



## MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Questions and Answers About MRCA Parks and Trails During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

### **Questions and Answers about Mountains Recreation and Conservation Park and Trail Openings During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

On May 9, 2020 the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) reopened most of its parks and trails to the public in accordance with the protocols set forth by the [Los Angeles County Department of Public Health](#) and directives by the city of Los Angeles and other jurisdictions within which it operates. According to the health order, the public can use parks and trails but must practice physical distancing (be more than six feet away from other people not of your household), and wear a cloth face covering.

Parking lots and many-but not all-restrooms have also been opened at MRCA parks and trails.

This followed an unprecedented period of closure since March 22, 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Below are questions and answers about the current status of MRCA parks and trails.**

#### ***Are all MRCA parks and trails open?***

Most MRCA-managed parks and trails are open daily from sunrise to sunset. A list of the MRCA's most popular parks can be found at this link on its website <https://mrca.ca.gov/parks/parklisting/>.

***Which MRCA parks and facilities are closed?*** All park buildings (with the exception of some outdoor-facing restroom facilities) and offices including those at King Gillette Ranch, Franklin Canyon Park, and Temescal Gateway Park Los Angeles River Center and Gardens Lewis MacAdams Riverfront Park All MRCA-managed Malibu beach accessways

#### ***Why are these facilities closed?***

All closures are to promote the health and safety of the public and MRCA staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.

***What about restrooms?***

MRCA has opened restrooms that can be used in a manner that promotes the six-foot physical distancing mandated by public health authorities. This means multi-stall restrooms, and those inside park buildings are not open at this time.

***Is parking available?***

Many MRCA parks and trails have fee-based parking facilities, which are open and patrolled. Don't forget to pay your parking fee. If you park on a public street, be sure you are in a legal parking spot because you may receive a parking ticket.

***Many local parks and trails operated by other public entities have closed again after experiencing crowding, noncompliance with public health directives, an abundance of trash, and lack of physical distancing. Will all MRCA-managed parks and trails that are currently open remain open?***

That depends on park users' compliance with public health directives. Unfortunately, the pandemic is not over and may get worse. If the public or MRCA staff are at risk because of how the parks and trails are being used, we would have to consider closing the park or trail. This is preventable if the public practices physical distancing in all areas including parking lots and trailheads and wears cloth face coverings.

***The MRCA-managed trail in my neighborhood, which I have enjoyed for 25 years, has recently reopened. We expected crowds but are very disappointed to have observed on a daily basis that the majority of hikers (most in close proximity to each other) are not wearing face coverings to prevent the spread of coronavirus. Isn't a face covering required?***

Yes. A face covering is required and every member of the public (with the exception of small children and those with a disability) is required to wear face coverings when visiting MRCA parks and trails. It is everyone's responsibility to prevent the spread of the coronavirus and to keep the parks open for everyone.

***What kind of enforcement are you doing to ensure the public complies with public health orders?***

MRCA rangers and uniformed staff are doing everything they can to keep people safe on the trails so that everyone can continue to enjoy the respite of nature during this unprecedented public health crisis. The rangers are assisted by exemplary volunteers including the Santa Monica Mountains Mountain Bike Unit and the [California Emergency Mobile Patrol](#), a more than 50-year old volunteer suburban search and rescue team serving the Los Angeles region. The goal is to educate park and trail users to practice the public health protocols of six-foot physical distancing and wearing face coverings to help keep everyone safe and the parks open.

***What about beach access managed by the MRCA?***

All MRCA-managed Malibu coastal accessways remain closed. These accessways are constrained physically so that they cannot allow for recommended social distancing. Their physical condition makes compliance with safety guidelines difficult for the public as well as for our operations and ranger staff. We look forward to reopening Malibu beach accessways as soon as it is safe to do so.

***Can I bring my dog on my hike?***

The same park rules apply as always. Dogs are allowed on leash and under owner's

immediate control at most (but not all) parks managed by the MRCA. Check for information on the individual park before you visit.

### **What else should I know?**

Trail amenities, like trash cans, might not be available on your hike. Plan to carry out your own trash-Pack it in and Pack it out!

Be sure to follow basic hiking safety rules: only wear sturdy shoes, carry water, use sunscreen, and wear a hat. Be aware of natural hazards of Southern California open space areas: rattlesnakes, poison oak, and ticks.

## **THE LOS ANGELES RIVER RECREATION ZONE - 2020**

### ***Is the Los Angeles River Recreation Zone managed by the MRCA open this year?***

Yes, the two LA River recreation zones managed by the MRCA-in Elysian Valley and in the Sepulveda Basin in Encino are open. However, no in-water activity including kayaking and boating can be allowed this year. The zones are open for the public to enjoy walking, bird watching, and fishing along the river. All public health protocols, including six-foot physical distancing and cloth face coverings are required in the recreation zones.

### ***If fishing is allowed in the LA River Recreation Zones, why not individual kayaking? I'm certainly not going to be within 6'; of anyone while I'm floating in a single kayak, and I'm not planning on going with anyone else.***

There are no established public health guidelines for COVID-19 transmission in the Los Angeles River and it is not possible for MRCA to make a safety determination for in-water use of the river by the public without such guidelines. In addition, responding to kayaking injuries and mishaps-which is a common occurrence throughout each season-would require MRCA rangers, as first responders, to breach the six-foot distancing barrier mandated by public health orders. The MRCA simply cannot put its personnel in this precarious position.

Because the safety of all cannot be assured, the difficult decision had to be made to close water activity, including kayaking and non-steerable boating, in the LA River Recreation Zone for this year until the public health crisis eases.

Activities such as fishing, walking, and bird watching are welcomed as long as visitors practice public health protocols including 6-foot physical distancing and wearing cloth face coverings.

*The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) is a local government public entity dedicated to the preservation and management of open space and parkland, watershed lands, trails, and wildlife habitat. The MRCA works in cooperation with other government partners to acquire parkland, participate in vital planning processes, provide natural resources and scientific expertise, and complete major park improvement projects. The MRCA manages and provides ranger services and fire protection for almost 75,000 acres of parkland that it owns and that are owned by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy or other agencies and provides comprehensive education and interpretation and leadership programs for youth. It is one of the lead agencies providing for the revitalization of the Los Angeles River.*