



CITY OF FORT DODGE PARKS, RECREATION & FORESTRY

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MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Parks, Trails, Outdoor Facilities and Open Space Protocol during COVID-19

From the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA): "Concerns about the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak continue to grip our nation. As organizations that support the power of parks and open spaces as essential resources for health and wellness, we understand that people may have questions and concerns about visiting their local parks, trails or open spaces at this time.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has flagged mental health as a top concern associated with the COVID-19 outbreak. We recognize that social distancing may take a toll on our mental health, especially during high-stress and anxiety-producing global public health emergencies. We also know that parks provide a connection to the outdoors and green space as well as opportunities for physical activity which studies demonstrate reduces stress and improves mental health.

We believe that many parks, trails and open spaces can continue to be used in a safe manner that allows people to enjoy the mental and physical health benefits these spaces provide. In all instances, we recommend people follow local, state and national ordinances and guidelines regarding the use of these spaces and recognize that these vary from community to community.

NRPA encourages local jurisdictions to keep parks, trails and open spaces accessible as long as it is safe to do so.

Our local parks, trails and open spaces have always served as places where people can find respite and seek peace and restoration. During this time of uncertainty, these places are needed now more than ever. Our nation's park and recreation professionals are working hard to maintain these spaces and keep them safe, accessible and benefiting our communities during these challenging times. Let us all do our part to use them in a way that respects each other and public health guidance."

At this point, all city parks are open. Our highest priority is the health and well-being of our community and employees. We are following the guidelines from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, National Recreation and Park Association and CDC to offer these helpful tips to stay safe.

Here's how YOU can help:

- **According to State of Iowa and CDC recommendations**, limit your group to less than 10 people when visiting a city facility. This includes outdoor picnicking, pick-up sports and other group hangouts. Maintain proper physical distance at all times.
- **Practice social distancing** by observing CDC's minimum recommended social distancing of 6 feet from other individuals at all times. If this is not possible, users should find an alternate location or depart that space.
- **If you have been sick** in the last two weeks, please stay at home for your health and the safety of others.
- **Avoid popular areas where people may congregate**, and also **avoid larger groups** in general. Areas to avoid include playgrounds, trail heads, public art, etc.
- **While on trails**, warn other users of their presence and as they pass, and step aside to let others pass.
- Please take into consideration the health of others when spending time outdoors.
- **Pack extra hand soap/water or hand sanitizer**. It is everyone's individual responsibility to follow the guidelines for hand washing when in public spaces. Please be aware that bathrooms and drinking fountains will not be available during this time of the COVID-19 outbreak. Please wash your hands often during and after all play!!
- Additional information on best practices for keeping you and your family safe can be found online at the [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) website.

Here's what WE are doing:

- Cabins will not be available for rent until further notice.
- **We are postponing programs and events** at all city facilities until further notice. This will help keep our citizens safe, and we will reassess this policy as the climate changes for COVID-19.
- **We are monitoring the situation**. We promise to remain diligent and intentional in protecting you.

