

Best Practices for Parks and Beaches During COVID-19

California Department of Parks and Recreation

Best Practices

The California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) utilizes a regionally-driven approach in working with coastal cities and counties throughout the state park system to align park operations consistent with the Governor's Stay-at-Home Order in a manner that supports physical distancing across the system. State Parks has identified a set of best practices based on its experience operating state beaches under soft closures and physical distancing standards. These best practices are dynamic and work best when local and state operations are in sync with enforcement and messaging strategies. To maintain a successful soft closure, multiple efforts need to be employed.

Best practices for safe beach access include, but may not be limited to, the following:

Messaging

- Timely and proactive messaging and outreach to the public on beach status including closures of parking lots, reduced hours of operation, allowable activities, etc.
- Active messaging campaigns on physical distancing, no gatherings, active recreation, and other directives and recommendations from public health orders.
- Messaging through multiple including but not limited to press releases, social media campaigns, digital message boards on highways (CMS signage), and signage at park unit access points.

Temporary Parking Restrictions to Ensure Minimal Passive Recreation Beach Usage

- Temporary closure of all beach parking lots.
- Temporary on-street parking prohibitions in areas surrounding beach parks – including residential neighborhoods adjacent to beaches.
- Residential parking permit programs in residential areas surrounding beach parks.
- Active parking enforcement efforts.

Service Reductions

- Maintain closure of all public facing facilities (restrooms, rinse stations, drinking fountains).
- Close piers, trails or access which do not allow for physical distancing.
- Removal of fire rings, b, picnic tables and other items that encourage gathering.
- Prohibition on use of all athletic courts, fields, playgrounds, etc.

- Prohibition on coolers, umbrellas, chairs, portable radios, and other large picnic type items to encourage active recreation and discourage gathering and loitering.
- Reduction of public access hours during peak times.

Staffing Resources

- Adequate on-the-ground staff resources walking and talking to members of the public regarding physical distancing and active recreation requirements.
- Staffing levels that allow for adequate patrol staff to provide educational and enforcement contacts if needed to enforce physical distancing, no gatherings, and any other directives outlined in the public health order.

Passive Recreation Restrictions

- Approve additional regulations that prohibit laying, standing, sitting, etc. on the beach to enforce active recreation only -- e.g. walking, running, surfing, swimming, etc.

Inability to Maintain Physical Distancing and Prohibit Gathering

- If issues with appropriate physical distancing cannot be met, then the local should have the ability to monitor and adapt operations to remedy any unsafe conditions, which may include temporary closure.