



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **All Marin Parks to be Closed Amid COVID-19 Spread Public Health issues order to stem influx of visitors**

**San Rafael, CA** – The Public Health Division of [Marin County Department of Health and Human Services](http://www.marincounty.org/department-of-health-and-human-services) (HHS) issued an order March 22 for the immediate closure of all Marin parks to stem the tide of visitors during the [COVID-19 emergency](http://www.marincounty.org/covid-19-emergency).

The closure will affect agencies and jurisdictions who operate parks and open space in Marin County. Visitors may continue to use paved pathways maintained by the County of Marin, such as the popular Mill Valley-Sausalito Multiuse Pathway along Richardson Bay and the Corte Madera Pathway along Corte Madera Creek, as long as people follow guidelines on social distancing.

The order comes one day after Bay Area residents [flocked to Marin](http://www.marincounty.org/flocked-to-marin) locations for recreation, putting vulnerable residents at risk because of unsafe social distancing and traffic that clogged the roads in beach communities. Sgt. Brenton Schneider of the [Marin County Sheriff's Office](http://www.marincounty.org/sheriff-office) said grocery store workers and restaurant personnel were inundated with visitors who were not respecting public health guidelines on keeping six feet away from other people.

"They are experiencing typical summer crowds or even bigger," Schneider said. "This is creating unsafe conditions for employees working at businesses that are staying open because they are deemed essential. Those workers are being overwhelmed and they are fearful about all the close contact that they're witnessing."

Marin's shelter-in-place order [went into effect March 16](http://www.marincounty.org/went-into-effect-march-16) along with six other Bay Area jurisdictions, and Governor Gavin Newsom followed with a statewide stay-at-home directive on March 18.

Dr. Lisa Santora, the County's Deputy Public Health Officer, also appealed to Bay Area media for their help in reinforcing the message.

"We've seen written stories and on-air reports about all the possibilities for people go enjoy nature and get out of the house, and that is contributing to the public health problem," she said. "Congregating in parks and the lack of social distancing is of great concern. We are appealing to our friends in the media to encourage people to honor the shelter-in-place order as much as possible during this critical and unprecedented emergency. It would be best if residents and visitors enjoy the weather and natural beauty in their own yards and neighborhoods."

The closure affects more than 18,000 acres managed by [Marin County Parks](http://www.marincounty.org/marin-county-parks), including dozens of park facilities and open space preserves. Parks Director Max Kortzen said online messages would be updated to include the public health order.

“While we are glad that people love visiting our parks and preserves, we are following the guidance of our Public Health doctors and closing all of our facilities to protect the health of our community,” Korten said. “In the short term, we will need to sacrifice to protect the most vulnerable members of our community in order to get through this challenging time and enjoy the outdoors once again together in the future.”

[Marin County Public Health](#) reminds Marin residents and visitors to:

- **Stay local.** Many local neighborhoods are walkable or have trails nearby that are easily accessed by foot or bicycle. Avoid driving whenever possible, and stay close to home when enjoying fresh air and outdoor activity.
- **Continue to practice social distancing.** It’s tempting to meet with friends for a day at the beach, but to prevent the spread of COVID-19 everyone needs to be at least 6 feet away from others when outside the household.

Marin’s shelter-in-place order limits activity, travel and business functions to only the most essential needs. The guidance comes after substantial input from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and best practices from other health officials around the world.

Answers to frequently asked questions can be found on [Public Health’s webpage](#).