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Memorandum

From: Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA)

Date: March 1, 2021

Subject: Safety Standards for Parks, Open Space, and Outdoor Education Programs – Phase III, Step 2

The following guidelines apply to Parks, Open Space, and Outdoor Education Programs during Phase III, Step 2 of the Commonwealth's Reopening.

All visitors to parks and open space, and managers associated with properties or activities herein, should abide by the specific guidelines outlined. Property-specific guidelines should be posted at entrance points to areas and on relevant social media/websites. Guidelines provided herein should apply to all parks, reservations and open spaces unless otherwise specified.

This guidance applies until amended or rescinded.

Parks and Open Space

Walking, hiking, biking, running, land stewardship events (clean-up events, community service projects, volunteer programming), and other similar activities are allowable activities during Phase III, Step 2 in parks and other designated areas such as rail trails, multi-use paths, and bike paths.

Parks and Open Space Guidelines:

- Visitors must practice social distancing by remaining 6 feet away from others and adhering to all site-specific rules, regulations, and posted signage regarding permitted uses.
- Face coverings are required for visitors of parks and open spaces in accordance with COVID-19 Order 55: *Revised Order Requiring Face Coverings in Public Places*, to prevent against the transmission of Covid-19.
- On trails, walker and hikers should move aside and leave room for others to pass, and cyclists and runners should alert other users when approaching and wait for others to step aside before passing.
- After visiting public spaces, users should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer.
- Managing entities may offer or allow third parties to coordinate group hikes, nature walks, and land stewardship activities, such as clean-up events and community service projects, at their discretion but such activities shall be consistent with social distancing and limited to groups of 12 or fewer including participants, staff, and instructors. There may be more than one group of 12 at one time, provided that adequate social distance and group separation of at least 14 feet can be maintained.
- Organized group hikes, nature walk programs, and land stewardship activities should be planned in advance with proper registration of participants in order to manage capacity. Onsite registration should be not offered.
- Participants of group hikes, nature walks, and land stewardship activities should sanitize any shared equipment between users.
- Permits may be issued for group events and gatherings provided that the activities are consistent with the gatherings order, all relevant sector or activity-specific guidance (including the *Indoor and Outdoor Events guidance*), and social distancing requirements. Persons seeking to organize youth or adult sport activities should review and follow EEA's *Workplace Safety and Reopening Standards for Businesses and Other Entities Providing Youth and Adult Amateur Sports Activities.* Businesses that offer guided tours or walking tours should review and follow the *Museum and Cultural and Historical Facilities and Guided Tours Standards*.

Athletic Fields, Courts, and Other Playing Surfaces (Non-Organized/Permitted Use)

All outdoor athletic fields, courts, and other playing surfaces (basketball, tennis, baseball, football, soccer, skate parks, etc.) can be utilized by the public during Phase III, Step 2 for general recreation. Athletic fields, courts, and other playing surfaces at parks, reservations and open space managed by municipalities or other organizations for public use is available at the discretion of the city or town it is in and/or the managing organization. User activities should be consistent with social distancing and group size guidelines. Persons seeking to organize youth or adult sport activities should review and follow EEA's *Workplace Safety and Reopening Standards for Businesses and Other Entities Providing Youth and Adult Amateur Sports Activities.*

Picnic Areas and Grills

Picnic and grill areas can open provided that social distancing can be maintained.

Trash Disposal, Recycling, and Public Restrooms

Where available, trash disposal, recycling, and restrooms facilities should be available for public use. Trash disposal, recycling, and restrooms at parks, reservations and open space managed by municipalities or other organizations for public use is available to the discretion of the city or town it is in and/or the managing organization.

Trash Disposal and Recycling General Guidelines:

- Visitors to parks, reservations, and open spaces should expect limited or no trash disposal and recycling receptacles.
- When visiting properties without trash and recycling receptacles, visitors should adhere to a strict "carry in, carry out" policy and take waste with them.
- Entities should, where feasible, provide no-touch, lidless trashcans.

Public Restrooms General Guidelines:

- Users should abide by social distancing standards for bathroom lines and follow any established visual guidelines for maintaining 6 feet of distance in all restroom facilities.
- In advance of the initial opening of public restrooms, the managing entity should adhere to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines pertaining to the cleaning and disinfection standards of operating procedures for interior spaces and that social distancing can be maintained.
- The managing entity should have the facilities cleaned at least once daily in accordance with *EEA COVID-19 Outdoor Recreation Facility Restroom Cleaning Best Practices*.
- Restroom facilities should contain hand washing and/or sanitizer stations, and the public should use these stations following the use of the facilities.

Non-Commercial Dog Walking and Dog Parks

Non-commercial dog-walking and dog parks are allowable activities during Phase III, Step 2 to the extent allowed by the managing entity.

Non-Commercial Dog Walking Guidelines:

- All dog walkers should practice social distancing, and users should provide appropriate space for others and/or their dogs to pass when necessary.

- ❖ Dog walkers should not share toys, treats, or other materials with dogs that are not within the same household.
- ❖ Dog walkers should supply their own bags associated with dog waste and dispose of it either in a designated receptacle onsite or at another appropriate location.

Dog Park Guidelines:

- ❖ All human users of dog parks should practice social distancing of at least six or more feet.
- ❖ Dog park amenities, including shared water dishes, toys, and other materials, should not be used by dogs or handled by visitors.
- ❖ Visitors of dog parks should supply their own bags associated with dog waste and take dog waste with them if designated trash receptacles are not available for normal use.
- ❖ Property managers, where feasible, if trash is available, should provide no-touch, lidless trashcans.

Community Gardens

Community gardens, and associated activities, are permissible during Phase III, Step 2 to the extent allowed by the managing entity.

Community Garden Guidelines:

- ❖ Users of community gardens should follow social distancing guidelines and sanitize any shared equipment between uses.
- ❖ Community garden users should only visit and utilize plots with members of the same household if social distancing cannot be maintained.
- ❖ If crowding becomes an issue, community garden committees and property managers should create a schedule to avoid crowding of individual plot users and maintenance of social distancing protocols.

Outdoor Education Programs

Organized educational programs, activities, and outdoor public art installations may occur in outdoor spaces during Phase III, Step 2 only if the program does not require individual participants make physical contact in order to engage in the activity, subject to the following guidelines. Fitness classes may occur in outdoor spaces in accordance with the guidance for *Fitness Centers and Health Clubs*. Businesses that offer guided tours or walking tours must comply with the *Museum and Cultural and Historical Facilities and Guided Tours Standards*.

Outdoor Education Program Guidelines:

- To allow for adequate social distancing for the activity, as well as ingress and egress, the layout of the class should be managed to accommodate a minimum of 12 feet distance between each individual activity station.
- Instructors and participants must always comply with all social distancing requirements, COVID-19 Order 55: *Revised Order Requiring Face Coverings in Public Places*, and remain at least 6 feet apart.
- Programs should attempt to limit the use of shared equipment. Any shared equipment should be sanitized between uses.
- Activities must be limited to gatherings of no more than 12, including instructor or leader. Larger areas may be used by more than one group at one time, provided that adequate social distance and group separation can be maintained. To ensure group separation, groups must be spaced at least 14 feet apart at all times.
- Organizers must use a pre-registration process to ensure group size.
- Instructors must be familiar with all protocols and procedures to maintain a safe activity, e.g., monitoring physical distancing, not allowing participants without facial coverings, disinfecting tables before and after use in accordance with CDC guidelines.
- Temporary signage will be posted to inform participants of public health guidelines and standards of behavior during program.
- If using outdoor displays or tables, add protective barriers, when possible and/or disinfect before and after use.