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Metroparks: Do your part. Practice social distancing to keep parks open.

All parks remain open; additional precautions in place; intermittent closures possible to control potential overcrowding

(Brighton, Mich.) – The Huron-Clinton Metroparks reaffirms that all 13 Metroparks will remain open to provide local opportunities to get outdoors, enjoy nature and exercise, per Gov. Gretchen Whitmer’s [“Stay Home, Stay Safe” Executive Order extension](#), while also implementing and enforcing additional social distancing measures to help protect the health and welfare of park visitors.

[Executive Order 2020-42](#) extended Michigan’s travel, work and gathering bans through April 30. At the same time, it recognized the importance of parks and recreation areas as essential and specifically allows Michiganders to travel locally to engage in outdoor physical activity.

“We know residents need these wide-open spaces and outlets now more than ever. Countless studies show the value of just being in the outdoors to boost mind, body and spirit, especially in times of immense stress and change,” said Huron-Clinton Metroparks Director Amy McMillan. “Metroparks is committed to being here for our residents and communities, providing opportunities for respite from pandemic news, a change of scenery, fresh air, and healthy activities. That’s why we’re taking even further comprehensive steps and precautions to ensure and enforce social distancing to protect the health and safety of all – that remains our paramount priority.”

McMillan said the Metroparks team is actively monitoring attendance in the parks and understands that as outdoor temperatures increase, the possibility for overcrowding in the parks also increases. That is why the Metroparks are looking at a new dynamic strategy to monitor capacity thresholds within the parks and enforce intermittent closures to certain areas – or entire parks – when attendance is too high or visitors are not following critical social distancing guidelines. The Metroparks Police and park staff will be performing parking lot counts three times a day to ensure that total parking spaces within each park do not exceed 60% of their full capacity. If that capacity is breached throughout the park, it will result in a temporary closure and entrance gates will be closed. Depending on the time of the day that capacity is reached, the park may reopen throughout the day as visitors leave. Those visitors that are already in the park when a closure starts, are welcome to enjoy the rest of their visit.

“Our plan will almost certainly adjust with time,” said McMillan. “We are paying attention and managing in real time the most current concerns and our plan will shift as concerns change”.

The Metroparks will be performing a practice drill of their temporary park closure procedures in select locations in the coming days to make sure staff are familiar and prepared for what needs to be done when these procedures truly need to be enforced. Those dates will be Wednesday, April 22 between 1 – 2pm at Kensington, Stony Creek and Lower Huron Metroparks and Thursday, April 23 between 1 – 2 pm at Hudson Mills, Lake St. Clair and Lake Erie Metroparks.

Ms. McMillan also points to the numerous safety protocols and specific preventive measures already implemented by the Metroparks:

- Closed all interpretative center buildings, including nature and farm centers, restrooms, food service, playgrounds, golf and disc golf courses, volleyball courts and offices. These are locations that can typically encourage close gatherings of people.
- Closed boat launches to motor boating.
- Cancelled all Metroparks public programming through June 5 to coincide with school closures.
- Offering free admission on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays during the Stay Home, Stay Safe executive orders.
- Starting summer hours so Metroparks are open longer each day, giving residents more options for their visit.
- Having Metroparks police officers patrolling regularly and reminding visitors about safe social distancing practices as needed.
- Providing Metroparks team members working toll booths during admission days with protective gloves, hand sanitizer and encouraging them to wear face masks. For vehicles, with an annual pass (which can be purchased online), there is no direct contact with the toll booth attendant and visitor. For those purchasing daily passes on the days needed, the interaction is minimal and brief.
- Implementing a requirement for all toll booth attendants and police officers to wear a face mask and encouraging all other staff to wear one as well. Staff are asked to have a face mask in their possession to use if they come within six feet of co-workers or visitors.

Metroparks will continue to post new updates on its website at [Metroparks.com](https://www.metroparks.com) and via email to subscribers. To sign up for future emails, visit [metroparks.com/email](https://www.metroparks.com/email).

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About Huron-Clinton Metroparks

One of America's premier metropolitan park systems, the Huron-Clinton Metroparks have served the people of Southeast Michigan since 1940. Managed by the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority, the Metroparks are made up of 13 properties in Livingston, Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw, and Wayne counties. Available activities include fishing, swimming, boating, hiking, nature study, biking, golf, winter sports and more. The Metroparks also provide educational resources on science, nature, history and the environment. Learn more at [Metroparks.com](https://www.metroparks.com).