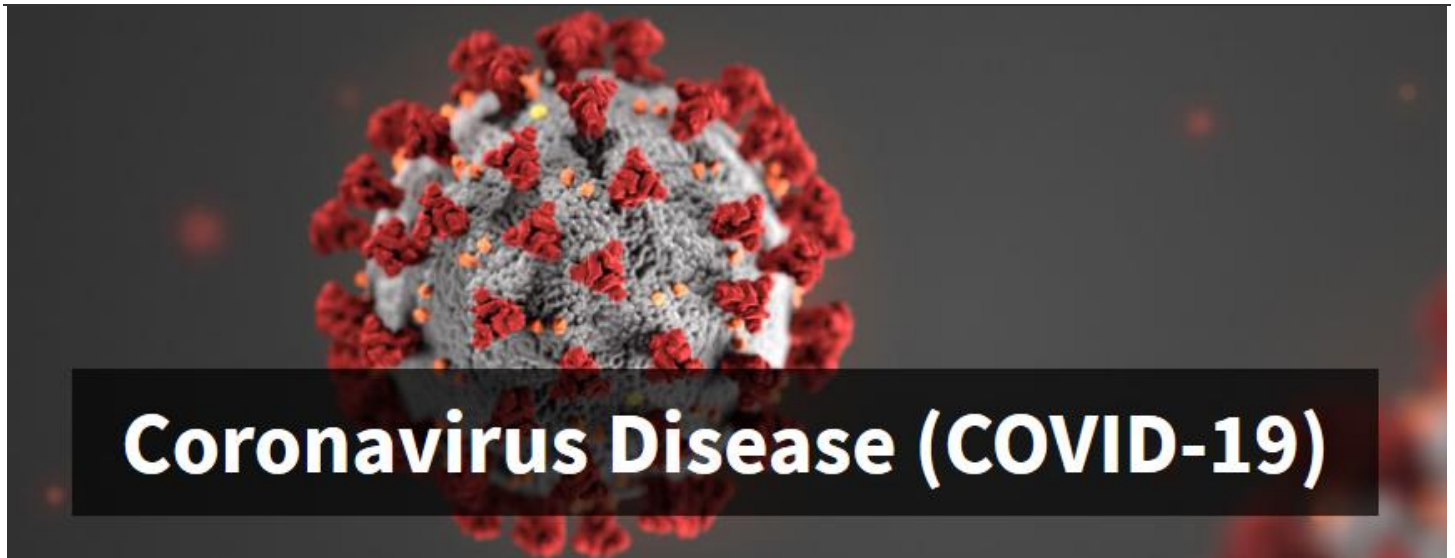


# Forest Service Coronavirus (Covid-19) Updates



The Forest Service is taking the risks presented by COVID-19 seriously and is following USDA and CDC public health guidance as we continue to offer services to the public. Visitors to our National Forests and Grasslands are urged to take the precautions recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). There are three official, government-wide sources of up-to-date information about the coronavirus: [Coronavirus.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus), [CDC.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus), and [USA.gov/coronavirus](https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus).

Please read the Frequently Asked Questions below for answers to common questions. Visitors are encouraged to use the “Find your Forest and Grassland” feature on the left side of this page for quick and easy access to local forest and grassland office hours and information.

## **What can the public do to practice social distancing while recreating on National Forest System lands?**

Visitors to our National Forests are urged to take the precautions recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). For tips from the CDC on preventing illnesses like the coronavirus, go to: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention.html>.

## **Can the public still visit visitor centers and other large gathering facilities?**

In coordination with state and local health and safety guidelines, National Forests remain open however recreation services at our facilities may be changed, suspended or offered through alternate approaches as we manage for the health and safety of our work force and the public. Agency direction tasks local managers to perform risk assessments of our facilities and limit congregations of people and person to person interactions. Our decisions will align with local city, county and state actions to provide for human health and safety (i.e. quarantine, curfew, and other social restrictions).

## **Where can I purchase maps?**

Hardcopy maps are available for purchase at <https://store.usgs.gov/maps>

## **Will recreation sites and facilities stay open?**

In coordination with state and local health and safety guidelines, National Forests remain open however recreation services at our facilities may be changed, suspended or offered through alternate approaches as we manage for the health and safety of our work force and the public. Agency direction tasks local managers to perform risk assessments of our facilities and limit congregations of people and person to person interactions. Our decisions will align with local city, county and state actions to provide for human health and safety (ie. quarantine, curfew, and other social restrictions).

### **Can the public still make reservations through [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov)?**

The Forest Service continues to monitor the COVID-19 situation and evaluate potential impacts and adjustments to reservations and our reservation policies through Recreation.gov. Reservation holders will be notified via email and/or cell phone text messages if there are any changes affecting their reservation. In the event of delayed openings of some, part or all of the campgrounds and cabins to ensure safe social distancing, visitors will receive a full refund for their reservation. Please remember to review current recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and focus on recreating safely while protecting yourself, Forest Service employees and our volunteers.

### **Will Forest Service work continue?**

Our mission critical work, such as suppressing wildfires, law enforcement and other public service responsibilities, will continue within appropriate risk management strategies, current guidance of the Centers for Disease Control, and local health and safety guidelines. At this time, the Forest Service continues to remain operational, and we are committed to the continuity of our mission.

In areas of community spread where telework has been maximized, we are working to exercise our technology capabilities where possible to ensure connection and service to the public. Many activities, approvals, and field work will be accomplished remotely or in a manner that limits exposure.

### **Are you closing offices?**

At this time, the Forest Service continues to remain open and operational, and we are committed to the continuity of our mission and our primary delivery of public service will occur through virtual means (ie. telephone and online service). In areas of community spread where telework has been maximized, we are working to exercise our technology capabilities where possible to ensure connection and service to the public. We are monitoring the situation closely, and we will make any necessary changes should the need arise.

Visitors are encouraged to contact their local forest or ranger district for the latest office hours and availability.

### **Are Forest Service meetings and travel canceled?**

We have postponed or reschedule in person meetings as a result of evolving risks associated with COVID-19. At this time, the health and well-being of our employees and the people we serve are our top priority. We are working to exercise our technology capabilities where possible to ensure essential meetings can occur virtually. As always, we continue to monitor the situation closely and reschedule meetings as appropriate.

### **Are you under a travel pause?**

Our work continues and offices remain open and operational except where we are adjusting operations to reduce exposure of person to person contact and large gatherings to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus. At the same time, the health and well-being of our employees and the people we serve are our top priority. We are carefully considering our employee travel and public event participation on a case-by-case basis with health and safety at the forefront of our decisions. As always, we will follow the lead of local and state health organizations and make any necessary changes should the need arise.

### **What will happen to current special-use permits?**

Special Use Permits will remain valid and in effect. Monitoring work associated with permit administration may experience delays. Valid permits issued for uses that focus on customer service, such as ski resorts, organizational

camps, club activities, etc. will remain in effect and operations will be under the discretion of the organization or individual holding the permit.

#### **Will land exchange projects continue?**

Land exchange projects will continue and may experience delays associated as the agency transitions to virtual delivery of mission work.

#### **Will active mining projects continue to operate?**

Plans of operations for active mining projects will continue. Administration of monitoring activities or processing minerals or mining requests may experience delays as employees try to do business in new ways.

#### **Will timber and vegetation management projects continue?**

As appropriate within current department direction, field work will continue to focus on managing vegetation, restoring ecosystems, reducing hazards and maintaining forest health. Meetings will be limited to minimum levels necessary to complete tasks. Work will continue either in office or remote.

#### **What about non-essential operations related to research and data collection?**

For non-essential operations and functions, field work (i.e. timber surveys, permit inspections, prescribed fire, scientific surveys and forest health monitoring) related to critical research and forest health may be impacted temporarily or permanently with loss in annual data collection. The severity of impact, the loss of data collection will depend upon the critical nature of the program and connections with customers.

#### **Will administration of grazing permits continue?**

Administration of current grazing (yearlong and winter grazing allotments for example) will continue. Allotment inspections may be delayed but will continue. Planning and other annual rotation adjustment meetings can continue to occur remotely or in accordance with CDC/OPM guidance.

#### **How will the Forest Service respond to wildfires?**

Our mission critical work, such as suppressing wildfires and other public service responsibilities, will continue within appropriate risk management strategies, current guidance of the Centers for Disease Control, and local health and safety guidelines.

#### **What will happen if a COVID-19 outbreak occurs among firefighters?**

The USDA Forest Service and Department of the Interior are updating plans and responses for various disease outbreak scenarios in the United States, including the "Pandemic Response and Preparedness Plan for the Federal Wildland Fire Agencies," and the "Infectious Diseases Guidelines for Wildland Fire Incident Management Teams." These plans institute appropriate mitigation activities during wildland fire response actions to ensure national wildland fire response capability.

#### **Are you considering how the smoke from your fires will contribute to weakened respiratory health at a time in which the coronavirus is a serious risk by itself?**

Potential smoke impacts to the public are considered in all prescribed fire and wildfire management. As always, we will work in coordination with local and state health organizations and make any necessary changes should the need arise.

#### **Have all USDA Forest Service regions paused their prescribed burning programs in response to COVID-19 risks?**

Yes, all new ignitions for prescribed fire have been postponed until further notice.

Potential smoke impacts to the public are considered in all prescribed fire and wildfire management. As always, we will work in coordination with local and state health organizations and make any necessary changes should the need arise.