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DNREC Closes Park and Wildlife Area Amenities; Limits Outdoor Recreation Activities at Beaches

Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (https://news.delaware.gov/category/dnrec/) | Division of Fish and Wildlife (https://news.delaware.gov/category/dnrec/fish-and-wildlife/) | Division of Parks and Recreation (https://news.delaware.gov/category/dnrec/division-of-parks-and-recreation/) | Date Posted: Thursday, April 2, 2020

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Out-of-state travelers must self-quarantine before visiting state properties

DOVER, Del. – While most state parks, nature and wildlife areas continue to stay open for Delawareans during the "Stay Home, Stay Safe" emergency order from Governor John Carney, many amenities are closed. Current closures include campsites, cabins, cottages, yurts and playgrounds, and now, public restrooms will be closed.

The Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control will close its public restroom facilities, including bathrooms, bathhouses and portable toilets, in state parks, wildlife areas and state boat ramps at the end of the day April 3. All amenities will remain closed until May 15, or until the public health threat has been eliminated. Those who plan to visit any state park, wildlife area or boat ramp should plan accordingly as these amenities will not be available.

"We made the decision to close restrooms, which have multiple public touch points," Secretary Shawn Garvin said. "Our staff has worked tirelessly to maintain the cleanliness of our restroom facilities, but hand sanitizer and soap has been stolen. It has become more difficult to maintain not only the cleanliness, but the social distancing in the facilities. It is no longer safe for our staff or the public to continue this service."

The closures come after Governor Carney signed a series of amendments to his State of Emergency declaration this week to slow the spread of COVID-19. These orders include:

- **Anyone who enters Delaware from another state must immediately self-quarantine for 14 days.** The order applies to individuals who would like to fish, hunt or intended to visit state parks and wildlife areas, including the state's golf courses.
- **The use of beaches, including those at state parks, has been restricted to exercising, walking dogs, and surf fishing under severely restricted conditions.** Some municipalities have further restrictions.
- **Surf fishing is limited to those with a current surf fishing permit with the following restrictions:** Only fishing from vehicles will be allowed, only two persons from the same household may accompany the vehicle and both persons must be actively fishing at all times, with distance between vehicles on the beach of 20 yards.

“The more activities that are allowed, the more crowded our beaches will be, which is contrary to the public health imperative at this time,” Garvin said. “We want to be clear that the following activities are not allowed from beaches: boating, surfing, sea kayaking, skim boarding, fishing from the beach not from a vehicle, football, volleyball and any other activity that would add more people to the beach.”

Although services are limited, outdoor recreation is still available in compliance with site rules, to include:

- birding
- cycling
- disc golf
- dog walking
- fishing in bays, ponds, rivers and streams
- drive-on surf fishing with restrictions
- hiking
- hunting
- jogging or running

The amenities not available, open and/or permitted include, but are not limited to:

- basketball courts
- camping
- gatherings of 10 or more people
- guided tours, events and programs
- playgrounds
- pavilions
- public park buildings: state park offices, nature centers
- restrooms
- rock climbing
- surfing and skimboarding
- walk-on surf fishing
- sea kayaking from the beach
- sunbathing on the beach
- Go Ape Course at Lums Pond
- The Brandywine Zoo

Anyone visiting a state park, wildlife area or boat ramp is required to engage in responsible social distancing practices, avoiding groupings of people. All conditions are subject to change.

DNREC Natural Resources Police officers are conducting routine patrols of state beaches, parks and wildlife areas on foot and with marked patrol vehicles throughout the day. Anyone concerned about an individual or group in any state park or wildlife area may contact DNREC’s Natural Resources Police via Tip411, DNREC’s smartphone app, or by calling the 24-hour DNREC Dispatch Center at 302-739-4580. Tip411 allows the public to easily report concerns. The app is available for free download by searching DENRP via the Google Play Store or the iTunes App Store.

Each of the governor’s orders has the force and effect of law. Any failure to comply with the provisions contained in a Declaration of a State of Emergency or any modification to a Declaration of the State of Emergency constitutes a criminal offense.

For the latest information on COVID-19 in Delaware, visit de.gov/coronavirus (http://de.gov/coronavirus).

About DNREC

The Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control protects and manages the state's natural resources, protects public health, provides outdoor recreational opportunities and educates Delawareans about the environment. For more information, visit the website (https://dnrec.alpha.delaware.gov/) and connect with DNREC on Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/DNREC), Twitter (https://twitter.com/YourDNREC) or LinkedIn (https://www.linkedin.com/company/dnrec/).

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(https://news.delaware.gov/2020/04/02/dnrec-closes-park-and-wildlife-area-amenities-limits-outdoor-recreation-activities-at-beaches/?print=pdf)

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