

Dear TTA chapter chairs and hike coordinators:

After reviewing recent changes to state and local COVID-19 guidelines as well as contacting Tennessee State Park staff for insight, the executive committee is replacing the previously issued guidelines with the following advisory. TTA chapter activities should always adhere to all applicable laws, rules, and guidelines for any given setting. Be aware that future changes to governmental guidelines may lessen or increase restrictions.

TTA Chapter Hike and Event Planning Advisory – July 31, 2020

Group size & distancing

Tennessee State Parks no longer limit groups to 10 (we've been assured of this even though trailhead signs indicating a limit remain) but **state guidelines currently limit group size to 50 and Nashville guidelines limit group size to 25**. Hikers who are not members of the same household should still **maintain a distance of 6 feet** between themselves and others. If circumstances do not permit this, individuals should wear masks, even outdoors.

Destinations

While there are no strict travel distance regulations, state park officials continue to **encourage favoring “local” hikes when planning**. At this point, however, helping parks cope with record numbers of visitors and demands on resources is what is important. **Chapters should avoid more popular parks and trails and/or try to schedule events early or during the week when destinations are less crowded**. Our extensive knowledge and experience should make it easy to lead by example. Be aware that park staff may close or limit access to parks and trails when crowded.

Collaboration

The state encourages but doesn't strictly require all organized groups to contact parks prior to an event. This presents an opportunity to discuss crowding or any other concerns. Groups are expected to have a CDC-protocol based COVID-19 strategy in place (one based on this advisory, for instance).

Health

Persons who are sick or were recently around someone with COVID-19 should not participate. Individual members should consider published guidelines in determining whether they are vulnerable and a given event is safe for them.

Online resources

For the latest updates, refer to these COVID-19 specific websites:

Tennessee State Parks

<https://tnstateparks.com/about/keeping-visitors-healthy>

Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA)

<https://www.tn.gov/twra/covid-19.html>

National Park Service

<https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/news/public-health-update.htm>