



M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Stacy Hurst, Cabinet Secretary; Caleb Osborne, Chief of Staff, Office of the Secretary; Grady Spann, Director, Parks Division; Shea Lewis, Deputy Director, Parks Division

FROM: Jeff King, Special Projects Manager, Parks Division

DATE: May 8, 2020

SUBJECT: COVID-19 Public Health Emergency – State Parks & Federal Parks/Rec. Areas Timeline

The below timeline is based on e-mail communications, along with website updates and media releases.

ARKANSAS STATE PARKS – PHASED OPENINGS & PLANNED OPENINGS

- **May 1, 2020** – Camping opened for in-state guests, only. Camping limited to private recreational vehicles with self-contained bathroom facilities.
- **May 5, 2020** – Camping opened for all visitors. Camping remains limited to private recreational vehicles with self-contained bathroom facilities. Self-quarantine guidelines to be followed by out-of-state travelers visiting from the states of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, along with the city of New Orleans and any international travelers.
- **May 15, 2020** – Planned opening of lodges, cabins, and yurts for overnight guests on weekends (Friday through Monday), only. Parks plan to open visitor centers, museums and exhibits, gift shops, golf pro shops, marinas, and equipment rentals, as well. Restaurants are also planned to open, following all ADH guidelines and with approved limited menus. Staff will limit the number of visitors allowed into facilities and will enforce social distancing.

ARKANSAS FEDERAL PARK AND RECREATION LOCATIONS – PHASED OPENINGS & PLANNED OPENINGS

National Park Service

- **May 15, 2020** – Buffalo National River will resume day use only access for private and commercial floating on the Buffalo River, including all river access points. All trails within park boundaries, except for the Lost Valley Trail, will be opened. Limited restroom facilities will be available. Park employees will be staffing trailheads and river access points to ensure traffic control and social distancing guidance. Staff will be available to direct visitors to other areas of the park should locations become too congested to comply with health guidelines. With public health in mind, the following facilities remain closed at this time: The Lost Valley Trail; Buffalo National River Headquarters building in Harrison; all established campgrounds in the park; gravel bar and backcountry camping within park boundaries; the Tyler Bend Visitor Center; the Steel Creek Visitor Contact Station; and, the Buffalo Point Visitor Contact Station.

US Army Corps of Engineers

- **May 20, 2020** – Little Rock District visitors can begin making campground reservations May 7, 2020, with specific campgrounds scheduled to reopen on May 20th.

ARKANSAS STATE PARKS – PHASED CLOSINGS

- **March 10, 2020** – Division’s contingency plan for continuing operations submitted for consideration.
- **March 11, 2020** – Arkansas’s first presumptive (later confirmed) COVID-19 case identified in Arkansas.
- **March 13, 2020** – All park sponsored programming, workshops, and events are cancelled through May 13, 2020.
- **March 20, 2020** – Access to certain park facilities limited, including:
 - Gift Shops are closed.
 - Playgrounds are closed.
 - Park visitor centers remain open only for camping/lodging check-in and trail access. Exhibit areas are closed.
 - Lodges, cabins, and campsites remain open with daily housekeeping suspended.
 - Restaurants closed to dine-in service; open for carry-out only.
 - Restrooms selectively closed on a park-by-park basis.
 - Trails, picnic areas, and outdoor pavilions remain open.
 - Museum parks with trails restricted to trail access only. Museum parks without trails provide limited access to exhibits.
 - Golf courses remain open with pro shops open for golf fees only.
- **March 23, 2020** – Lodges closed through April 17, 2020.
- **March 29, 2020** – Limited the use of campgrounds to RVs with self-contained bathroom facilities.
- **March 30, 2020** – Cabins, yurts, rental RVs, and camper cabin reservations are modified to create a minimum of 48-hour, and up to 96-hour, rest period for lodging properties. Housekeepers restricted from entering facilities until passage of a 48-hour period.
- **April 3, 2020** – Parks limited to day-use visitors only. Select trails closed. Parking limited to designated parking areas only.

ARKANSAS FEDERAL PARK AND RECREATION LOCATIONS – PHASED CLOSINGS

National Park Service

- **March 18, 2020** – Fort Smith National Historic Site visitor center is closed until further notice. Where it is possible to adhere to the latest health guidance, the park grounds and trails will remain open to provide healthy options for the public.
- **March 18, 2020** – Hot Springs National Park Fordyce Bathhouse Visitor Center and Museum is closed, along with the Bathhouse Row Emporium, located in the Lamar Bathhouse. Where it is possible to adhere to the latest health guidance, outdoor areas of the park, including all trails, the Grand Promenade, and the park campground (later closed), remain open for hiking and recreation.

- **March 18, 2020** – Pea Ridge National Military Park visitor center is closed until further notice. Where it is possible to adhere to the latest health guidance, the park grounds, tour road and trails will remain open to the public.
- **March 23, 2020** – President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home National Historic Site visitor center and the birthplace home are closed however the grounds of the site are open.
- **April 1, 2020** – Arkansas Post National Memorial visitor center is closed. The park grounds remain open and accessible to visitors. No programs or events will be held until the park is fully opened. Restrooms are available at the picnic area but not at the visitor center.
- **April 2, 2020** – Buffalo National River closed the all the park's trails, campgrounds, open areas, and the river itself to visitors.
- **April 2, 2020** – Hot Springs National Park restricted use of the Gulpha Gorge Campground, including the restrooms and picnic area. Those registered to camp in Gulpha Gorge were asked to leave their campsites by Friday, April 3.
- **April 2, 2020** – Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site visitor center is closed, on-site public or educational programs are cancelled, and restrooms and other inside facilities are temporarily inaccessible to the public. Outdoor spaces at Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site remain accessible to the public in accordance with the latest federal, state, and local health guidance, in addition to entry fees being waived for visitors. Where it is possible to adhere to the latest health guidance, an outdoor area of the park, the Commemorative Garden, will remain open for visitor reflection.
- **April 7, 2020** – Pea Ridge National Military Park will close the pit toilet located near the Elkhorn Tavern. Portable toilets are available and have been centrally places in the park, located at the West Overlook. In addition, all trash and recycle facilities have been removed. The park is asking visitors to practice the principles of Leave No Trace by establishing a pack-in and pack-out policy. This requires visitors to take home all refuse and recyclables they might bring into the park. Although the park visitor center is closed and entrance fees have been waived, the park tour road and trails remain open.

US Army Corps of Engineers

- **March 18, 2020** – Little Rock District announced campground reservation cancellations in Arkansas and Southern Missouri in response to the Coronavirus. USACE campgrounds that were open honored active reservations through Sunday, March 22, 2020. No new reservations accepted after March 22nd. Campground reservations scheduled between March 23rd and May 15th were cancelled. These measures are in addition to operational changes announced earlier the week of March 16th. Those changes included: All USACE sponsored events, tournaments, volunteer activities, and public meetings cancelled until further notice. Special event or activity permits no longer issued; those permits that have already been granted to be considered for revocation based on CDC guidelines. Visitor centers and lake offices closed to the public until further notice. Campgrounds that are currently closed will not reopen until further notice. Day use facilities, such as group shelters, are subject to evolving conditions and may not be available pending decisions by local project offices.
- **March 18, 2020** – Vicksburg District announced closure of its visitor centers, interpretive centers, field offices, and select recreation site attractions, including campgrounds and beaches, across Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas to the public beginning March 19, 2020. The

affected visitor and interpretive centers include the DeGray Lake Visitor Center in Arkadelphia, Arkansas. The affected field offices include those at Lake Greeson, DeGray Lake, and Lake Ouachita, in Arkansas. The public will be unable to receive in-person customer service or purchase recreation passes from all the district's visitor centers, interpretive centers, and field offices beginning March 19th. The public is encouraged to contact the offices and centers via telephone for customer service and to purchase recreation passes online at the following link: <https://store.usgs.gov/pass>. Effective March 18th, all district campgrounds no longer are accepting new reservations. Reservations scheduled to start after March 18th are canceled. Additionally, walk-in reservations are not being accepted. All district campgrounds closed March 23rd. All scheduled campground reservations after March 22nd were canceled. All district day use areas closed on March 23rd. All scheduled pavilion and special event registrations were canceled. Recreation sites, nature trails, and boat ramps, including nearby amenities such as restrooms and fish cleaning stations, will remain open.

USDA Forest Service

- **March 26, 2020** – Ouachita and Ozark-St. Francis National Forests announced the temporary shutdown of recreational areas and campgrounds for the safety of visitors and staff. Effective immediately on March 26th, some recreation areas and campgrounds are temporarily shut down. Some campgrounds and cabins have not yet opened for season and will remain closed. Dispersed camping is still available on both forests. On the Ouachita National Forest, all restrooms are shut down. For a list of closures, more information and updates, visit the websites of the Ouachita National Forest at www.fs.usda.gov/ouachita or the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests at www.fs.usda.gov/osfnf/. Keep in mind, trails and roads may be open for use, but please recreate responsibly and follow public health guidelines regarding social distancing while you recreate in National Forests. Law enforcement and search and rescue operations may be limited due to COVID-19 issues. High risk activities such as rock climbing or motorized activities that increase your chance of injury or distress should be avoided.
- **April 7, 2020** – Ozark-St. Francis National Forests announced on April 7th that, effective immediately, officials will temporary shutdown access to Whitaker Point, also known as Hawksbill Crag, and Glory Hole Trails, located in Newton County, in an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19. The temporary shutdown also includes the trailhead parking areas.
- **April 13, 2020** – Ouachita National Forest announced officials announced on April 13th that, effective immediately, the Wolf Pen Gap Trail Complex, located in Mena, is temporarily shut down until further notice.

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