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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
2020ENV0014-000553  
March 24, 2020

Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy  
Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations  
and Rural Development

### **Province closing certain parks, recreation areas**

VICTORIA – BC Parks continues to monitor whether people visiting provincial parks are complying with the physical distancing required to stop the spread of novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Parks throughout British Columbia are seeing an increase in visitors, but many people are not complying with the provincial health officer's (PHO) requirement for families and individuals to stay at least two metres away from others. This puts the most vulnerable populations at risk. BC Parks has heard concerns from the public, RCMP and First Nations, as well as regional and municipal governments about the increase in visitors and is implementing full closures of certain parks throughout the province.

“The mental and physical wellness benefit of being outside during the COVID-19 pandemic response is important, but keeping people safe right now is the most important thing we can be doing,” said George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy. “Until we flatten the transmission curve of COVID-19 and people strictly comply with the PHO physical distancing requirement, provincial park access will be restricted.”

These closures are in addition to a previous suspension of services and facilities in provincial parks, including visitor centres, nature houses, washrooms and day-use areas. In alignment with Parks Canada, all campgrounds are closed until April 30, 2020.

BC Parks will continue to monitor the COVID-19 outbreak closely and follow the direction and advice set out by the PHO and the Ministry of Health. Additional provincial park closures may be implemented on a case-by-case basis where and when required. People who still choose to visit provincial parks should be mindful that they are responsible for their own safety and that washroom facilities will not be available.

In addition to the BC Parks closures, the Recreation Sites and Trails BC (RSTBC) branch of the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development is closing its campgrounds and amenities in response to the COVID-19 situation.

“We want to do whatever we can to make sure British Columbians have access to this province's great outdoor recreation opportunities, but this is an unprecedented situation and we need to protect everyone's health,” said Doug Donaldson, Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development.

RSTBC campgrounds are generally located in remote areas and provide basic facilities. Potable water and electricity are not provided. The temporary closure includes RSTBC campgrounds where there is an increased likelihood of close contact with frequently touched surfaces,

including toilets, kiosks, ticket booths, overnight shelters and day-use shelters. Day-use shelters, backcountry cabins, warming huts, ticket booths at snowmobile areas and other built facilities will be closed.

Backcountry trails will remain open, but maintenance services, including grooming, have been suspended. Trail users are encouraged to use local facilities and not travel for recreation purposes. The facilities accessed by these groups will also remain closed.

**Learn More:**

For status updates on BC Parks closures, visit the BC Parks website: <http://BCParks.ca>

For status updates on RSTBC campgrounds, visit:  
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/sports-culture/recreation/camping-hiking/sites-trails>

The website will be updated in the coming days. Check back on a regular basis.

For recommendations on protecting yourself and your community from COVID-19, and to use an online self-assessment tool, visit: <http://www.bccdc.ca/>

For non-health information on COVID-19, call 1 888 COVID-19 or visit: [www.gov.bc.ca/covid19](http://www.gov.bc.ca/covid19)

A backgrounder follows.

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## BACKGROUND

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### **Provincial parks to be closed immediately**

The following provincial parks will be closed immediately in response to the provincial health officer's requirement to maintain a two-metre separation when in public to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19:

West Coast, Vancouver Island:

- French Beach Provincial Park
- Goldstream Provincial Park
- Gowlland Tod Provincial Park (closure restricted to McKenzie Bight and Tod Inlet)
- Juan de Fuca Provincial Park (includes China Beach, Sombrio Beach and Botanical Beach)
- ŁÁU, WELNEW/John Dean Provincial Park
- Spectacle Lake Provincial Park

South Coast:

- Chilliwack Lake Provincial Park
- Joffre Lakes Provincial Park
- Murrin Provincial Park
- Shannon Falls Provincial Park
- Stawamus Chief Provincial Park and Protected Area

Okanagan:

- Skaha Bluffs Provincial Park

North:

- Ancient Forest/Chun T'oh Whudujut Provincial Park
- Liard River Hot Springs Provincial Park (hot springs and campground closed previously; now full closure)

Full and partial park closures previously put in place:

- Flores Island Park and Gibson Marine Park (closure of Wildside Trail)
- Maquinna Marine Provincial Park (full closure)
- Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Provincial Park (full closure)

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