DNREC state parks, wildlife area visitors must bring masks starting Friday

DOVER, Del. – The Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control announced that starting Friday those aged 13 or older are now required to bring a face mask with them to enter state parks, wildlife areas and reserves, and should wear them when they cannot maintain social distancing from other visitors. Those who do not bring face masks when visiting these areas may be required to leave by officers or staff.

This decision is in accordance with Governor John Carney's thirteenth modification to his State of Emergency declaration, which requires Delawareans to wear face coverings in public settings. Visitors to DNREC parks and areas must wear a face covering where social distancing is difficult, such as on boat ramps, narrow trails, and when they encounter anyone not in their household including other visitors and staff. Masks are required at all times at the Ommelanden shooting range.

"In order to keep our outdoor public spaces for all members of the public to enjoy, visitors to state parks, wildlife areas and reserves must heed social distancing and mask requirements," said DNREC Secretary Shawn Garvin. "We need our visitors to do their part to help keep these areas safe for everyone during the COVID-19 pandemic."

Visitors are also asked to be mindful of the length and frequency of their visits, and to avoid peak times. The safest way to enjoy state parks is sparingly, as needed, and during off-peak times: before 10 a.m. and after 4 p.m. daily.

While most state parks, wildlife areas and reserves continue to stay open for Delawareans during the "Stay Home, Stay Safe" emergency order from Governor John Carney, DNREC has a few guidelines for visitors to stay safe:

- **Bring a mask and wear it when needed.** Parks and wildlife areas are becoming increasingly crowded as the weather warms so it is now required to have a mask to put on when you are near others not from your home.
- **Plan ahead.** Many amenities are closed, including all public restrooms.
- **Be prepared.** Bring your own soap, water and hand sanitizer with you.
- **Stay close to home.** This period is not the time to travel for outdoor adventure. Out-of-state visitors must observe a 14-day quarantine before entering a park, wildlife area or reserve.
- **Keep your group small.** Make sure to enjoy the outdoors with your immediate household members only. You should not attend or host any gatherings like barbeques or birthday parties.
- **Avoid close contact activities.** Instead, choose outdoor recreation like fishing, hiking or bike riding.
- **Practice social distancing.** Keep six feet between you and others. Warn others of your presence and give them enough space to pass on boat ramps, paths and trails. Leave at least one parking space between your vehicle and the vehicle next to you. Areas may be closed if it is determined based on observation of parking lots or groupings of people that lack of responsible social distancing has become an issue.
- **Leave no trace.** Even during normal operations, parks are carry-in/carry-out with regards to trash. Trash you take into the park or area, including disposable gloves and masks, you must take with you. Our staff resources are limited, and we need your help collecting trash.
- **If you're sick, stay home.** Don't visit our parks, wildlife areas or reserves if you or any member of your household is not feeling well.

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 can constitute a criminal offense.

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.

For the latest information on COVID-19 in Delaware, visit 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 and connect with DNREC on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn.

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