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Fishing, shellfish harvesting, and some hunting postponed

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WDFW acts to protect Washington communities from the spread of COVID-19

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) today announced that recreational fishing, shellfish harvesting and spring turkey and bear hunting seasons will be delayed in an effort to control the spread of COVID-19.

The decision follows a Friday announcement that all state land and boat ramp closures would extend to May 4, 2020 to coincide with Gov. Jay Inslee's extension of the [Stay Home, Stay Healthy](#)

(<http://web.archive.org/web/20221127155059/https://www.governor.wa.gov/news-media/inslee-announces-stay-home-stay-healthy%C2%A0order>). order.

WDFW expects most recreation activities to remain closed through the Stay Home, Stay Healthy order. The department will reevaluate specific hunting, fishing, shellfish harvesting, public land, and boat ramp closures as new information becomes available from public health officials.

“Local public health authorities have relayed to us their concerns regarding the risk that hunting, fishing and recreational travel poses to their communities right now,” said WDFW Director Kelly Susewind. “With the support of the Governor's office we’re asking people to put their recreation plans on pause while we work together to get this situation under control.”

Director Susewind noted that some individuals may be able to enjoy these activities without risky interactions, but many cannot and asks everyone to be patient for the health of all Washingtonians.

These newly extended closures include all recreational fishing and shellfish harvesting, whether on public or private lands, and the spring bear hunts that would have started on April 1 as well as the April 4 and 5 youth turkey hunt. In addition, the department will postpone the spring bear and turkey season opening days, which were previously scheduled to open on April 15. The department made the closure decisions after consulting with local health departments.

While some recreational fishing opportunities exist year-round, the lowland lakes trout season opener, previously scheduled for April 25, is one of the most celebrated angling days of the year. The recreational halibut seasons scheduled to open on April 16 in Marine Areas 6-10 and Areas 1-5 on April 30 will be delayed. Recreational harvesting of spot shrimp in Marine Areas 5-7 and 12 will also be delayed. When fishing seasons do open, anglers should be prepared to practice proper social distancing and avoid the gatherings that characteristically define opening day for so many.

A number of April razor clam digs are cancelled, though the department will assess the ability for razor clamming and other shellfish seasons to resume in May. According to Larry Phillips, WDFW Coastal Region Director, “We had an excellent season planned, with a great number of days available for razor clam digging. If we are not able to reopen, clam diggers can still look forward to larger clams next year.”

If the department is able to open spring bear and turkey seasons on May 4, spring bear hunters would still have until May 31 or June 15, depending on the location, to use their permits before the intended season closure dates for those hunts. Likewise, spring turkey hunters would have 28 days of hunting during the spring season, plus, most likely, a robust fall season.

Hunting application deadlines for the rest of the year have not changed, yet the deadline for sealing bobcat and river otter pelts that were harvested during the 2019-2020 season has been extended to July 20.

Refunds for licenses and permits, if initiated before opening day, are available. Hunters can also get their points reinstated for spring bear season if requested prior to the start of the season.

The department does not regulate shed antler hunting, yet wants to remind the public that this activity is not allowed on state lands while the closures are in place.

For the latest updates on WDFW's coronavirus response updates, visit wdfw.wa.gov/about/covid-19-updates
([/web/20221127155059/https://wdfw.wa.gov/C:/Users/monsj477/Downloads/wdfw.wa.gov/about/covid-19-updates](https://web.archive.org/web/20221127155059/https://wdfw.wa.gov/C:/Users/monsj477/Downloads/wdfw.wa.gov/about/covid-19-updates)).

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is the state agency tasked with preserving, protecting, and perpetuating fish, wildlife, and ecosystems, while providing sustainable fishing, hunting, and other recreation opportunities.

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