



NCTA's response to COVID-19

Frequently Asked Questions

Updated 3/20/2020

Should we be using the Trail? Is it safe to hike? Although we may be discouraging group gatherings, we are not discouraging use of the Trail. It's critical that we have a venue for physical health and mental wellness at times like this and the trail is a perfect venue for that. Hiking in general is safe but we suggest keeping it local, hiking with only immediate family, and avoiding popular spots. If the parking lot is full, consider moving to the next one. Several states have issued orders to "shelter in place" which would prohibit even venturing out to hike on your own so be sure to check your own state and local requirements before you head out.

Are public lands open? National Parks, National Forests and State Department of Natural Resources will be making decisions about whether or not to keep their facilities open. Disruptions can include parking, camping, restrooms, etc.

Some long distance Trails are discouraging thru hikes. Should thru hikers come to the NCT instead?

The National Trails community is concerned about the potential of spreading COVID-19 through our communities. We are suggesting hikers keep it local and postpone any longer distance hikes. Because we do not manage a permit system, there is no way to prohibit thru hikers but we would like all hikers to be aware of how the spread of the virus can impact a small community and do your best to mitigate those impacts by using hygiene best practices. It's important to note that hikers will likely find services lacking and trail angels less likely to assist at this time.

Should we cancel our group hike, trail project or Chapter meeting? We are asking that all group hikes, trail projects and meetings be postponed or cancelled.

Should we cancel our volunteer project? We are asking that all trail projects be postponed or cancelled and our trail management staff are here to help you through any logistical challenges this causes. If project is grant dependent, let us know and we'll work with you to get those grants extended.

What about A-100 and NCTA Celebration or other events planned for later this summer? We are working on contingency plans for our upcoming events and will do our best to make decisions in a timely manner so you can prepare.

If NCTA's Celebration is cancelled, will we still do NCTA and NPS Awards? Should we need to postpone or cancel Celebration, we will be sure to get earned awards into the hands of our volunteers and celebrate your accomplishments with our whole community.

What can I expect from NCTA Staff? NCTA staff will be working from home but this will only impact our availability to the walk-in public at our headquarters in Lowell, Michigan. All staff are available via email, by phone and our main office phone number will be monitored: (616) 897-5987; hq@northcountrytrail.org; northcountrytrail.org/about/staff

Like you, our staff are juggling many responsibilities at this time including managing our family's health and changes in childcare so please be patient if our normally working hours aren't observed.

Can you help my Chapter hold a virtual meeting? NCTA will assist Chapters and Volunteers if they'd like to hold an online meeting and conference call instead of an in person meeting. Please contact Alison Myers to inquire about availability.

How can I keep my Chapter members engaged? Many of our members and volunteers love the social interaction that NCTA and our activities provides them and social distancing can be hardest on those that don't have family at home. Take this break from trail work as an opportunity to call up your members for a personal chat and a time to connect with members you may not know. If you have someone you'd like staff to check in on, please make that suggestion. We're here for you and for them.

What should my Chapter be posting on social media? This is a great opportunity to engage our followers in different ways. Keeping information current, relevant and positive is our goal. Post content that educates about different sections of the trail, post questions that engage people in conversations (just not controversial ones), share a look behind the scenes by giving information about all that's needed to run your Chapter. Share information that they can use at home like how to prepare for a hike, clean camping equipment, and keeping in shape in the off season. Share beautiful photos and positive messages so we can be an uplifting influence in these stressful times. NCTA has a robust social media calendar so you can always re-share our main posts.

How long will this last? Right now we have no defined end date as the situation is changing day to day. We will continue to monitor the guidelines put forth by the Centers for Disease Control, along with individual state guidance and promise to update our trail community regularly. We will return to normal and when we do, we'll be ready.

What should we do if our Chapter needs help when we do return to work and are overwhelmed with the needs? Keep our staff informed about any help you need and we'll do our best to get you additional volunteers or funding needed to fill the gaps.

Will the global economic concerns hurt NCTA? NCTA has a broad base of individual supporters that we know will continue to support our work and our Federal and State grants are in place and secure. We will do our best to be sure our members and donors understand how they can best support our work to keep the organization up and running through any hard times ahead.

Where can I find more information? NCTA [will update website regularly](#) for our community and for the most up to date information on COVID-19, please monitor the Centers for Disease Control at CDC.gov and your state and local government websites.