

New post on **EAR TO THE GROUND WITH DNR & COMMISSIONER FRANZ**

We all love to get outside and enjoy the remarkable forests and beaches around us and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages nearly 6 million acres of public lands, including 1,200 miles of trails and [over 160 recreation sites](#). However, during a time when the coronavirus is spreading at a rapid rate, staying home saves lives. That is why DNR decided to close all public access and recreation sites for two weeks.

What does 'closed' mean?

Since public safety is DNR's top priority, public access to state lands will be closed for two weeks to combat the COVID-19 outbreak. From March 26th through at least April 8th, DNR managed lands including trailheads, trails, roads, free flight launch sites, campgrounds, water access sites, day-use areas, and dispersed recreation (camping, off-trail hiking, hunting, target shooting, etc.) will be closed. DNR will continue to monitor the situation and will reassess whether the closure will extend past April 8th as we get closer to that date.

Isn't being out in the wilderness safe?

In normal circumstances, outdoor recreation provides numerous health benefits. But, when social distancing is the best way to decrease the spread of the coronavirus, everyone swarming to the same recreation area creates a large risk. People sharing facilities, passing each other on the trails, and staying near each other on campgrounds produce potentially hazardous settings. Although we love bringing people together on our lands, temporarily closing access is an important action in limiting risk and exposure at this time.

Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz stated:

"This was not an easy decision. We treasure our forests and trails and beaches as places of rejuvenation and refuge from the chaos of daily life. But, I cannot ignore the unfortunate reality of what we saw this weekend: crowded trails, people shoulder to shoulder, and large gatherings. This behavior undercuts the sacrifices that Washingtonians of all means and ability are making in order to adhere to social distancing. And it undercuts the heroic efforts of our doctors, nurses, and first responders who risk their lives each day

responding to this unrelenting epidemic.

“This behavior also makes clear that, while we have taken drastic measures, we have not done enough when it comes to closing areas where large crowds gather and communicating the importance of staying at home and avoiding physical contact with others.”

What about all DNR operations?

DNR offices are closed to the public and most of DNR staff is working from home. However field staff and our wardens are still out patrolling the land and doing essential updates.

When it comes to commercial activities, essential business functions of DNR will continue during the closure period. Timber harvests are included, as they support the manufacture and distribution of forest products. Our agriculture lands are also essential in supporting our food supply. These workers will be practicing social distancing and doing any non-essential elements via telework.

DNR has closed all DNR-managed lands to the public and firewood permits are not being accepted at this time. The closure is in effect Thursday, March 26 through at least April 8. For region specific questions regarding Firewood Permits, please [contact the appropriate region office.](#)

What can I do?

Please continue to avoid the crowds and spend most of your days indoors. We should take this time to appreciate the essential workers who cannot stay home. We should follow the direction of scientists, doctors, and [Governor Inslee’s ‘Stay Home, Stay Healthy’ order.](#)

“If we all do our part, these temporary disruptions will save countless lives.” – Commissioner of Public Lands, Hilary Franz.

Additional Resources:

You can find the news release about the closure [here.](#)

Have more questions? Download our frequently asked questions document [here.](#)

Get the latest information on how the coronavirus is affecting Washington State by visiting the Washington State Coronavirus Response (COVID-19) [page.](#)

[Ear to the Ground](#) | March 30, 2020 at 4:25 pm | Tags: [campground](#), [Commissioner of Public Lands](#), [coronavirus](#), [covid-19](#), [public access](#), [Recreation](#), [trails](#) | Categories: [equestrian](#), [Forests](#), [hiking](#), [Mtn. Biking](#),

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