoor, in-person programs will resume with a limit of 40 participants per program. Masks and social distancing are required;
- Visitor center exhibit halls, interpretive areas and theaters will open with a 75 percent capacity visitation allowance. Masks and social distancing are required;
- Volunteer work days will resume with a limit of 40 participants per group. Masks and social distancing are required;
- Virtual and self-guided programs will continue to be offered;
- Scheduled programs will be listed on DCNR's [Calendar of Events](#); and
- Large, DCNR-sponsored events remain canceled until further notice.

State park and forest visitor centers, offices, theaters and interpretive wings will return to an occupancy limit of 75 percent of capacity. All visitors and staff must wear masks and practice social distancing and frequent hand sanitizing or washing.

Volunteer Friends group meetings must be virtual or outdoors at park or forest facilities. Outdoor facilities must be under the 50 percent occupancy limit, and social distancing must be practiced and masks worn.

Not considered organized park or forest events, volunteer work days are permitted to resume. Guidelines include maximum at 40 per group. Multiple groups are permitted in separate locations, multiple groups may attend at different times, and masks and social distancing are required.

Third-party events can continue if established guidelines are followed. DCNR staff may be present to assist with public safety and to maintain compliance with the event agreement.

All occupancy changes are subject to reevaluation going forward and will maintain consistency with all applicable Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Pennsylvania Department of Health guidance.

Secretary Dunn noted visits to Pennsylvania state parks have increased by more than one million visitors a month since the start of mitigation efforts, and that interest is expected to hold strong through spring and into summer.

In a related development, DCNR [announced](#) last month that campsites will be available at an additional 17 state parks to accommodate fishing enthusiasts who want to stay overnight on April 2 for the new statewide trout opener the following day. A total of 34 parks throughout the state will provide camping at this time.

To help avoid exposure to COVID-19 and still enjoy the outdoors:

- Don't hike or recreate in groups – go with those under the same roof, and adhere to social distancing (stay 6 feet apart)
- Take hand sanitizer with you and use it regularly
- Avoid touching your face, eyes, and nose
- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing with a tissue or flexed elbow
- If you are sick, stay home

Visitors can help keep state parks and forest lands safe by following these practices:

- Avoid crowded parking lots and trailheads
- Bring a bag and either carry out your trash or dispose of it properly
- Clean up after pets
- Avoid activities that put you at greater risk of injury, so you don't require a trip to the emergency room

Pennsylvania has 121 state parks and 20 forest districts; all are open year-round.

Information about state parks and forests is available on the [DCNR website](#) and [here](#).