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Green Mountain National Forest limits site access

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Certain campgrounds in the Green Mountain National Forest will remain closed because of the coronavirus pandemic, the USDA Forest Service has announced.

The Green Mountain National Forest is prohibiting overnight camping at certain campgrounds, the USDA Forest Service has announced.

Forest Supervisor of the Green Mountain and Finger Lakes National Forests John Sinclair said the decision to restrict access to certain areas of the park is the right thing to do at this time.

"These difficult decisions are not taken lightly. They consider the current risk to public health, the national effort to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus, and the local community desire to access public lands," Sinclair said.

"Restricting access to recreational sites or areas is a particularly difficult decision for the Forest Service, but health and safety concerns during this pandemic must be taken seriously," he added.

Vermont Gov. Phil Scott issued an addendum on Wednesday to the "Stay Home, Stay Safe" order which allowed "businesses, non-profit and government entities that support or offer outdoor recreation and outdoor fitness activities with low or no direct physical contact to begin operations on May 7."

Despite loosening the restrictions of some outdoor activities, the addendum states that campgrounds, marinas and beaches are not permitted to open at this time.

Areas that are closed throughout GMNF include Greendale Campground, Grout Pond Campground, Hapgood Pond Campground, Somerset Campground and Old Job (shelter) in

the Manchester Ranger district, and Bingo Campground, Chittenden Brook Campground, Moosalamoo Campground and Silver Lake Campground in the Rochester district, according to the Forest Service. Many Long Trail shelters and Appalachian Trail shelters are also prohibited. Privies along the Appalachian Trail and Long Trail are locked for health reasons.

"These campgrounds and privies are being closed because they are typically places where people might be gathering in larger groups and using the same surfaces. We continue to monitor recreation sites, but as personal protective equipment is scarce, we have to focus on the health of our employees and the visiting public," according to the USDA.

Certain sites at GMNF may take longer to open, even if the state further loosens its social distancing restrictions.

"While the 'Stay Home, Stay Safe' order may be lifted in time, there may still be a delay in reopening certain recreation areas of the Forest. This decision will be made on a case-by-case basis," according to the USDA.

The Forest Service advises those who are sick to not visit the forest. They are also asking visitors to remain 6 feet apart from one another and to avoid crowded areas during their visit.

For up-to-date information on the Green Mountain National Forest, visit <https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/gmfl/home>.

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