

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2020

**SOMERSET COUNTY PARK COMMISSION
TO RE-OPEN PARKS AND GOLF COURSES**

BRIDGEWATER, NJ – In accordance with Governor Phil Murphy’s Executive Order No. 133, the Somerset County Park Commission has announced the re-opening of its general use parks, trails, and golf courses in Somerset County on Saturday, May 2, 2020 at sunrise.

Restrictions included in the Governor’s Order will be imposed at all Commission facilities, and will be enforced by Park Commission staff, the Somerset County Sheriff’s Office, and local police. The Governor has made it clear that non-compliance with these restrictions and general social distancing measures will be met with an order requiring the closure of parks and golf courses. The Commission requests the cooperation of all park patrons and golfers in complying with these mandates so as to limit the spread of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and allow Commission facilities to remain open.

General use parks including Duke Island Park on Old York Road and North Branch Park on Milltown Road, both in Bridgewater; Natirar Park in Far Hills and Peapack-Gladstone; East County Park in Warren; and Skillman Park in Montgomery will be open.

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. However, restroom facilities, picnic areas, pavilions, playgrounds, exercise stations, and all buildings including, but not limited to, visitor centers and educational/interpretive centers will remain closed to the public.

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.

In compliance with the Governor’s most recent order, the following requirements will be implemented at its general use parks and trail systems:

- Employees and visitors must wear cloth face coverings 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 50% of the maximum capacity at one time, and visitors shall be prohibited from parking in undesignated areas, including



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in roadways. At 50% of parking capacity, parking areas will be closed. We thank patrons for their patience and compliance;

- Picnicking, of any nature, shall be prohibited. This prohibition includes a ban on picnic blankets, chairs, coolers, and other such personal property;
- Visitors must practice social distancing and stay six feet apart whenever practicable, excluding immediate family members, caretakers, household members, or romantic partners;
- Organized or contact activities or sports shall not be allowed; and
- Gatherings of individuals in park or on trails are prohibited.

Golf courses including Neshanic Valley in Neshanic Station, Green Knoll in Bridgewater, Quail Brook and Spooky Brook in Somerset, and Warrenbrook in Warren Township will be open starting on Saturday, May 2, 2020 at 7:00 a.m.

Like park facilities, Commission golf courses will have a number of requirements and restrictions. The particulars of those requirements and restrictions are consistent with the requirements set forth in Governor Murphy's Executive Order 133. The Park Commission has adopted a Policy on COVID-19 Mitigation Practices and Procedures which can be found on the Park Commission website at www.somersetcountyparks.org. Individuals desiring to golf at Park Commission courses should review that policy, understand its content, and be prepared to comply with all requirements and restrictions.

The welfare of the Park Commission's employees, park patrons, and golfers is of paramount importance to the Commission. If Commission staff in its parks and trails or at its golf courses witness non-compliance with the Governor's Executive Orders or 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.

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

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