



# NEWS

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March 27, 2020

**For Immediate Release**

## **San Mateo County Parks Closes All Parks to Slow the Spread of COVID-19**

**Redwood City, Calif.** – San Mateo County Parks will close all parks at 6 p.m. today, Friday, March 27, to slow the spread of the coronavirus that causes COVID-19. County parks will remain closed until further notice.

The decision comes following a surge in visitors last weekend and observations of park and trail use during the past several weeks. San Mateo County Parks manages 23 parks and was keeping 17 open as of this week.

“The decision to close parks is not easy, especially now when people are looking for outdoor experiences, but the safety of San Mateo County residents must always be a priority. In that spirit we had to take this action,” said San Mateo County Parks Director Nicholas Calderon. “We know that parks and trails are a valuable community resource. Almost 3 million people visit San Mateo County Parks annually.”

Data and park ranger observations informed the department’s decision. During the past 11 days, park staff observed many visitors ignoring the Shelter In Place Order by driving to parks, congregating in groups and not maintaining six-feet of social distancing.

“We have a limited amount of time for the Shelter In Place Order to truly save lives,” said San Mateo County Manager Mike Callagy. “The sheer number of people crowding our parks and driving to reach them made them unsafe for our community. I appreciate the desire for our residents to get outside and enjoy our open spaces, but we cannot have them descending on our parks in large groups now.”

Parks staff will lock entrance gates and parking lots and post “Park Closed” signs at park and trail entrances. Park staff will continue to patrol parks during the closure.

The department collects foot traffic through trail counters placed throughout the system to show use.

Data collected from mid-February to March 25 showed spikes in the days following the Shelter in Place order, with an increase of 50 percent to 300 percent.

“We make decisions about park status based on whether we can provide the public a safe experience,” Calderon said. “At this time, data and staff observations show we are unable to do so.”

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