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Routt County Commissioners Amend Lodging Public Health Order to Allow Camping at State Campgrounds

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, CO – May 15, 2020 — On May 11, Governor Polis announced that the 4,000 campgrounds at state parks across the state would be allowed to open if allowed by their host counties. At the request of the Colorado Department of Parks and Wildlife (CPW), the Routt County Commissioners amended the short-term lodging Public Health Order to allow camping at state campgrounds. Routt County has three state campgrounds: Stagecoach, Steamboat Lake, and Yampa River State Park. According to their Safer at Home website, the state is still encouraging people to recreate close to home and to avoid traveling from the Front Range to the mountains for recreational activities.

“The opening of State Park campgrounds is a great first step. I feel comfortable with the state campgrounds moving forward because they have to follow the safety protocols developed and enforced by the state. They have developed stringent protocols for cleaning and keeping employees and visitors safe. This is probably the best incremental step we can take. I am really excited that our residents can get out and go camping,” said Commissioner Beth Melton.

Earlier this week, Kris Middledorf, the local CPW representative, as well as the directors of the three state parks, shared with the Commissioners the different mitigation and cleaning strategies they will employ to keep visitors and employees safe. All the visitor centers will still be closed.

According to CPW, there are several important points about the reopening process:

- The reopening process will be in coordination with local counties and will take into account any local restrictions that are in place. CPW staff will also maintain communication with local officials following reopening.
- Campers will need to make sure they respect local community restrictions: <http://counties.coloradogeodev.com/safer.html>.
- The reopening of camping will closely abide by all Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) social distancing guidance and recommendations.

- Campers should also follow best practices for recreational travel, including bringing your meals with you, filling up on gas prior to leaving home, bringing cleaning supplies and personal hygiene items, and remembering to wear facemasks when out in public.

Stagecoach and Yampa River State Parks are taking reservations starting May 19, and Steamboat Lake, at higher elevation, will take reservations for Memorial Day Weekend, which is their traditional opening weekend.

“I am personally ok with moving forward with opening campgrounds. I do see a big distinction of indoor and outdoor activities. Camping inherently includes social distancing. If proper cleaning takes place and community members and visitors practice prevention measures like social distancing, we have a better chance of keeping Routt County safe and healthy,” said Commissioner Tim Corrigan.

Commissioner Doug Monger added, “I appreciate the Colorado State Parks working with us collaboratively as we move forward. We like to work with our public land partners. Having a phased approach to opening up State Park campgrounds is a great first step to opening up our economy.”

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