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Memorandum

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

Date: June 9, 2020

Subject: Safety Standards for Parks, Open Space, and Outdoor Education Programs – Phase II

The following guidelines apply to Parks, Open Space, and Outdoor Education Programs during Phase II 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This guidance should apply until amended or rescinded. Any questions regarding this guidance can be sent to outdoor.recreation@mass.gov

General Guidelines

Face Coverings and Masks: Consistent with [*COVID-19 Order 31: Order Requiring Face Coverings in Public Places Where Social Distancing is Not Possible*](#), which requires persons to wear face coverings while in public places to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and the Safer at Home Advisory issued by the Department of Public Health issued on May 18, 2020, all persons over the age of two must wear a face covering when they attend outdoor gatherings if the circumstances of the gathering could limit their ability to maintain at least six feet of distance from others, unless they are prevented from wearing a face covering by a medical or disabling condition. All persons are likewise advised to avoid close personal contact to prevent spreading the virus.

Group Size: No groups larger than 10 are allowed to gather: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/march-31-2020-assemblage-guidance/download>

Parks and Open Space

Walking, hiking, biking, running, land stewardship events (clean-up events, community service projects, volunteer programming), and other activities (yoga, tai chi, etc.) are allowable activities during Phase II 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.
- ❖ 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 group size guidelines. There may be more than one group of 10 at one time, provided that adequate social distance and group separation 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 not share equipment.
- ❖ No permits should be issued for group gatherings.

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 II 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 Outdoor Adult Sports, Supervised Adult Youth Sports Leagues, Summer Sports Camps*](#) guidance.

Athletic Fields, Courts, and Other Playing Surfaces Guidelines:

- ❖ Users should sanitize hands before and after play and not share equipment.
- ❖ Users waiting to utilize a section or area of the field should wait outside the field of play until previous users have vacated to ensure proper social distancing.
- ❖ Scrimmages, organized games and tournaments are not allowed for contact sports in Phase II, and activities must be limited to no-contact drills and training exercises. Contact sports are those where ordinary play puts players into contact or close proximity to one another, and include, without limitation, basketball, football, baseball, soccer, field hockey, and lacrosse.
- ❖ Games are permitted during Phase II only for no-contact sports where ordinary play allows for social distancing (e.g., tennis and other racquet sports), but inter-team games or tournaments are not allowed.
- ❖ Individuals should not congregate outside the field of play to avoid overcrowding

Picnic Areas and Grills

During Phase II, picnic and grill areas can open with social distancing measures.

Trash Disposal, Recycling, and Public Restrooms

Where available, trash disposal, recycling, and restrooms facilities should be available for public use during Phase II. 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 II 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 II to the extent allowed by the managing entity.

Community Garden Guidelines:

- ❖ Users of community gardens should follow social distancing guidelines and should avoid utilizing communal tools, hoses, and other equipment, and avoid sharing personal equipment.
- ❖ 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, workout classes, and outdoor public art installations may occur in outdoor spaces during Phase II only if the program does not require individual participants to share equipment or make physical contact in order to engage in the activity, subject to the following guidelines.

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.
- ❖ Facial coverings are required, and instructors and participants must always comply with all social distancing requirements and remain 6 feet apart. Programs must be conducted without shared equipment, tools or materials.
- ❖ Activities must be limited to gatherings of no more than 10, including instructor or leader. Larger areas may be used by more than one group of 10 at one time, provided that adequate social distance and group separation can be maintained. To ensure group separation, groups must be spaced at least 20 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.