

Interim COVID-19 Operating Procedures

Date Approved: 5/14/20

Subject to change

As the COVID-19 pandemic has progressed, the FTA board, staff, and our U.S. Forest Service partners have been closely monitoring conditions in Florida, and working together to provide operating procedures that keep our communities safe. The FTA board has voted to approve the following until further notice:

General recommendations to hikers

- As always, only hike sections of the trail that are open to the public according to the relevant land managing agency.
- Only hike on the Florida Trail if it is within close proximity of your home. A rule of thumb suggested by the [American Hiking Society](#) is to stay within about 50 miles of your home.
- If significant travel is required, we recommend instead that you explore your local trails and open spaces to reduce risk of spreading the disease.
- Follow CDC social distancing guidelines while hiking.
- Avoid trailheads that appear to be crowded.

Trail Maintenance

- Will continue to be suspended until at least July 1st, 2020.
- Forest Service liability coverage for trail maintainers will continue to be suspended until trail maintenance activities are formally allowed to resume.
- If trail conditions, such as significantly damaged infrastructure, require immediate attention due to potential safety risks to hikers:
 - FTA Regional Trail Managers should be contacted immediately.
 - Jenna Taylor (Central and South Florida): jennat@floridatrail.org
 - Jeff Glenn (North Florida): jeffg@floridatrail.org
 - Adam Fryska (Panhandle): adamf@floridatrail.org
 - FTA and USFS staff will work with the relevant land manager to determine if accommodations need to be made to allow for volunteers to address the situation, or if a temporary closure or reroute is necessary.

Chapter Activities (recreational outings, outreach, meetings)

FTA chapters will have the option to resume activities (other than trail maintenance) starting May 16th, 2020. Until further notice, any FTA activities must abide by the following:

Individuals may not participate in in-person FTA activities if...

- They have experienced any of the following symptoms within the last 14 days:
 - A new fever
 - A new cough that is not because of another illness
 - A new shortness of breath that is not because of another illness
 - A new sore throat that is not because of another illness
 - Sore muscles not because of existing illness, or not from exercise or injury
 - Diagnosis of an infection
 - Exposure to someone known to be infected
- Someone they are closely associated with experiencing any of the above symptoms.
- They are currently experiencing unmanaged seasonal allergy symptoms (e.g., persistent cough, sneezing). If you have become infected but do not know it yet, persistent allergy symptoms could mask early symptoms of infection.
- They are at high risk for severe illness [according to the CDC](#)

Mandatory safety measures for chapter-led activities:

- As always, activities may only take place in areas confirmed to be open to the public.
- Do not carpool with non-household members.
- No more than 10 participants.
- Practice frequent and thorough hand washing when available. If soap and running water are not immediately available, alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 60% alcohol should be utilized.
- Disinfect hands before and after signing Assumption of Risk form. Alternatively, encourage participants to bring their own pen.
- Maintain minimum physical distancing of 6 feet.
- No sharing of consumables (food, water, etc.). No shared meals or potluck style events. Everyone should bring their own items and remove their own trash.
- Select trails that are not as popular or well known to avoid large crowds.
- If you arrive and find a crowded parking lot, consider relocating to a different trail.
- Masks must be provided by the participant.
- At minimum, masks must be worn during any time there is a significant risk that 6ft social distancing could be violated.
- Move only your own equipment. If you must help someone carry something such as a kayak or canoe, disinfect hands before and after.
- If trail access requires opening gates, the same individual should open and close gates on the way in and out and disinfect hands before and after.
- Chapters are urged to hold chapter meetings on Zoom or other virtual platforms. Any in-person meetings should follow the above safety measures as well as CDC measures.