

# Dept. of Natural Resources: Wisconsin State Parks and Forests to reopen May 1

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**MADISON, Wis.** – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources will reopen 34 state parks and forests on Friday, May 1 at the direction of Gov. Evers with special conditions.

Under Gov. Evers' Badger Bounce Back Plan, which outlines important criteria for Wisconsin to be able to reopen its economy in phases and includes steps to make sure workers and businesses are prepared to reopen as soon as it is safe to do so, the DNR will modify current operations to maintain the safest environment for visitors and staff.

Due to unprecedented crowds, litter, vandalism and the need to protect the health and safety of our visitors and staff, Gov. Evers directed the DNR to close 38 Wisconsin State Parks, Forests and Recreational Areas on Friday, April 10.

To minimize overcrowding, allow for social distancing requirements and to promote a safe and enjoyable experience for visitors, the following conditions will be put into place at all state park system properties until further notice beginning May 1:

## ADMISSION REQUIRED

- An annual park sticker and/or trail pass will be required to visit state parks and trails.
- Annual stickers will be available for purchase with credit card by phone 8 a.m. – 3 p.m. seven days a week by calling toll free: **1-888-305-0398**. We thank you in advance for your patience as we may be experiencing heavy call

volumes.

- **Annual passes are NOT available for purchase at individual properties.** Visitors must have an annual admission sticker adhered to their vehicle or proof of purchase for entry.
- Once proof of purchase is shown, visitors must place proof of purchase on the dash of the windshield while parked within the boundary of the property.
- The 2020 annual vehicle admission sticker is valid through Dec. 31, 2020.

## HOURS OF OPERATION

- State parks and forests will be open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily, a change from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m.
- Properties will be closed to the public every Wednesday for maintenance and upkeep.
- Northern Forests, Flowages, Lower Wisconsin Riverway, and Wild Rivers will be open 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. seven days a week. Specific properties listed below.
  - Black River State Forest
  - Brule River State Forest
  - Chippewa Flowage
  - Flambeau River State Forest
  - Governor Earl Peshtigo River State Forest
  - Governor Knowles State Forest
  - Lower Wisconsin State Riverway
  - Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest
  - Pike Wild River
  - Pine-Popple Wild River
  - Turtle Flambeau Flowage
  - Willow Flowage
- Hunting and fishing will be allowed on all open properties in accordance with legal season structure and hours. Access to some areas may be limited to walk-in or water access only.
- The following properties will remain closed for the health and safety of the public, staff, and property integrity:
  - Gibraltar Rock State Natural Area
  - Pewit's Nest State Natural Area
  - Parfrey's Glen State Natural Area
  - Dells of The Wisconsin River state natural area
  - **NOTE:** *Capital Springs State Recreation Area and Cross Plains State*

*Park are managed cooperatively with multiple partners and municipalities and as such were removed from the closure list in April.*

## BOAT LAUNCHES

- DNR boat launches are open at open state properties.
- All anglers and recreational boaters should practice social distancing and keep travel to a minimum.
- If individuals can lawfully access Wisconsin's rivers and lakes, they are free to navigate upon them while engaging in outdoor recreation.

## TRAILS

- All linear/rail trails are open to the public, which includes ATV trails.
- The Ice Age Trail remains open.
- An annual state trail pass is required for anyone age 16 or older biking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding or in-line skating on certain trails. A state trail pass is **NOT** required for walking or hiking. The annual trail passes are valid through Dec. 31 of the year they are issued.

## RESTROOMS AND BUILDINGS

- **Restrooms at all state properties will be closed.** This includes the closure of restrooms on properties currently open to the public.
- All other facilities will remain closed, including towers, shelters, playgrounds, nature centers, headquarters, contact stations and concession buildings.
- Attractions where social distancing cannot be achieved will be closed as needed at various properties.

## PRE-DETERMINED SAFETY CAPACITY LIMITATIONS

- At times, many properties will likely reach their pre-determined safety capacity. When this happens, visitors may be denied entry to the park until existing visitors leave. Visitors are encouraged to explore other DNR recreation areas or visit during non-peak hours before 10 a.m. and after 4 p.m.
- State Parks likely to temporarily prohibit additional visitors include:
  - Copper Falls
  - Devil's Lake
  - Governor Dodge

- Governor Nelson
- Harrington Beach
- Hartman Creek
- High Cliff
- Interstate
- Kinnickinnic
- Kettle Moraine Southern Unit
- Lapham Peak
- Perrot, Rib Mountain
- Roche-a-Cri
- Whitefish Dunes
- Willow River

## CAMPING AND EVENTS

- Camping, group camps and shelters will remain closed until May 26. Refunds will be issued to all customers.
- Limited numbers of remote, backpack and boat-in campsites are available on a first-come first-serve basis. A list of some of the properties offering this type of camping include:
  - Brule River State Forest
  - Crex Meadows State Wildlife Area
  - Dunnville Wildlife Area
  - Flambeau River State Forest
  - Governor Earl Peshtigo River State Forest
  - Governor Knowles State Forest
  - Meadow Valley State Wildlife Area
  - Tiffany Wildlife Area
  - Van Loon State Wildlife Area
  - Willow Flowage
- Volunteer activities remain suspended at DNR properties.
- All events and special event permits are canceled until May 26.

“We are excited to reopen several of our state parks and forests for the public to enjoy. We want to thank everyone for their cooperation with our new operating schedule and procedures,” said DNR Secretary Preston D. Cole. “We must do all that we can to prevent the spread of COVID-19. When visiting our treasured state parks and forests, remember to stay close to home, practice social distancing and carry hand sanitizer. Please enjoy the outdoors responsibly and be more than safe.”

The DNR urges visitors to do their part when visiting DNR properties. Most Wisconsin state parks, forests and other day-use areas [do not have garbage or recycling bins](#). When you visit, please take your garbage and recyclables home with you. We all play a vital role in taking care of our natural resources. Following the [Leave No Trace principles](#) helps protect the land for generations to come.

Visitors are reminded to practice social distancing of 6 feet, refrain from congregating in large groups, travel only within your home communities and follow all existing state park rules and guidelines. Visitors are also encouraged to wear masks in situations where social distancing is difficult.

The DNR continues to receive the most up-to-date information and will adjust operations as conditions change. We will also continue to monitor on-the-ground circumstances each day to determine additional conditions that may become necessary. Before visiting other properties, please check with [individual parks](#) regarding changes to park operations.

For specific information regarding the COVID-19 we encourage the public to frequently monitor the [DHS website for updates](#), and to follow @DHSWI on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), or dhs.wi on [Instagram](#). Additional information can be found on the [CDC website](#).