



Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

235 Promenade Street | Providence, RI 02908 | 401.222.4700 | www.dem.ri.gov | @RhodelsandDEM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Friday, April 3, 2020

CONTACT: Gail Mastrati, 401-255-6144

gail.mastrati@dem.ri.gov

RHODE ISLAND STATE PARKS AND BEACHES ARE CLOSED DUE TO COVID-19 EMERGENCY

Opening of state campgrounds delayed until at least May 1st

PROVIDENCE – The Department of Environmental Management (DEM) reminds Rhode Islanders that state parks, beaches and campgrounds are closed due to the COVID-19 public health crisis.



Brenton Point State Park, Newport

DEM asks the public not to drive to parks and beaches. The entrances are blocked, there is no public parking, and these facilities are closed to vehicular traffic. DEM is not prohibiting Rhode Islanders from walking or riding bikes at parks and beaches if they are not congregated in groups of five or more and are adhering to social/physical distancing rules to prevent the spread of COVID-19. DEM will be patrolling these sites and dispersing groups of people.

Parks and Beaches

The following state parks are closed:

- Beavertail State Park, Jamestown
- Black Regiment Monument, Portsmouth
- Brenton Point State Park, Newport

“Restricting access to public places where any groups might gather, such as parks and beaches, is a necessary step we’re taking to protect public health,” said DEM Director Janet Coit. “During this critical time when we all must practice social distancing, I encourage Rhode Islanders to enjoy the outdoors close to home by taking a walk around the block or spending time in their backyards and to respect the closure and stay away from state parks and beaches.”

- Burlingame State Park, Charlestown
- Cocomcussoc Park, North Kingstown
- Colt State Park, Bristol
- Fisherman's Memorial State Park, Narragansett
- Fort Adams State Park, Newport
- Fort Wetherill State Park, Jamestown
- George Washington State Park, Gloucester
- Goddard Memorial State Park, Warwick
- Haines Memorial State Park, East Providence
- John H. Chafee Nature Preserve, North Kingstown
- J.L. Curran State Park, Cranston
- Lehigh High Grove, Portsmouth
- Lincoln Woods State Park, Lincoln
- Meshanticut State Park, Cranston
- Ninigret Conservation Area, Charlestown
- Pulaski State Park, Gloucester
- Purgatory Chasm, Middletown
- Snake Den State Park, Johnston
- Rocky Point, Warwick

The following state beaches area closed:

- Charlestown Breachway, Charlestown
- Ninigret Conservation Area, Charlestown
- East Beach, Charlestown
- East Matunuck State Beach, South Kingstown
- Misquamicut State Beach, Westerly
- Salty Brine State Beach, Narragansett
- Scarborough North Beach, Narragansett
- Scarborough South Beach, Narragansett
- Roger W. Wheeler State Beach, Narragansett

State Campgrounds

The opening of state campgrounds is delayed until at least May 1st in order to protect the health and safety of visitors and staff during the COVID-19 public health crisis. Rhode Island's five state campgrounds were originally scheduled to open in early-mid April. All campground reservations through April 30 have been cancelled. The state's reservation agent, Reserve America, is contacting those with reservations during this period with information about the cancellations and refunds.

The following state campgrounds and camping areas are closed:

- Burlingame State Campground, Charlestown
- Charlestown Breachway, Charlestown
- East Beach Campground, Charlestown
- Fishermen's Memorial State Park and Campground, Narragansett
- George Washington State Campground, Gloucester
- Arcadia Management Area (Frosty Hollow shelter, backpack camping area, and horseman's campground), Exeter

Camping without permits and outside designated camping areas on all state lands is prohibited.

Bike Paths

For now, the DEM-managed bike paths – the Blackstone River Bikeway, the East Bay Bike Path, Washington Secondary Bike Path – and the state management areas will remain open. This is a situation that DEM will be monitoring very closely. We ask that people avoid these bike paths if they are crowded and find an alternate place to ride close to home.

Anyone using the bike paths must practice proper social distancing on the path, providing at least six feet of space between you and other users. This includes anticipating others on the path and stepping off the path onto the shoulder if necessary. Bike path users can avoid crowds by planning their trip in the morning or late afternoon as the bike paths are busiest in the middle of the day.

Also, those who are ill should not be using the bike path and instead remain at home. For bike safely tips/rules of the road, visit RIDOT's website at: <http://www.dot.ri.gov/community/bikeri/>

Wildlife Management Areas

State management areas remain open for the time being, but this is a situation that DEM will be monitoring very closely. People should avoid trails if they are crowded and maintain social distancing on all trails. We ask all Rhode Islanders to abide by local and state stay-at-home orders, and limit travel whenever possible, even for approved recreation activities. If you do go to a refuge, preserve, management area or other open spaces, and see that parking is limited or lots are full, you should change your plans and take your walk back home.

Outdoor Safety

There are many ways for residents to safely enjoy the outdoors, as long as they take the necessary precautions by adhering to the Governor's guidance on not gathering in groups of more than five and practicing social distancing. For details on safety guidelines, visit <https://health.ri.gov/diseases/ncov2019/>

DEM Environmental Police Officers and DEM Parks' staff will continue to monitor state parks and beaches for compliance. If people are blatantly ignoring the new rules – if they choose to congregate at state parks and beaches, or if they're not complying with the physical distancing rules – they may be cited if actions and behavior are not corrected.

In order to determine the opening dates for recreational facilities including parks, beaches and campgrounds, DEM will continue to work closely with the Governor and Dr. Alexander-Scott and her team at the Rhode Island Department of Health for guidance on this issue. In the meantime, DEM will continue with our preparations for getting our parks and beaches ready later this year.

DEM advises everyone to follow guidance about COVID-19 from Governor Raimondo and the Rhode Island Department of Health. More information about COVID-19 and Rhode Island's response can be found here: <https://health.ri.gov/diseases/ncov2019/>

For a list of Frequently Asked Questions and updates on the DEM closures, visit
<http://riparks.com/covid19.php>

For information on DEM programs and initiatives, visit www.dem.ri.gov. Follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/RhodeIslandDEM or on Twitter (@RhodeIslandDEM) for timely updates.

###