

Visiting state parks encouraged, but do it with proper measure

With the weather warming, and Easter week more uneventful than normal, many people will look to get out and visit a state park.

Per the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation website, there are cautions and restrictions in place during the COVID-19 pandemic:

State Parks encourages New Yorkers to recreate locally, practice social distancing, and use common sense to protect themselves and others. Getting outdoors to walk, jog, hike, ride a bike, or visit a park or state lands is a healthy way to stay active, spend time with your immediate household family members, and reduce stress and anxiety while practicing social distancing.

While indoor spaces and restrooms at state park facilities may be closed to prevent community spread of COVID-19, parks, grounds, forests and trails are open during daylight hours, seven days a week.

For the safety of all visitors, all state park playgrounds, athletic courts and sport fields are closed.

Visitors are asked to #recreate-local, choose parks that are close to their home, and follow CDC/NYSDOH's guidelines for preventing the spread of colds, flu and COVID-19.

State Parks said, "We appreciate your support and patience as we navigate this public health crisis together. Learn more about COVID-19 and its impact on NY State Parks. Visit: COVID-19 UPDATE."

Parking Limitations in Effect

To encourage physical social distancing at popular parks, trailheads and scenic areas, State Parks may reduce the number of available parking spaces on high-visit days. Have a plan ready to visit a different park or another park area.

Visit <https://parks.ny.gov/parks/> for a list of parks. Park maps are available on each park page.

Early Season Camping & Pavilion/Shelters

Due to the global health crisis, all campgrounds, cabins, cottages, and pavilions/shelters are closed to visitation through April 30. All visitors with reservations will be issued a full refund.

"We ask for your patience as refunds are processed," State Parks said.

Camping Reservations & Pavilion/Shelter Reservations

New York has suspended all new camping, cabin and cottage and pavilion/shelter reservations for the 2020 season until further notice.

State Parks said, "We are assessing campground and pavilion status on a daily basis. If you've made a reservation for the season beginning May 1, and we determine your facility is safe to open, your reservation will be honored. However, visitors who wish to cancel an existing reservation may do so and receive a full refund. Thank you for your patience as we work to protect the safety of our visitors and staff.

On Patrol

State parks, lands, forests and facilities are monitored by Park Police, forest rangers, environmental conservation police officers and other staff. These parks,

lands, forests and facilities and visitors will incorporate physical distancing to limit the potential spread of COVID-19.

In addition, these officers and staff respond to, and assist, local agencies with search and rescue missions, wildfire suppression, and other response activities.

State Parks said, "Following this guidance will prevent unnecessary burdens on, and dangers to, state resources and local responders during the ongoing COVID-19 response.

"While enjoying outdoor spaces, please continue to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)/State Department of Health (DOH) guidelines for preventing the spread of colds, flu, and COVID-19."

That means:

- √ Stay home if you are sick, or showing or feeling any COVID-19 symptoms, such as fever, coughing, and/or troubled breathing;

- √ Practice social distancing by keeping at least 6 feet of distance between yourself and others, even when outdoors;

- √ Avoid close contact, such as shaking hands, hugging or high-fives;

- √ Wash hands often or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol when soap and water are not available; and

- √ Avoid unnecessary contact with surfaces that are often touched, such as doorknobs and handrails.

DEC and State Parks also encourage visitors to state parks, state lands, and other parks to:

- √ Stay local and keep visits short;

- √ Visit in small groups limited to immediate household members;

- √ Maintain distance from others while in places where people tend to congregate, such as parking lots, trailheads, and scenic overlooks;

- √ Avoid games and activities that require close contact, such as basketball, football or soccer;

- √ Avoid playground equipment like slides and swings and other frequently touched surfaces;

- √ Do not share equipment, such as bicycles, helmets, balls or Frisbees;

- √ If you arrive at a park and crowds are forming, choose a different park, a different trail, or return another time/day to visit; and

If parking lots are full, please do not park along roadsides or other undesignated areas. To protect your safety and that of others, please choose a different area to visit, or return another time or day when parking is available.

If you are sick or have had contact with someone who is sick in the last 14 days:

- √ Stay home; and
- √ Spend time in the backyard or other personal outdoor space. Do not visit public outdoor spaces.

If you are over 70 or have a compromised immune system:

- √ Avoid visiting outdoor public spaces;

- √ Remain indoors or spend time in the backyard or other personal outdoor space;

- √ Pre-screen visitors by taking their temperature from a safe social distance; and

- √ Require visitors to wear masks, if available.

Below are some specifics for State Park visitors:

- √ Playgrounds, athletic courts and sporting fields: All State Parks' playgrounds, athletic courts, and sporting fields are closed.

State Parks said, "This measure is taken for the safety of all visitors and to stop the spread of COVID-19. Park visitors should maintain 6 feet of social distance and visit parks for solitary recreational activities only. Please avoid crowds and refrain from group

activity."

- √ Restrooms: Due to COVID-19, State Parks has closed most indoor spaces – visitor centers, nature centers and historic houses. Some but not all public restrooms will continue to be available.

Note that many restrooms may still be closed until water systems are restored from seasonal closures. Visitors should plan accordingly and call the park office for more information.

Camping Reservations and Pavilion/Shelter Reservations: New York State has suspended all new camping, cabin and cottage and pavilion/shelter reservations for

the 2020 season until further notice.

- √ Entrance fees: All entrance fees have been waived.

Permits and Passes:

- √ Events: All public programming and events have been canceled until further notice.

- √ Lifeguards: At this time, all lifeguards have been postponed through April 11.

State Parks said, "As the situation continues to develop, we will take any necessary actions to protect visitor and staff health. We appreciate your support and patience as we navigate this public health crisis together."



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For temporary assistance, call the Neighbors Foundation of Grand Island 773-1452 or 773-7476

All inquiries are confidential

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COVID-19 RELIEF Information for Small Business

Congressman Brian Higgins



PAYCHECK PROTECTION PROGRAM:

Acts as a bridge for organizations that retain employees and their salaries.

Who is eligible?

Small Business, 501(c)(3) non-profits 501(c)(19) veterans organizations, tribal businesses, sole proprietors, independent contractors, self-employed individuals.

What are the terms of the program?

Zero-fee loans of up to \$10 million. The loan will be eligible for forgiveness for expenses of up to 8 weeks of average payroll and related costs if the organization retains employees and their salary levels.

Can my business qualify for both programs?

Yes for the Paycheck Protection Program and Economic Injury Disaster Loans/Grants; however, they must be used for different purposes, & any amount received under the Emergency Economic Injury Grant Program would be subtracted from the amount forgiven in the Paycheck Protection Program.

SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION ASSISTANCE CENTERS:

National: 1-800-659-2955

disastercustomerservice@sba.gov

SBA.gov

Erie County: 716-878-4030

mccartsa@buffalostate.edu

sbdc.buffalostate.edu

Niagara County: 716-210-2515

oswald@niagaracc.suny.edu

niagarasbdc.org

CONTACT US:

We are here to help. Please contact our office with any additional questions.

Buffalo: 716-852-3501

Niagara Falls: 716-282-1274

Washington, DC: 202-225-3306

Website: Higgins.House.gov

@RepBrianHiggins

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ECONOMIC INJURY DISASTER LOANS & EMERGENCY ECONOMIC INJURY GRANTS:

For small businesses that experienced significant economic injury and are located in a declared disaster area (New York).

Who is eligible for an Economic Injury Disaster Loan?

The following entities with 500 or fewer employees: small businesses, sole proprietorships (with or without employees), independent contractors, cooperatives & employee owned businesses, tribal businesses, small agricultural cooperatives that meet the applicable size standard, as well as most private non-profits of any size.

What is the difference between an Economic Injury Disaster Loan and an Emergency Economic Grant?

- An Economic Injury Disaster Loan is a 30-year loan of up to \$2 million with an interest rate up to 3.75% for businesses and 2.75% for non-profits to help pay for expenses that would not have occurred if a disaster had not taken place.

- An Emergency Economic Injury Grant is an immediate advance of up to \$10,000 received within 3 days of applying for an EIDL that does not need to be repaid.

EMPLOYEE RETENTION CREDIT:

A refundable payroll tax credit for 50% of wages paid to certain employees.

Who is eligible?

Employers, including non-profits, whose operations have been fully/partially suspended as a result of a government order. Employers who have experienced a 50% or greater reduction in quarterly receipts. Not available to employers receiving assistance through the Paycheck Protection Program. Available through December 31, 2020.