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Guidance for Recreation in a Pandemic: Please Stay Close to Home!

Despite "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order, too many people are congregating in parks and trailheads

EVERETT, Wash., April 4, 2020 – The Snohomish County Parks, Recreation and Tourism department today reinforced guidelines to help residents understand how to recreate responsibly during the pandemic and launched a new tag line: "If you take a car, the park is too far!" A sunny day in Snohomish County reveals busy beaches, crowded trails and people parking illegally near parks. Many people are still traveling to parks, creating crowds and making it difficult to maintain social distancing in the midst of a global pandemic.

"By following social distancing guidance, we will be better able to protect our community's health. COVID-19 can infect you anywhere you gather closely with others, including in our parks," said Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers. "Social distancing seems to be having the intended effect, and we are not seeing a big spike in infection rates right now. If you take a car, the park is too far. If you take a walk, keep your distance from others."

Along with this new guidance, the department is also reiterating the current closures: **Snohomish County park gates, playgrounds, and bathrooms are closed until at least May 4, 2020.** All scheduled Parks events/gatherings are cancelled or postponed through at least May 20, 2020. These actions are to discourage travel, stop gatherings, and slow the spread of the virus under Governor Inslee's "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order, which has been extended to May 4, 2020.

While there are still many benefits to going outside during this time, follow these recommendations to stay safe:

- Engage in outdoor activities only with people in your immediate household (not extended families).
- Engage in outdoor activities close by your home, instead of traveling to do them ("If you take a car, the park is too far!").
- If you encounter others, maintain a minimum of 6-foot social distance.
- Gatherings of any size are not allowed outdoors, just as they are not allowed indoors. This includes getting a group together to go on a hike.
- Do not play on any play equipment.
- Do not park in front of park gates or roads. Emergency services need access to these at all times.

Snohomish County has widespread parks and open spaces in both urban and rural settings. In these difficult times, it is critical the community plays their part in stopping the spread of COVID-19. The Parks staff members are witnessing cars parked in front of gates, crowded street parking, and too many users, making social distancing difficult. In particular, there has been unsafe and/or illegal parking near Meadowdale Beach, Picnic Point, Lord Hill, Paradise Valley, Wenberg County Park, Heybrook Ridge Park, as well as many of the Centennial Trail trailhead parking areas.

Please only leave home if necessary and follow the Governor's "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" guidelines. The parks will be waiting and ready for more social adventures once this crisis is over.

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