

Somerset County Park Commission

HEADQUARTERS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FRIDAY, MAY 8, 2020

**SOMERSET COUNTY PARK COMMISSION
UPDATED INFORMATION ON PARKS AND TRAILS**

BRIDGEWATER, NJ –The Somerset County Park Commission reminds all that the following general use parks are open for enjoyment in strict accord with all requirements set forth in Governor Murphy’s Executive Order No. 133: Duke Island Park on Old York Road and North Branch Park on Milltown Road, both in Bridgewater; Colonial Park in Franklin; Natirar Park in Far Hills and Peapack-Gladstone; East County Park in Warren; and Skillman Park in Montgomery. In addition, the trail systems in Washington Valley Park in Bridgewater, the Sourland Mountain Preserve in Hillsborough and Montgomery, the Environmental Education Center at Lord Stirling Park in Basking Ridge, and the Little Brook Sanctuary in Bernardsville will be open. Washington Rock State Park in Green Brook has been closed until further notice.

Commencing this Saturday and—until further notice—continuing on weekends and holidays thereafter, the entire length of Colonial Drive (the roadway running through Colonial Park) will be closed to vehicular traffic. Visitors driving to Colonial Park will be able to access available parking only from a single entry point off of Elizabeth Avenue. This entry point is the Howe Athletic Complex driveway. Parking for Colonial Park will only take place at the Howe Athletic Complex parking lot. With this new traffic configuration, visitors may utilize Colonial Drive for walking while practicing social distancing.

Somerset County Sheriff’s Officers will be controlling access to parking lots at many of the aforementioned locations. Park patrons must understand that, pursuant to Governor Murphy’s direction, parking is limited to 50% of the maximum parking capacity at one time. Accordingly, there has been, and there will continue to be, a need to close access to parks once they reach this restricted parking capacity. Access will be re-opened once a sufficient number of vehicles have left the park. The Park Commission requests and appreciates the patience, understanding, and cooperation of its park patrons regarding access closures. Visitors are prohibited from parking in undesignated areas, including roadways. The Commission must but to comply with the Governor’s requirements and it welcomes the collaborative compliance of all park patrons.

In compliance with Executive Order 133, the following requirements will be implemented at all Park Commission general use parks and trail systems:

- **FACE COVERINGS:** should be worn when and where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, except where doing so would inhibit that individual’s health or where the individual is under two years of age.

- **PARKING:** will be limited to 50% of the maximum capacity at one time, and visitors shall be prohibited from parking in undesignated areas, including in roadways.
- **PICNICKING:** is prohibited. The use of charcoal grills in picnic groves is not allowed. Picnic blankets, chairs, coolers, and other such personal property are not allowed in parks.
- **SOCIAL DISTANCING:** must be practiced at all times. Visitors are to stay six feet apart whenever practicable, excluding immediate family members, caretakers, household members, or romantic partners.
- **ACTIVITIES AND SPORTS:** shall not be allowed.
- **GATHERINGS:** in parks or on trails are prohibited.

As a reminder, restroom facilities, picnic areas (including charcoal grills), pavilions, playgrounds, exercise stations, and all buildings including, but not limited to, visitor centers and educational/interpretive centers will remain closed to the public. Park patrons must take note of the fact that park benches and tables are not disinfected on a regular basis. Accordingly, they should not be utilized in any manner.

The leash-free dog areas located in Colonial Park, East County Park, and Skillman Park will also remain closed until further notice. Further, the Rudolf W. van der Goot Rose Garden at Colonial Park and the Leonard J. Buck Garden in Far Hills will remain closed. Classes, lessons, and programs at all Park Commission facilities remain suspended indefinitely. All of the Commission's baseball, basketball, softball, cricket, and soccer fields, the tennis courts at the Green Knoll Tennis Center and Colonial Park, and the roller hockey rink at the North Branch Greenway Park in Bridgewater remain closed. The safety and welfare of the Park Commission's employees and park patrons are of paramount importance. If Commission staff witness non-compliance with the Governor's Executive Orders or with the Commission's practices and policies, the Commission will have no choice but to close its facilities. Moreover, the Governor, himself, has said that if these rules are not followed, he will reverse the Executive Order and close parks and golf courses again. For these reasons, the Park Commission implores everyone to comply with all mandates and—most importantly—practice patience and politeness.

Updates on programs and activities may be found at www.somersetcountyparks.org or by calling 908-722-1200.

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