

COVID-19 forces changes to Parks and Recreation programming

PIMA COUNTY, April 6, 2020 – With an abundance of caution, and in accordance with federal, state and local guidelines, Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation cancelled nearly all Department-organized events and activities at all of its sites due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, NRPR-operated natural resource parks, urban parks and river parks, and associated facilities are expected to remain open for general public use by individuals and families in the community. Staff encourages all users of NRPR sites to practice social distancing, minimum of 6 feet, and avoid assembling into groups of more than 10 people.

In following guidelines set in Governor Ducey's Executive Order https://azgovernor.gov/sites/default/files/eo_2021_0.pdf declaring Parks an essential government function/operation, Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation has taken the following actions to ensure public safety while keeping vital recreational amenities open:

- Closed ramadas
- Closed playgrounds and dugouts
- Closed restrooms
- Closed indoor facilities where numerous people gather
- Closed splash pads
- Closed shooting ranges
- Installed signage at heavily used outdoor venues to remind park users of the basic requirements for using good hygiene and social distancing
- Continue to work with the media to get the message out that social distancing and hygiene apply to recreating public when outdoors in our parks and trails

NRPR continues to evaluate the activities within our open park facilities as they become more heavily used and making necessary and appropriate adjustments to protect the public.

It should be noted that activities and events operated at NRPR-managed facilities by contracted entities may or may not be cancelled by that entity. Many of these activities and events are cancelling based on current guidance. Should activity participants have questions, they are encouraged to contact the activity or event proponent directly.

Specifically, these guidelines will impact upcoming activities at the following sites:

- Non-essential programs at all Community Centers are cancelled. The County is modifying its congregate meals program so it can continue modified meal service at Ellie Towne Flowing Wells Community Center (ETFWCC), Ajo Community Center (ACC) and Picture Rocks Community Center (PRCC). That service modification will consist of transitioning from a "sit-down" meal program at all three centers to a "drive-thru" program at ETFWCC and PRCC, and a "drive-thru/home delivery" model at ACC.
- Weekly Canoa Country Markets at [Historic Canoa Ranch](#) have been cancelled. The ranch gates will remain open daily from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m., giving the public access to Canoa Lake and the historic Anza Trail; however, the historic site with the buildings and

- exhibits are closed to the public. In addition, until further notice, the Historic Canoa Ranch tours, Anza tours and Gardens of Canoa tours are suspended as are the bird walks and all environmental education programs at Canoa.

Trail and Park Precautions and Etiquette during COVID-19 Pandemic

With the outbreak of the COVID - 19 virus, now more than ever people are escaping to Pima County's outdoor parks and trail systems for their mental and physical health. It is critical everyone be aware of and practice recommendations provided by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) to prevent the spread of COVID - 19. All the safe practices we have been observing in our daily lives must translate when recreating outdoors as well. Given the increased number of people using parks, trails and The Chuck Huckelberry Loop, below is a detailed list of important practices to keep things safe and enjoyable for everyone in our outdoor spaces. Responsibility and awareness starts with the individual and we all must be willing to adjust our normal behavior to accommodate the current circumstances.

1. **Know when to stay home:** If you are sick or exhibiting symptoms of illness, stay home and allow yourself ample time to recover.
2. **Be flexible and have a plan B:** Parking is limited. If you arrive at a trailhead or park and the parking lot is full, be prepared to go elsewhere. A full parking lot is a good indication that the park or trail is too crowded for safe, physical distancing.
3. **Explore and research:** Popular trails make up a small percentage of what is available for trail users. Use this time of uncertainty to explore less popular areas, perhaps areas you've never been to. Spend time doing research to familiarize yourself with other trails or sections of The Loop and their various access points. Not only will this help spread out trail use, but who knows, you just might find a new favorite trail.
4. **Physical distancing:** Maintaining a minimum physical distance of 6-feet from each other is paramount whether indoors or outdoors. Given the potential for wind to facilitate transmission of airborne particles, physical distancing is crucial in outdoor spaces. If you are 2 - 3 steps away from someone, you are too close to them. This can be especially challenging on a narrow trail when users are passing each other. Take extra time and allow others extra time to step further off the trail than you normally would. Some people prefer to be in groups and talk while on the trail. Adjust your behavior to ensure proper physical distancing. Practice spacing out and if you are too far away from your hiking buddy to carry on a conversation, that's okay, you still have the comfort of hiking with another person. Remember to avoid groups of more than 10 people.
5. **Keep moving on the trail:** When passing other trail users, keep moving past them. If you are accustomed to stopping and having conversations with fellow trail users, recognize the importance of not congregating and maintaining physical separation. Keep in mind you are not being unfriendly, you are being responsible.
6. **Keep your ears open:** If you must listen to music while on the trail, do so at a lower volume than usual, ideally leaving one ear open to hear other users approaching from behind. It is especially important to be aware of other trail users and the environment around you.

7. **Avoid touching park infrastructure:** Refrain from touching surfaces. Now is not the time to be touching trail signs, benches or other park infrastructure.
8. **Bring hand-cleaning products:** Remember to throw hand sanitizer, wipes or soap and water in the car before you leave home. We all know how important clean hands are right now.
9. **Do not litter and do not pick up garbage that is not yours:** We always appreciate when kind park users take it upon themselves to pick up litter left behind by others, but now is not the time to be doing that. It might be hard for you, but just leave it, parks maintenance staff will take care of it.
10. **Be self-sufficient:** Access to park amenities might be limited and it is best to avoid contact with any kind of surfaces. Do not rely on drinking fountains; bring an ample supply of water for yourself. Do not share water or snacks. If present, avoid using park facilities such as garbage cans and restrooms if possible. Bring a trash bag with you and be prepared to remove any waste you generate.
11. **Know your limits and your environment:** Know your ability level and do not take unnecessary risks. With increasing seasonal temperatures, be aware of environmental factors such as heat and venomous wildlife such as rattlesnakes. Avoid putting yourself in an emergency situation and causing unnecessary strain on first responders and medical facilities.
12. **Dogs:** Dog owners want to get out with their four-legged companions, but it must be done responsibly and with respect to other trail users. Please note that violating any of the rules below constitutes a Class 2 misdemeanor and is punishable by law.
 - Dogs must be leashed at all times on no more than a 6-foot leash, no exceptions.
 - Dog waste must be cleaned up immediately and taken back to your car or carried with you. Do not leave dog-waste bags along the trail, even if you plan to pick them up on your way back.
 - It is your responsibility to remove your dog's waste from the site completely in your vehicle and properly dispose of it off site.
 - Respect areas where dogs are not allowed. Although dogs are allowed in most Pima County Parks, dogs are NOT allowed in Tucson Mountain Park.
13. **Mountain Bicyclists: FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH AND FOLLOW PROPER TRAIL ETIQUETTE AT ALL TIMES.**
 - Mountain bicyclists must yield to all other users, no exceptions. This means coming to a complete stop, dismounting your bicycle and stepping off the trail to allow others to pass. Having your bicycle in between you and other trail users is a good method to increase physical distancing.
 - Trails are not racecourses, they are pathways for people of all ages and ability levels to enjoy nature at their own pace. Slow down, look ahead, and be prepared to stop and move off the trail at any time.
 - When approaching other users from behind, announce yourself well ahead of time and give them ample time to step off the trail. Do not sneak up on, startle or encroach on the space of other users.
 - Electric bicycles are NOT allowed in Pima County parks and trail systems, no exceptions.

14. **Equestrians:** Now is not the time to show up at a busy trailhead with multiple horse trailers. Having more than a few horses on a narrow trail on a busy day is a recipe for trail congestion. Please consider using the areas you are familiar with that are less popular. If you are part of an equestrian organization, please consider spreading out in smaller groups at different locations. Keep in mind that horse droppings on the trail detracts from most trail users' experience. While it may not be feasible to clean up on the trail, please do so at the trailhead.
15. **Hikers and runners:** If you are approaching other trail users from behind, make sure you announce yourself ahead of time and allow others ample time to move off the trail. Pedestrians must yield to equestrians.
16. **Assess trail conditions:** If it has rained recently, assess the trail before going out. If the trail is wet or muddy to the point that a depression is left in the soil when walking or riding, the trail is too wet to use. Stay off wet trails to avoid damaging them.

More information and resources on COVID-19 from Pima County may be found at pima.gov/covid19.

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