



COVID-19 and South Dakota Outdoors: FAQs

Updated: 4/1/2020

Public Access

1. Are state parks open for recreation?

Yes, while state park offices are closed or have limited staff, the parks themselves are open. Enjoy hiking the trails, bird watching, disc golf, fishing or the other activities your favorite park has to offer!

Please note that most restroom facilities remain closed for the winter.

2. I don't have my park entrance license yet. Will I still be able to enter the parks?

Yes, while our offices are closed, we are offering a grace period if you do not have your park entrance license yet. Enjoy your time at the park, then when offices reopen stop in and get your park pass for the year.

Park entrance licenses can also be purchased online or via self-serve envelopes at the park's entrance. Your receipt will serve as your license until we can mail it to you.

3. Are boat launches open to the public?

Yes, public boat launches remain open to the public, even if state offices are closed. Depending on ice, water levels and other weather conditions, it may take additional time to place more docks in the water as additional open water opportunities become available. We appreciate your patience.

4. What is the status of state public lands? Are they open to the public?

Game Production Areas (GPAs) are lands owned by the department. All GPAs are currently open to public recreation.

Walk-In Areas (WIAs) are private lands leased by the department for hunting only. All WIAs are currently open to hunting only. Landowner permission is required for trapping, fishing, dog training or other activities.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) lands are private lands enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and leased by the department for hunting and fishing. All CREP areas are currently open to hunting



and fishing. Like WIAs, landowner permission is required for trapping, dog training or other activities.

You can learn more about the various types of public lands in South Dakota at <https://gfp.sd.gov/hunting-areas/>.

When using these public lands, please follow the social distancing and other guidelines from the CDC and Governor Noem. We ask that you show respect to the landowners, resource and other outdoor enthusiasts by ensuring you pack out everything you pack in and avoid damaging wet roads.

5. What is the status of federal public lands? Are they open to the public?

Please be aware the Black Hills National Forest, Fall River Ranger District on the Buffalo Gap National Grassland and the Sioux Ranger District in Harding County temporarily closed certain recreational sites until April 30. More information can be found at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/blackhills>.

Fishing/Hunting Seasons

6. Are you closing fishing/hunting seasons to nonresidents?

No, any individual with a valid fishing or hunting license is eligible to participate in any open fishing or hunting season.

Please make mindful decisions about travel according to CDC guidelines. For more information, visit www.covid.sd.gov.

7. Will fishing tournaments still be held?

Previously scheduled fishing tournaments will be canceled or rescheduled by the event organizer. Please reach out to the event organizer if there are questions or concerns. GFP guidance to event organizers is to take personal responsibility and use common sense to navigate the next steps. Social distancing is a top priority at this time. The health and safety of those around us, as well as our own, must remain the top priority.

8. Will I still be able to hunt turkeys this season?

Yes, spring turkey season will open as planned.



9. I am not able to travel to use my hunting tags because of COVID-19. Can I get a refund?

You can get a refund for your tags if you mail them back to the return address on the envelope, put "Attn: Shon" on it and enclose a note asking for a refund due to the COVID-19 virus. Return envelopes must be post-marked prior to the start of the season.

10. Will I still be able to contact a Conservation Officer? Where can I find their contact information?

Yes, you are still able to contact Conservation Officers. To find your nearest Conservation Officer and their contact information, visit <https://gfp.sd.gov/contactus/> and scroll down to the "Conservation Officers" bar.

11. Will the Nest Predator Bounty Program still take place?

Yes, the Nest Predator Bounty Program will still take place and began on April 1.

12. Where can I submit my tails for the Nest Predator Bounty Program?

Due to concerns of COVID-19, GFP will not be accepting tails for the program until a later date (yet to be determined). Participants are asked to freeze all tails until they can be submitted. Please watch <https://gfp.sd.gov/bounty-program/> for that information.

13. Will fishing stockings still take place as usual?

Future fish stockings are on hold while we address the impacts of COVID-19.

State Parks

14. Will there be any general maintenance done to parks/who will be keeping them clean?

Many park facilities such as comfort stations remain closed for the winter. Vault toilets and some restrooms are available. Park staff are applying extra cleaning efforts and occasional deep cleaning to facilities that are currently in service where possible including vault toilets. We will continue to monitor the information provided to us by the Department of Health and CDC and apply best practices possible.

15. Are all park activities/programs cancelled? How long?

With the CDC's recommendations on limiting large gatherings, all park programs are cancelled. They'll resume when we receive direction from the CDC. But there



are still many ways you can learn about the outdoors! The internet is a wealth of information. In addition, many of our parks are posting activities you can do at home on their Facebook pages.

16. Can I still make camping reservations?

Camping reservations are ongoing and are not affected by state park office closures. If advised COVID-19 restrictions continue, we'll be in touch with reservation holders before their arrival to discuss appropriate steps.

17. I have a camping reservation and offices are closed, am I still able to come camp?

You're still welcome to camp in the state parks. Just keep in mind that services are limited and that most restroom facilities remain closed for the winter. Staff will be making rounds periodically and emergency numbers are being monitored. Parks are contacting reservation holders for cabins and lodges directly. If you have a paid campsite reservation, you can proceed to your campsite and set up. If you don't have a reservation when you arrive, you can make one online at CampSD.com or call 1-800-710-2267. Park entrance licenses can be purchased online or via self-serve envelopes at the park's entrance. Your receipt will serve as your license until we can mail it to you. Keep the CDC's recommendations on social distancing and group limitations in mind.

18. Will I be able to camp this summer? Will campgrounds close?

We'll be tracking the CDC's recommendations carefully as things progress. If restrictions will impact future stays, we'll be in touch with reservation holders before their arrival to discuss appropriate steps. If you have a future reservation and want to cancel now, call 1-800-710-2267 and our operators will assist you.

19. If I made a reservation for camping can I get a full refund due the circumstances?

Yes, you are eligible for a full refund due to the circumstances. If you wish to cancel your reservation call 1-800-710-2267 and our operators will assist you.

Education

20. Are HuntSAFE classes still available? What about field days?

HuntSAFE classes can be completed online. In-person classes are currently on hold and field days will not be required for those completing the on-line class in April. More information can be found at <https://gfp.sd.gov/hunter-education/>.



21. Are the Outdoor Campuses open?

The offices and buildings for Outdoor Campuses are currently closed, but the trails remain open. Visit your local Outdoor Campus' Facebook page for more information and for educational materials you can do at home.

[Outdoor Campus-East Facebook](#) and [Outdoor Campus-West Facebook](#)

Other

22. Is GFP still processing food plot payments?

Yes, payments are still being processed but they are taking longer than normal. We appreciate your patience.

23. Can I still enroll my land into a habitat program at this time?

Yes, you can still enroll your land into a habitat program. Please contact your nearest habitat advisor for more information. Please note the enrollment process may take longer than normal. We appreciate your patience.

24. What is the best method of contacting GFP at this time?

You can always reach out to us using any of the methods listed at <https://gfp.sd.gov/contactus/>. We apologize our response may be delayed and we appreciate your patience!

25. What are the recommendations from the Governor and the CDC?

- Practice social distancing and personal responsibility.
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly.
- Stay home and contact your doctor if you are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms.

26. Where can I learn more about COVID-19?

For more information on COVID-19 in South Dakota, visit www.covid.sd.gov.

Please make mindful decisions as you care for yourself and your loved ones but know that our South Dakota outdoor resources are available and waiting for you.