

Gov. Evers: Directs DNR to reopen several state parks and forests with special conditions

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MADISON - Gov. Tony Evers today directed the Department of Natural Resources to re-open several state parks, forests, and recreational areas originally closed due to unprecedented crowds and out of an abundance of caution to protect public health. The DNR will reopen 34 state parks and forests on May 1, 2020 under special conditions to help minimize overcrowding, allow for social distancing requirements, and to promote a safe and enjoyable experience for staff and visitors.

"Outdoor recreation is important for both physical and mental health, and I know how important it is to Wisconsinites to get outside and enjoy Wisconsin's natural resources and spring weather," said Gov. Evers.

"With a few adjustments, like closing one day a week for maintenance and reduced hours of operation, folks should be able to get outside and enjoy our parks safely and respectfully."

"Amid the immense uncertainty of this crisis, we are very fortunate to have such beautiful spaces in which to ease our minds and take care of ourselves," Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes said. "I am glad that we are able to reopen these spaces with new safety guidelines, so that people can enjoy our state parks and forests while we continue to prioritize public health and safety."

Here are the latest Wisconsin state park property updates:

ADMISSION REQUIRED STARTING MAY 1

- 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

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.

The public should follow simple steps to prevent illness and avoid exposure to this virus including:

- Avoid social gatherings with people of all ages (including playdates and sleepovers, parties, large family dinners, visitors in your home, non-essential workers in your house);
- Frequent and thorough hand washing with soap and water;
- Covering coughs and sneezes;
- Avoiding touching your face; and
- Staying home.

This is a rapidly evolving situation and we encourage you and 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](#).

