

# Government agencies need to reopen all public recreation and fishing areas

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As the Coronavirus winds down, it's time for city, county, state, and federal government agencies to reopen all of the public recreation areas that were shut down under the guise of stopping the spread of COVID-19.

Most should have never been closed in the first place.

Closures of many places where the public could go to safely social distance themselves from others during this crisis was a mistake from the beginning. More than that, it is an affront to anyone with an IQ higher than a hubcap.

By closing public recreation areas, especially ones where it is easy to disperse away from other people, was a mistake from the beginning, and it is even more important to reopen them now as the weather improves and people are going stir-crazy.

Lake Perris and Lake Silverwood are good example of state parks that should never have been closed. Both facilities have massive parking areas that are rarely fill (even Fourth of July). They both have hiking and biking trails, picnic grounds and open areas. The state should have encouraged people to go to these places but assure they follow the precautions. Instead, they were closed, ostensibly "because people are too stupid to social distance."

Yet, we are expected and trusted to wear masks and social distance at COSTCO or Stater Bros.

I get the idea that we don't want people gather in large groups and potentially spread this disease, but in open air situations, the closures are way overboard. Since we now know the virus doesn't do well in sunlight/UV light, this kind of outdoor social distancing could – should – be encouraged.

But state and county parks are closed. San Bernardino County Parks were among the first to close, and it's most popular parks have lots of room where people can spread out. Rarely did you ever see people closer than six feet apart before the outbreak and its even less likely now. But it is easier to lock the gates.

Safety precautions for staff taking entrance fees could easily and cheaply be implemented to protect everyone involved. Ditto for restroom facilities. This is just government giving in to hysteria and closing the parks.

It's time for all county, state, and national parks to reopen.

It's time for the U.S. Forest Service to reopen all of its campgrounds. I can't think of a single campground in any of the forests that have camping sites close together.

It's time for the Department of Fish and Wildlife to start publishing where it planting trout again – even if they publish the information a week after the plant to help deter crowds.

The DFW is likely to postpone the trout season opener in the Eastern Sierra Nevada after the Commission voted to give the state the emergency authority to do this. But is that even necessary?

We've heard all the impassioned pleas from the business

community and local groups in Inyo and Mono counties: They don't want to have a mass of people flock to the region and spread the virus in their small communities with their limited health care facilities. I get that. But if the stores, motels, and restaurants are not open on April 25 (the historic trout opener date), will there really be many people in their communities except to buy gas? Can't we just tell people to come self-contained with enough supplies for the duration of your trip and social-distance?

No, that will not happen. Government agencies don't trust anyone to be intelligent enough to protect themselves and those around them. So we lock the system down. It is management for the lowest common denominator (the person who is already breaking the recommendations and suggestions). And we're not even going to discuss the legality and Constitutionality of these stay-at-home orders and public resource closures.

Sadly, the closures and restrictions appear to be spreading far faster than the virus. In the past couple of weeks, the BLM has closed a huge off-highway riding area to all travel along Highway 14. Is this because ATV and motorcycle riders crowd together? The National Park Service closed Joshua Tree National Park, even to people who merely want to drive through the park. Some states have delayed the non-resident hunting application process, apparently assuming this is still going to be a crisis come fall hunting seasons. Washington state closed the entire state to fishing nearly a month ago. It is simply mind-boggling, and defies common sense and science.

Some counties that have used sane measures (like Kern) are suddenly getting influxes of people from outside their areas because their parks and fishing waters are still open. Lake Isabella is getting mobbed partially because it is still open, and the good crappie bite doesn't hurt. Castaic is busy on weekends because it's also still open and has pretty good bass and striper action. (And both lakes are open for boat launching).

You can bet there are government officials with a say in management of those waters who are wringing their hands right. How much longer will they be open? How much longer will the insanity continue?

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OUTDOOR NEWS SERVICE

Originally Published:

April 19, 2020

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