



ORDER OF THE HEALTH OFFICER OF THE COUNTY OF SONOMA No. C19-11

AMENDED PARKS CLOSURE ORDER TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19, ALLOWING LIMITED, SOCIALLY DISTANCED ACCESS TO SOME PARKS, FOR OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

DATE OF ORDER: MAY 12, 2020

Please read this Order carefully. Violation of or failure to comply with this Order is a misdemeanor punishable by fine, imprisonment, or both. (California Health and Safety Code § 120275, *et seq.*)

UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF CALIFORNIA HEALTH AND SAFETY CODE SECTIONS 101040, 101085, AND 120175, THE HEALTH OFFICER OF THE COUNTY OF SONOMA (“HEALTH OFFICER”) ORDERS:

- 1) This Order facilitates additional parks’ access due to the demonstrated commitment of the community in maintaining social distancing on park property and the success of the Shelter-In-Place Order in interrupting community transmission of the COVID19 virus. The Order further recognizes the critical role parks and open space lands play in maintaining the physical, emotional and mental health of our community. The Order shall become effective at 12:01 a.m. on May 13, 2020, and will continue in effect until is terminated, amended, or superseded and replaced by a future Order of the Public Health Officer.
- 2) This Order rescinds, supersedes and replaces the April 28, 2020, Order of the Health Officer “Closing Parks to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19” (Order No. C19-10.)
- 3) The intent and effect of this Order is to allow limited use of Parks for lower risk outdoor recreation and exercise to sustain residents’ physical and mental health including walking, jogging, hiking, biking and other outdoor activities where individuals and households can exercise with protective safeguards (e.g., facial coverings and distancing) and safety guidance to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- 4) On March 23, 2020, a high volume of usage by the public of parks, beaches, and open space made it necessary to close all parks in the County to protect public health, under the Health Officer’s Order Closing Parks to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 (No. C19-04). Crowding makes it extremely difficult for persons to maintain the required social distancing to protect public health during this pandemic. Under the subsequent Parks Order No. C19-10, restricting vehicular access to some Parks, while not an ideal approach, achieved greater compliance and social distancing.

- 5) The diligent and responsible cooperation of the community in complying with the Shelter - In- Place Orders and the previous Park Closure Orders, along with increased testing, and the use of facial coverings and social distancing, have led to indications of a leveling off in the number of newly detected COVID-19 cases which is “flattening the curve”. While it is too early to lift all provisions of these Orders, modification of the Park Closure Orders to allow a less restricted access to Parks is appropriate because of the burden the closures have placed on the community, the initial progress in “flattening the curve,” and the reduced risk of transmission while outdoors. Such a lifting of restrictions is possible as long as diligent social distancing and facial coverings are utilized as required by Order No. C19-07.
- 6) For purposes of this Order, “Park” means an area of land, beach or water open to the public for recreation, including but not limited to walking, hiking, biking, horseback riding, relaxing, boating, fishing, and playing, regardless of ownership.
- 7) The purpose of this amended Order is to allow County residents more access to Parks for outdoor recreation and exercise, with restrictions sufficient to prevent crowding and virus transmission. It also provides the flexibility for quick re-closures and additional constraints if problems develop with overuse, virus transmission, crowding, neighborhood impacts, or violations of the conditions of this Order.

With that context, Parks will be opened to access, under the following limitations:

- a. Parking opportunities may be physically limited by Parks managers to conservatively provide for physical distancing in parking lots and at trailheads and other access points. While driving to Parks is allowed under this Order, Parks users are still encouraged to stay close to home and limit their time and interactions with others in public, and to initiate their visits from their place of residence if possible, via walking, hiking or biking;
- b. The use of Park recreational areas or facilities which contain high-touch equipment or that encourage gatherings, including, but not limited to, playgrounds, dog parks, outdoor gym equipment, pools, picnic areas, drinking fountains, and barbecue areas, are prohibited, and all such areas shall remain closed to public access. Park owners shall post and, where appropriate, install physical barriers to access such areas. Failure to do so does not, however, excuse violation of this Order by users of the Park, trail or facility;
- c. Every potential Park user must conduct a self-assessment of their health and shall not enter a Park if they have any of the following symptoms consistent with COVID-19:
 - Fever of 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit or greater;
 - Cough;
 - Sore throat;
 - Shortness of breath;
 - Unusual headaches;
 - Severe fatigue;
 - Chills;
 - Gastro-intestinal symptoms such as diarrhea or stomach cramps; or

- Loss of sense of smell or taste.
 - d. If the potential Park visitor has had direct contact with a COVID-19 positive individual(s) in the past 14 days that person shall not enter a Park, and should contact their primary health care physician for further instructions.
 - e. In addition to compliance with the requirements of the social distancing and hygiene protocols in the Shelter in Place Order (No. C19-09), the following additional social distancing and hygiene protocols must be adhered to at all times within any Park.
All persons must:
 - i. Maintain a minimum six-foot distance from persons who are not part of the same household or living unit;
 - ii. Carry facial coverings with them at all times, and wear them in all circumstances required by the Health Officer's Order No. C19-07, including specifically if or when unable to maintain a six-foot distance from others (such as when passing on a trail);
 - iii. Not use any facilities or equipment that are closed; and
 - iv. Not engage in sports or other activities that involve the use of shared equipment with individuals or groups outside of the person's household.
 - f. Consistent with the Governor's Guidance on outdoor recreation (<https://covid19.ca.gov/stay-home-except-for-essential-needs/#outdoor>), the use of shared facilities for some recreational activities outside of residences, including, but not limited to, tennis, bocce and pickle ball courts, water sports, sports fields, climbing walls, shooting and archery ranges, disc golf, basketball courts, and boat launches, shall be closed unless, on a Park by Park basis, the Park owner determines that the particular facility can safely be operated consistent with social distancing and hygiene requirements of Order No. C19-09 and this Order. If any such facilities are open, they may only be used by individuals alone or in a group comprised solely of individuals from the same household.
 - g. Golf Courses shall be open only as provided under the current Shelter-in-Place Order (C19-09 and any subsequent orders).
- 8) Coastal Zone Parks have continued to attract a significant number of daily visitors by vehicle despite the March 23, 2020 and April 28, 2020 Park Closure Orders. The majority of these visitors have traveled from outside of Sonoma County, and there are limited public safety resources to enforce the Health Officer's COVID-19 related Orders, including this one, in these remote areas. Therefore, all Parks, trails, and beaches in the Coastal Zone, as defined by the County of Sonoma Local Coastal Plan, shall be closed from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., daily. All Coastal Zone Parks, trails, and beach access must be initiated from one's residence and may not involve the use of a motor vehicle to travel to any Park, trail or beach in the Coastal Zone.

During the times that beaches are open, they are to be used only for running, walking, cycling, water sports, or other form of physical activity. Sitting, lying, sunbathing, sightseeing, picnicking, and all other non-exercise, passive, or sedentary activities at beaches are prohibited. In addition, the following items are prohibited for use or possession on beaches for the duration of this Order: umbrellas, shade structures, tents, barbeques and grills, coolers, beach chairs, or other conveyances for sitting or lying.

- 9) All restrictions in this Order as they relate to access shall be subject to reasonable accommodation to provide for disabled access.
- 10) Bodega Bay coastal boat launch ramps and trailer parking areas may be opened by owners for the purpose of recreational fishing access to provide food for participants.
- 11) Recreational fishing is permissible only if:
 - a. It is in a Park that is open and permits recreational fishing;
 - b. Includes only members of the same household;
 - c. Is conducted in compliance with the social distancing and hygiene requirements of this Order, and the currently applicable Shelter-in-Place Order; and
 - d. All other licensing or other applicable regulatory requirements are met.
- 12) Community Gardens can be operated as agricultural operations providing food for participants, but only if they are operated in compliance with the following additional social-distancing and hygiene protocols:
 - a. They may be operated only for the purpose of food growth/production;
 - b. Soap and running water will be available;
 - c. There can be no more than one person in a garden at a time, unless it is sufficiently large to accommodate more than one person while maintaining at least six feet of distance at all times;
 - d. All garden entry and use shall be subject to the health and exposure self-assessment limitations set out in section “7.c” and “7.d” above;
 - e. Masks must be worn in order to allow more than one person at a time in a garden, in addition to maintaining the six feet of distance between gardeners;
 - f. Gardeners are strongly encouraged to bring their own tools;
 - g. All tools used will be cleaned with a CDC recommended disinfectant after each use and will not be shared throughout the day;
 - h. Gardeners must use their own gloves;
 - i. Signage will be displayed at all entrances to the garden with these rules; and
 - j. Benches and other communal spaces will be marked as off-limits for the duration of this Order.
- 13) Each and all Park owners are free to decide whether to re-open their Parks under the limited authority provided for in this Order. If a Park is re-opened, however, the Park owner/manager shall adopt Social Distancing Protocols consistent with this Order, and shall post them, along with this Order, prominently in all locations most likely to be seen by visitors.
- 14) Interpretation of this order should take into consideration that the intent is to allow brief respite from our homes for limited periods. Longer and more frequent outings inherently come with greater risk of virus transmission.
- 15) Vulnerable populations should use particular discretion and best judgment, in traveling to places where they may be in contact with others. Engaging in the outdoor activities allowed

under this Order should be undertaken with extra caution, or perhaps avoided altogether, to minimize risks associated with contracting COVID-19. Vulnerable populations include people that are 65 or older, have high-risk conditions such as chronic lung disease or other respiratory ailments, serious heart conditions, immunocompromised, or are severely obese.

- 16) In the event of crowding, widespread non-compliance with the limitations of this Order, or other evidence of activities presenting an unacceptable risk of spread of COVID-19 through Park use, any or all Parks may be closed again in their entirety or on a case-by-case-basis by the Health Officer, or by the individual Park owner, including but not limited to County Parks as determined by the Director of Regional Parks, as needed.
- 17) This Order is issued in accordance with, and incorporates by reference, the March 19, 2020 Executive Order of the Governor (No. N-33-20) and the May 7, 2020 Order of the State Public Health Officer (<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID-19/SHO%20Order%205-7-2020.pdf>) and related Governor's Office guidance regarding outdoor recreation (<https://covid19.ca.gov/stay-home-except-for-essential-needs/#outdoor>); the April 29, 2020, Order of the Sonoma County Health Officer re Shelter in Place (No. C19-09); the March 13, 2020 Order of the Health Officer No. C19-02; the April 13, 2020, Order of the Health Officer No. C19-04 concerning Facial Coverings; the March 4, 2020 Proclamation of a State of Emergency issued by Governor Gavin Newsom; the March 2, 2020 Proclamation of Local Emergency for the County of Sonoma issued by the Director of Emergency Services Declaring the Existence of a Local Emergency in the County Regarding Novel Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19); the Declaration of Local Health Emergency Regarding Novel Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) issued by the Health Officer; the March 4, 2020 Resolution of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Sonoma Ratifying and Extending the Declaration of a Local Health Emergency, and the March 4, 2020 Resolution of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Sonoma Ratifying and Extending the Proclamation of a Local Emergency.
- 18) This Order is issued based on evidence of continuing occurrence of COVID-19 within the County and throughout the Bay Area, scientific evidence and best practices regarding the most effective approaches to slow the transmission of communicable diseases generally and COVID-19 specifically, and evidence that the age, condition, and health of a significant portion of the population of the County places it at risk for serious health complications, including death, from COVID-19. Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus in the general public, which is now a pandemic according to the World Health Organization, there is a public health emergency throughout the County. Making the problem worse, some individuals who contract the COVID-19 virus have no symptoms or have mild symptoms, which means they may not be aware they carry the virus. Because even people without symptoms can transmit the disease, and because evidence shows the disease spreads easily, social distancing consisting of a six-foot separation between people is currently required for all activity permitted by the County's Shelter-In-Place Order No. C19-05 and the Governor's Executive Order, including outdoor activity.

- 19) The scientific evidence shows that at this stage of the emergency, while the curve is currently flattening, it is still essential to continue to slow virus transmission as much as possible to protect the most vulnerable and to prevent the health care system from being overwhelmed by another surge of cases. One proven way to slow the transmission is to limit interactions among people to the greatest extent practicable. By continuing to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus, this Order helps preserve critical and limited healthcare capacity in the County and saves lives.
- 20) This Order also is issued in light of the existence of at least 309 cases of COVID-19 in the County as well as four fatalities, as of May 11, 2020, including a significant number of suspected cases of community transmission, and likely additional cases of community transmission if physical distancing is not carefully maintained in this critical period.
- 21) Further revisions to this Order may be made, as necessary to maintain public health, consistency with the Governor’s Guidance and Orders, and/or as otherwise needed to implement additional safety guidance or provide for additional recreational activities as approved by the Health Officer.
- 22) Additional information about this Order can be found at:
<https://parks.sonomacounty.ca.gov/Visit/Covid-19-Parks-Frequently-Asked-Questions/>.

IT IS SO ORDERED:

Dr. Sundari R. Mase, MD MPH
Health Officer of the County of Sonoma

Date