



PRESS RELEASE

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## COUNTY OF SONOMA

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: April 28, 2020

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### **Restrictions on Sonoma County Parks Closures Eased**

*Public health officer amends order to allow walk-in, bike-in access*

**SANTA ROSA, CA** – Sonoma County’s health officer today issued a modified parks closure order to allow residents to walk or bike to parks from their homes beginning April 29, 2020.

The order by Dr. Sundari Mase allows people to walk or cycle into their nearest parks for basic exercise. Driving to a park is not allowed. Parking lots, restrooms, playgrounds, picnic areas and sports courts will remain closed, as will Sonoma Coast beaches.

Mase ordered all Sonoma County parks closed on March 23 after record numbers of visitors traveled to parks and beaches throughout the region, despite a mandate to shelter at home to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

“This amended closure order lets residents use their local parks while minimizing the likelihood of unsafe crowding,” Mase said. “The community is making an extraordinary effort to flatten the curve of infections, but the risk is still too great to fully reopen parks. I’m asking the public to continue sheltering at home and visit only those parks they can easily walk or bike to.”

The order specifies park visits must originate from a resident’s home and cannot involve the use of a motor vehicle. It limits park activities to walking, hiking, jogging, biking and fishing at this time. Park users must carry a face covering and wear the covering if they come within 6 feet of other visitors.

“It has been difficult for our community to live with restricted access to parks during our temporary shelter in place order these past weeks.” said Susan Gorin, chair of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors. “This revised order opens up our parks for walking and riding, which is so important for our community. We look forward to the day when we

can travel to all of our favorite parks, but until then, we need to stay close to home and limit our exposure to others.”

The order applies to all parks, trails and recreation areas managed by public agencies and private organizations. It keeps golf courses closed for golfing, but allows operators to open course pathways for walking, jogging and biking. Community gardens can remain open for food production.

According to the order, Sonoma Coast beaches will remain closed because of the potential for crowding and the limited resources available to enforce local walk-in and bike-in access along the coastline. The order allows Russian River beaches to open to residents who can walk or bike from their homes. Residents can use the parks only for walking, hiking, jogging, biking and fishing.

“We wish we were reopening all parks to all visitors, but we understand limited access is a necessary first step,” said Bert Whitaker, director of Sonoma County’s Regional Parks. “We’re working with the health officer to restore greater access as soon as it’s safe to do so. We will do everything we can to keep the regional parks open during this emergency.”

Except for the Sonoma Coast beaches, the order allows park agencies to decide which properties to reopen. Residents should check with their local park agencies for any ongoing closures.

For more information about Covid-19 and the resources available to you during this emergency, go to [SoCoEmergency.org](https://www.socoemergency.org).

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