

April 8, 2020

Dear (Governor/Mayor/Etc.):

Our hunting, fishing, recreational shooting, and other outdoor recreation organizations are writing to offer our help and ideas for maintaining safe and appropriate access to nature during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the entire country, we are concerned, careful, and committed to effective responses to the COVID-19 virus in accordance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations. We deeply appreciate your current burden of leadership and efforts to find and implement solutions medically, economically, and socially. Our organizations will help however possible and hope for good health for you and your communities.

The outdoors is where we are most able to help. At parks, wildlife management areas, lakes, and other places, we ask for your consideration in keeping managed-use facilities, boat launches, hunting and fishing areas, and viewing areas open to the general public. Barring localized situations that may justify closures, we urge a general policy of maintaining open access which will help families through this challenging time. Nature is an ideal place to keep safe distances among people while simultaneously allowing citizens educational and recreational experiences that provide health, and hope. Now, more than ever, Americans need to have the ability to access these lands for a variety of reasons, including hunting and fishing to provide food for their families.

In particular, please consider maintaining the openness of opportunities for the hunting of spring turkey and bear, and other in-season species, as well as fishing and recreational shooting opportunities that are timely right now. The spring hunting season is upon us, and if your state's wildlife management areas and other public lands remain open, this will provide an opportunity for the solitary and safe pursuit of hunting. Fishing also keeps people at a safe distance apart and can help sustain the economy if tackle shops remain open as essential businesses. Several states have temporarily waived fishing license requirements (but not limits), or withheld trout stocking announcements (which attract crowds), or opened seasons early (to reduce risk of crowding). Recreational shooters are practicing social distancing at ranges that remain open and also play a strong economic role by generating the federal excise tax revenue that drives the American System of Conservation Funding (ASCF).

In recent weeks, many of our organizations have communicated with our members, as well as federal and state policy makers, to encourage safe social distancing practices while enjoying the outdoors. As such, a social media campaign known as #ResponsibleRecreation is underway to encourage the public to act responsibly as they enjoy the outdoors. Similarly, we can support your efforts through our webpages and social media channels by distributing information on available points of access and guidance on safety.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter and diligence in facing the crisis.

Sincerely,

American Sportfishing Association
American Woodcock Society
Archery Trade Association
Bass Anglers Sportsman Society
Boone and Crockett Club
California Waterfowl
Campfire Club of America
Center for Sportfishing Policy

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Conservation Force
Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports
Dallas Safari Club
Delta Waterfowl Foundation
Ducks Unlimited
Fishing League Worldwide
Houston Safari Club
International Game Fish Association
Izaak Walton League of America
Marine Retailers Association of the Americas
Masters of Foxhounds Association
Mule Deer Foundation
National Association of Charterboat Operators
National Association of Forest Service Retirees
National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative
National Marine Manufacturers Association
National Professional Anglers Association
National Rifle Association
National Shooting Sports Foundation
National Wildlife Federation
National Wild Turkey Federation
North American Grouse Partnership
North American Falconers Association
Orion – The Hunter's Institute
Pheasants Forever, Inc.
Pope and Young Club
Professional Guides and Outfitters Association
Quail Forever
Quality Deer Management Association
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Ruffed Grouse Society
Safari Club International
Sportsmen's Alliance
Texas Wildlife Association
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Tread Lightly!
Trout Unlimited
Whitetails Unlimited
Wild Sheep Foundation
Wildlife Forever
Wildlife Management Institute
Wildlife Mississippi