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NEWS RELEASE

Park Modifies Operations to Implement Latest Health Guidance

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News Release Date: March 18, 2020

Great Smoky Mountains National Park continues to take steps to implement the latest guidance from the White House, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), and local and state authorities to promote social distancing. As of Thursday, March 19, seasonally open campgrounds at Smokemont, Cades Cove, Elkmont, and Cosby will no longer accept fees on-site. All campers must reserve and pay for sites online at [recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov) to minimize the exposure risk for park employees and visitors.

In addition, the park is suspending reservations for gatherings at the following park facilities through April 30: Appalachian Clubhouse, Spence Cabin, Cades Cove Primitive Baptist Church, Cades Cove Missionary Baptist Church, Cades Cove Methodist Church, and Smokemont Baptist Church. All requests for reservation cancellations for campgrounds, picnic pavilions, churches, and Special Park Use permits will be honored with a full refund without cancellation penalties.

At this time, seasonally open park campgrounds, picnic areas, roads, trails, and restroom facilities located adjacent to Visitor Centers remain open and accessible to the public. Effective immediately, backcountry campers and A.T. thru-hikers with reservations at one of the park's 15 backcountry shelters are authorized to use a tent outside the shelter to provide for social distancing.

The health and safety of our visitors, employees, volunteers, and partners at Great Smoky Mountains National Park is our number one priority. The National Park Service (NPS) is working with the federal, state, and local authorities to closely monitor the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) situation. We will notify the public when we resume full operations and provide updates on our website and social media channels.

The NPS urges visitors to do their part when visiting a park and to follow CDC guidance to prevent the spread of infectious diseases by maintaining a safe distance between yourself and other groups; washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds; avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth; covering your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze; and most importantly, staying home if you feel sick.

For high-risk populations, such as the elderly and people with underlying conditions, we ask that they take extra caution and follow CDC guidance for those at higher risk of serious illness.

Updates about NPS operations will be posted on www.nps.gov/coronavirus. For more information about current conditions in the park, please visit the park website at www.nps.gov/grsm/planyourvisit/conditions.htm.

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CONTACT INFO

Mailing Address:

107 Park Headquarters Road
Gatlinburg, TN 37738

Phone:

(865)436-1200