DNR News Release

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Contact: Miranda Fredrick
573-751-6510
miranda.fredrick@dnr.mo.gov (mailto:miranda.fredrick@dnr.mo.gov)

Missouri State Parks announces phase one in resuming normal operations

JEFFERSON CITY, MO, April 29, 2020 – Missouri State Parks, a division of the Department of Natural Resources, today announced phase one of a phased approach to resuming normal operations.

While the vast majority of Missouri state parks and historic sites have remained open for day use, Missouri State Parks has implemented a number of measures designed to maintain required social distancing and protect visitors and team members.

Based on current conditions, Missouri State Parks is implementing the following measures in phase one of the return to normal operations:

- On May 4, concession-operated lodging, dining, marina and retail operations will begin reopening at the discretion of the individual concessionaires and following Governor Parson's recommended guidelines.

- On May 11, Castlewood State Park, Elephant Rocks State Park, Watkins Woolen Mill State Historic Site and State Park and Weston Bend State Park will reopen for day use only.

- On May 18, the off-road-vehicle riding area at St. Joe State Park will reopen and will require daily permits to be purchased online; quantities may be limited to manage capacity.

- Park campgrounds and park-run lodging will remain closed through May 18. Missouri State Parks continues to evaluate public-health data, applicable social-distancing guidelines and operational requirements to determine when it would be appropriate to resume these operations.

Visitor centers, park offices, tours, programs, group camps, enclosed shelters, playgrounds, pools and beaches will remain closed as Missouri State Parks evaluates the implementation of phase one. Events, including third-party events planned in the month of May, may be postponed or cancelled.

"Never has access to our state parks been more important than during this period of COVID-19 response," said Carol Comer, director of the Department of Natural Resources. "Missouri State Parks is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for our visitors, volunteers and staff, and we are working toward resumption of additional services as soon as we can do so responsibly."

"Missouri State Parks is experiencing record crowds as people take advantage of the outdoor opportunities we have to offer," said Mike Sutherland, director of the department's Division of State Parks. "We ask for everyone's patience and cooperation as we implement measures to minimize congestion and maintain social distancing at our facilities."

Visitors are encouraged to check **mostateparks.com (https://mostateparks.com)** for individual park advisory updates and the latest actions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Crowds and visitation will be monitored closely in order to prevent overcrowding. If a park is nearing capacity, gates or parking lots may close temporarily.

All visitors must remain diligent and enjoy the outdoors responsibly by following the guidance provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Governor Parson:

- Keep a minimum distance of six feet between you and others.
- Avoid crowded areas and groups of people.
- Stay close-to-home and travel with only those from your household.
- Wash your hands often.
- Come prepared and carry hand sanitizers, soaps, wipes and water.
- Share the trail and warn other trail users of your presence as you pass.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Avoid handshakes and hugs.
- Cover your mouth and nose with your elbow when you cough or sneeze.
- Pack out what you pack in.
- Be kind and considerate of others.
- Most importantly, stay home if you are sick.

The Department of Natural Resources and Missouri State Parks team is closely monitoring the progression of COVID-19 and its effects in Missouri. While safety, outdoor recreation and service to our visitors are all very important to us, the safety of our guests and team members is our top priority.

For the latest actions by Missouri State Parks in response to COVID-19, visit **mostateparks.com/response (https://mostateparks.com/response)**. Missourians are encouraged to review COVID-19 information provided by the **Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. (https://health.mo.gov/living/healthcondiseases/communicable/novel-coronavirus/)**

If you have questions regarding Missouri State Parks, please contact us at **moparks@dnr.mo.gov (mailto: moparks@dnr.mo.gov)**. For more information on state parks and historic sites, visit **mostateparks.com (https://mostateparks.com)**. Missouri State Parks is a division of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

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