

Park Policy Announcements

Updated June 24, 2020

The City of Duluth Parks and Recreation Division announces the following updates to our Park Policies in regards to the Covid-19 pandemic. Duluth Parks and Recreation will strive to align with allowable activities as described in current State Orders. Due to limitations on our current workforce and financial capacity, some policies may remain more restrictive than State Orders.

<https://mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/stay-safe-mn/stay-safe-plan.jsp>

In order to support increased use and enjoyment of our Parks at a time when the opportunity to be active outdoors is unusually important, the City of Duluth is pleased to announce that we are going to temporarily and partially restore park maintenance staffing levels from mid-July to mid-October. 100% of the cost to partially restore service levels for this period will be paid for using reserves from the voter-approved Park Fund which, by law, may only be used to support park activities. Park Fund reserves are not sufficient to cover the cost to fully restore the Park Maintenance workforce indefinitely; however, they are sufficient to allow Duluth residents and visitors to enjoy more of their favorite activities this summer and fall.

The partial restoration of park maintenance staffing levels will allow the City to gradually increase the frequency of mowing and garbage collection, resume some park facility rentals and events, increase the cap on group sizes to state maximums which can be as high as 250 for some event types, and allow the gradual resumption of outdoor sports practices and games.

While we are pleased to report this good news, we also want to manage expectations:

1. Service levels cannot be partially restored until the Park Maintenance workforce is partially restored.
2. It will take us about three weeks, until mid-July, to partially restore the workforce and service levels.
3. The restoration of service levels will only be partial. Even when we have brought back all of the staff we can afford to employ this summer, the Park Maintenance workforce will still be about 1/3 below the usual level.
4. As a result, service levels by mid-July will be higher than they have been thus far this year but not as high as they usually are. For example, park maintenance will be preparing some, but not all, of our athletic fields for games and practices and resuming mowing of some, but not all, of our turfed areas.

City of Duluth Parks and Recreation staff will be in communication with various user groups in the weeks ahead including youth and adult sports leagues to discuss how the partial restoration of Park Maintenance service levels will impact them. The community can expect a series of Parks announcements over the next few weeks conveying the details of plans to partially restore the park maintenance workforce and its service levels. Look for those details to be made available in press releases and on the Parks web page.

A. Permits and Reservations

Beginning July 10, Parks and Recreation will accept permit requests for activities, reservations, and events at select outdoor parks locations, pavilions, etc. for small, medium and large sized groups, with a maximum of 250 participants. Some outdoor locations may have smaller gathering size limitations. Special events are contingent upon an approved pandemic operations plan and other event-specific requirements that align with current State Orders and City-specific limitations.

At this time, Wade Stadium is available to rent by the general public. Wade Stadium and select pavilions and park locations are open for event rentals.

All groups should be prepared to pack out their own trash. A limited number of porta-potties are currently placed throughout the Parks.

All Community Centers will remain closed to the public and no reservations will be accepted through at least August 1. A limited number of exceptions apply to centers that are managed by third-party organizations with whom the City holds an updated lease agreement and approved pandemic operations plan.

B. Sports and Leagues

The City of Duluth will strive to align with the State's current Orders and guidance on resumption of sports and leagues for adults and youth. Limitations on certain fields will continue while we work to restore a portion of our Park Maintenance workforce. Leagues and sports organizations utilizing City facilities must still submit a pandemic operations plan to Parks and Recreation and review any user agreements necessary for their continued use of City facilities.

At this time, games and competitions are allowed per State guidelines, however the City's capacity to support a full return to play is still limited. We encourage organizations and leagues to reach out directly to Parks and Recreation so that we can work through a pandemic operations plan and facilities use.

Parks and Recreation will continue to consult with youth and adult sport leagues on the status of their adapted seasons and identification of facilities needs.

C. Programming

Parks and Recreation has resumed limited outdoors programming for the general public. Programming opportunities are: family-friendly and offered for various age groups. They include short, single programs and multi-day Summer camp activities based upon current Orders and guidance for proper social distancing and hygiene. More information is available on the Parks and Recreation website at: <https://duluthmn.gov/parks/programs-events/general-programs/>. Pre-registration is required.

D. Programming in Parks by third-party organizations

Programs that take place within our parks but are organized by an outside business, association, or entity will require a pandemic operations plan approved by Parks and Recreation. The City will work with each organization to resume their programming within current State Orders. Inquiries can be sent to Chris Severson at cseverson@duluthmn.gov.

E. Reopening of select Parks buildings to the public

For those Parks-based buildings in which we already have or need to formalize Tenant/Lease agreements, the City will work with each tenant to resume adapted public-facing operations within current State Orders. A pandemic operations plan approved by Parks and Rec as well as a review of the current lease agreement by the Property and Facilities Manager is still required.

Parks and Recreation will not accept general reservations for community centers or indoor Park facilities until at least August 1.

We wish to reinforce the process by which organizations may reopen and clarify that the previously stated date of July 1 is instead replaced with a rolling process for the City to work with each tenant on a plan and lease review. Park buildings that may open to serve the public through third-party-offered services this Summer: *(Contingent upon approved plan and lease review)*

- Bayfront Family Center
- Chester Bowl Improvement Club

- Central Hillside Community Center
- Gary New Duluth Rec Center
- Hartley Nature Center
- Lester-Amity Chalet
- Lester Park Library
- Longview Tennis Clubhouse
- Observation Park Center
- Washington Center
- Woodland Y

F. Volunteer Projects

Duluth citizens have generously stepped up to support our parks and open space this Summer, more than ever. We appreciate the added support and are continuing to assess our abilities to support those otherwise independent volunteer efforts.

In the coming weeks, citizens can expect more from us on how they can help us keep our parks and neighborhoods clean and tidy this Summer.

Nonprofit groups with existing agreements or those requesting to continue with routine projects in the absence of an existing agreement with the City of Duluth may conduct volunteer service projects with a City-approved pandemic operations plan. Individual volunteer projects are subject to the approval of the Property, Park, and Libraries Director on the basis of alignment with the City's summer 2020 park maintenance priorities – safety, asset preservation, and minimal tidiness - and the City's capacity to support the project. No other volunteer service projects will be permitted.

Upon completion of a pandemic operations plan, volunteer groups may be granted access to tools at the Volunteer Tool Shed.

G. Playgrounds

City of Duluth playgrounds are open to the general public. The City will not be sanitizing playground equipment. Playground use involves behaviors that may result in disease transmission. Those who choose to use playground equipment do so at their own risk and should continue to follow all current CDC and State health and hygiene guidelines to reduce the risk of covid-19 transmission.

H. Road Closures and Alternate Recreation Areas

The following road closures will reopen to the public July 1:

- Seven Bridges Road
- Skyline Parkway along Hawk Ridge
- Skyline Parkway and Hank Jensen Drive around Enger Park
- Skyline Parkway from Haines Road to Highland Street
- Skyline Parkway through Magney-Snively Natural Area
- Lincoln Park Drive

Lester Park Golf Course – Our previous set of announcements included allowance of walking along the Lake 9 cart path at the Lester Park Golf Course. Following reports of unsanctioned use of the Lester Park Golf Course, including biking, off-leash dog walking and not cleaning up after dogs, golfing, and private golf cart use, the City of Duluth has elected to close the Lester Park Golf Course and parking lot to all use until further notice.

At this time, Duluth Golf is focused on asset preservation of the Lester Park Golf Course. This requires regular mowing and agronomy work to prevent the course from overgrowth. As such, the parking lot closure further supports our efforts to protect this golf asset while it is not in play this season. All use of the course is prohibited at this time. The City is evaluating the potential for an eventual reopening to pedestrian use only of the cart paths later this Summer.

I. Park Point Beach and Beach House

The public beach along Park Point remains open. Beach goers must use designated beach access points, respect private property, and should pack out their trash. Limited trash and recycling cans, along with a limited schedule for emptying cans means we need everyone to do their part to pack out their trash. The Beach House restrooms will be open while lifeguards are on duty: Friday, Saturday, and Sunday's from noon-5p.m. The concession stand remains closed. Other plumbed restrooms remain closed, and porta potties are available at the following locations: 12th Street Beach, Lafayette Community Center, Park Point Recreation Area.

J. Attractions and Camping

The Lake Superior Zoo will move into its second phase of reopening beginning July 2, which will include access to indoor exhibits. Please check the Lake Superior Zoo's website for up-to-date information on visiting the zoo: <https://lszooduluth.org/>.

Duluth Indian Point Campground continues its phased approach to providing recreational camping. The Indian Point Campground will expand camping options beginning July 1 to all campers and tents, with a reduced number of reservable sites to provide for continued distancing between groups. More information on camping at DIPC can be found at: <http://duluthindianpointcampground.com/campsites>

K. Maintenance: Trash and Mowing

With the return of a portion of the Park Maintenance workforce beginning in early July, we look forward to increasing the frequency of trash pickups, amount of mowing, and attention to sport fields to prepare them for playable conditions later this Summer. We are still evaluating which of our athletic fields and complexes we will have the ability to bring up to game-playable standards this Summer.

At this time, we ask that private citizens who have not received approval from the City of Duluth refrain from and/or discontinue any mowing, trimming, or weed whipping on public property. Proceeding without permission has caused disruption to multi-year natural resources efforts to intentionally decrease mowing in certain designated areas where the City is seeking to transition to a native plant/pollinator areas.