

Dear Municipal Officials:

As we approach the Memorial Day Holiday and the start of the summer recreation season, I am writing to share the latest Operational Plan for Connecticut State Parks and Boat Launches, which provides current guidelines for DEEP staff and visitors for the operation and use of Connecticut state park grounds, trails, beaches, boat launches and other areas in a manner that is consistent with social distancing guidelines.

Coordination is more important now than ever as we respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic. This collaboration strengthens our ability to provide outdoor recreation opportunities to an estimated 10 million annual visitors to Connecticut State Parks. The recent calls and discussions with Council of Government members and municipal leaders have been very informative for the development of our Operational Plan. Hopefully our Plan will be informative to you as you manage your beaches, parks, and other recreation facilities.

We developed this latest Operational Plan in consultation with the CT Department of Public Health (DPH), and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Red Cross. The guidance addresses topics that may be relevant for the operation of municipal beaches and other outdoor recreation areas. The guidance also includes links to DPH guidance.

The full plan is available here: <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/State-Parks/COVID-19-Updates-CT-State-Parks-and-Forests>. Outlined below are a few highlights of the plan:

Shoreline beaches in Connecticut state parks will be open. Governor Lamont recently announced that in Connecticut, state parks that feature beaches along the Connecticut shoreline will be open May 22, though with capacity limitations, and visitors are advised to follow social distancing guidelines.

Swimming areas at all inland State Parks will be closed indefinitely. Based on the very limited size of inland swim areas and the large groups that will congregate on the beach and in the water we are prohibiting all swimming at inland State Parks. We will continue to review this policy in alignment with public health recommendations and will consider the reopening of designated swim areas on a case by case basis.

Social distancing is actively monitored and enforced. This includes a “**No Picnicking**” policy prohibiting use of picnic tables, and **no gatherings over five**. At beaches, we are recommending that visitors space beach blankets 15 feet apart.

Lower Capacity daily closures of parks and forests will continue. Parks and forests have been evaluated as to whether their pre-existing parking capacities can be utilized while assuring proper social distancing. Most park areas can accommodate that pre-existing maximum parking capacity, but additional visitors parking outside of a facility and walking in cannot be allowed. Some areas (mostly larger shoreline parks) are operating on a