



# **NEWS RELEASE**

## **STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Most State Park, Trail and Boating Facilities Remain Open, but Social Distancing Must be Maintained**

**LANSING, MICH.** To help slow the spread of the coronavirus and in accordance with Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's "[Stay Home, Stay Safe" Executive Order](#), the Department of Natural Resources continues to monitor visitation and adherence to social-distancing requirements at DNR-managed facilities. This means continually assessing needed adjustments to services and closures that best protect visitors, staff and the local communities.

A vast majority of state parks and recreation areas, state-managed trails and boating access sites remain open to provide local opportunities to get outdoors; however, all locations have modified services and/or closed amenities.

Recently, Tippy Dam Recreation Area in Manistee County was closed until further notice due to high numbers of visitors, lack of improper social distancing and people traveling long distances to reach the park.

"Throughout the stay-at-home order, we've seen an influx of visitors at state parks, boating access sites and trails," said Ron Olson, chief of the DNR Parks and Recreation Division. "In order to continue to keep state parks and trails open, we expect everyone to follow effective social distancing practices, to not litter and not travel long distances to enjoy the outdoors.

"If concerns continue to build, the DNR will have to look at closing or further limiting access to our state-designated trails, state parks, boating access sites and other outdoor locations," he said.

As the COVID-19 pandemic evolves and additional information has become available to state, health and DNR officials, the following reminders and announcements are in place.

### **Do not litter. Please carry in, carry out**

It's been reported by both visitors and staff that a significant amount of trash has been left in state parks and boating access sites and at trailheads. Because of limited staff and the need to minimize public contact, trash services have been reduced in DNR-managed locations to dumpsters in designated locations. Visitors are asked to help protect our natural resources and bring a trash bag and "carry in, carry out" their trash and recyclables.

### **Social-distancing offenses could result in fines**

The Department of Health and Human Services issued an emergency order April 2 that sets a civil penalty of up to \$1,000 for not complying with executive orders banning gatherings and nonessential businesses, including social distancing (not keeping at least 6 feet between individuals) and a process for referral to licensing agencies for violations of Executive Orders 2020-11, 2020-20 and 2020-21. Criminal penalties for violation will remain an option for prosecutors.

### **Motorized and nonmotorized trails open for local visitors only**

Even though the "Stay Home, Stay Safe" Executive Order allows for engagement in outdoor activities, the DNR is asking visitors to stay local and not travel far distances to hike, run, bicycle or ride an ORV. Under the order, extensive travel is permitted only for essential needs.

### **DTE Energy Foundation Trail parking lot closures**

The two primary parking lots for Waterloo Recreation Area's DTE Energy Foundation Trail are closed due to reports of people gathering at trailheads and mountain biking trails and not adhering to social-distancing requirements. The parking lots are located on Cassidy Road and M-52 in Chelsea. The trail remains open for local use, and visitors should park in alternative and appropriate lots. There is no parking along M-52, and people are encouraged to bike into the trails to avoid crowding at other parking spots.

### **Dispersed camping**

To help minimize nonessential travel, dispersed camping on public lands is closed until further notice. This falls in line with state park and recreation area campgrounds and state forest campgrounds that are also closed until further notice.

### **Fishing**

Fishing is allowed, and the 2020 season is now open. Fishing is one outdoor activity that can be done with proper social distancing – just make sure to remain 6 feet away, or a fishing rod's distance, from others and stay local.

### **Nonessential travel**

The DNR continues to support the governor's "Stay Home, Stay Safe" Executive Order, which includes that nonessential travel is not permissible, including travel to state parks, trails and other outdoor destinations outside the local area. Traveling outside local communities could unintentionally increase the spread of COVID-19 into nearby communities.

### **Keep the following guidelines in mind**

- Go out only if you're feeling healthy.
- Long-distance travel is discouraged unless it is essential.
- Individuals must maintain a minimum of 6 feet between themselves and people of other households. Anyone not following the social distancing requirement may face a civil penalty of up to \$1,000.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for 20 seconds. If soap and water aren't available, use a hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- When driving, keep windows slightly open to provide air flow. Do not drive with people who don't live in your household.
- If the parking lot is full when attempting to visit a park, recreation area, boating access site or trailhead, leave and choose a different nearby location.

**Know before you go**

Anyone planning to visit any state-managed land is first encouraged to visit the [DNR COVID-19 response page](#) for updates and frequently asked questions on facility closures, changes in services and event/meeting cancellations. Follow [Michigan.gov/DNRClosures](#) for the latest information.

Information around this outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at [Michigan.gov/Coronavirus](#) and [CDC.gov/Coronavirus](#).

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