
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

All BC Parks closing

VICTORIA – BC Parks is immediately closing all provincial parks in response to the widespread call for increased action to address COVID-19.

The closure responds to both the federal and provincial directives that people should stay close to home to reduce COVID-19 transmission risk. This temporary measure means people should not be going to provincial parks until further notice.

“Because physical distancing works, it is critical that we take every action needed to restrict the spread of COVID-19. This applies to British Columbians and out-of-province visitors who were planning to visit or stay at our provincial parks. The message is clear: stay home, avoid travel, do not put yourself or others at risk,” said George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy.

“I understand and share the love people in British Columbia have for the outdoors and the connection between health and proximity to nature. We tried to provide safe space for people to get some exercise and fresh air in our beautiful parks. But it has proven too challenging to maintain safe distance between visitors. This action is difficult but necessary. We look forward to the day we can welcome people back to our wonderful parks.”

The decision to close the park system is informed by continued feedback from RCMP, local government, First Nations, local search-and-rescue organizations and the general public. While many people are observing the physical distancing requirements set by the provincial health officer (PHO), some continue to ignore the order, making enforcement in a wilderness setting challenging.

The timing of this decision is important given the upcoming long weekend and the beginning of the busy season for outdoor recreation and camping. BC Parks is also extending the ban on all camping in provincial parks until May 31, 2020, in alignment with neighbouring jurisdictions and the temporary closure of Canada’s national parks. Refunds for bookings up to May 31 will be sent automatically.

As previously announced, the Recreation Sites and Trails BC (RSTBC) branch of the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development has also closed its campgrounds and amenities in response to the COVID-19 situation.

BC Parks has taken a scaled and phased in approach to limiting park access following PHO requirements and the latest COVID-19 transmission data. BC Parks recognizes the value of nature in contributing to public health and wellness and will expand access to the park system as soon as the PHO indicates it can be done without increasing the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Learn More:

Any change to provincial park access or services will be posted to 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>

For the latest medical updates, including case counts, prevention, risks and testing,
visit: <http://www.bccdc.ca/>
Or follow @CDCofBC on Twitter

For provincial health officer orders, notices and guidance, visit: www.gov.bc.ca/phoguidance

For non-health related information, including financial, child care and education supports,
travel, transportation and essential service information, visit: www.gov.bc.ca/covid19
Or call 1 888 COVID19 (1 888 268-4319) between 7:30 a.m. and 8 p.m., seven days a week.

Contacts:

Ministry of Environment and Climate Change	Joint Information Centre
Strategy	COVID Provincial Co-ordination Plan
Media Relations	embc.covidjic@gov.bc.ca
250 953-3834	236 478-1336

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