



News Release Date: May 13, 2020
Contact: [Morgan Warthin](mailto:Morgan.Warthin@nps.gov), (307) 344-2015

MAMMOTH HOT SPRINGS, WY - Following guidance from the White House, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and state and local public health authorities, Yellowstone National Park will reopen on a limited basis on May 18. The park has been closed to visitors since March 24, 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It was great to welcome Vice President Mike Pence and Second Lady Karen Pence to Yellowstone National Park and First Lady Melania Trump to Grand Teton National Park last year. These are incredible places that are special to the American public. I appreciate Superintendent Cam Sholly and Acting Superintendent Gopaul Noojibail

for working with Governor Gordon and health officials to make the parks accessible to the public," said Secretary of the Interior David L. Bernhardt.

Yellowstone has outlined a [three-phased plan](#) that initially opens the South and East entrances of Wyoming and limits visitor travel to the lower loop of the park. The lower loop allows visitors to access Lake, Canyon, Norris, Old Faithful, West Thumb, and Grant Village.

Wyoming has lifted out-of-state travel restrictions and has requested the state's entrances open the week of May 18. Montana and Idaho continue to have out-of-state restrictions in place and the park is working closely with these states and counties to open the remaining three entrances as soon as possible.

"I want to thank Yellowstone Superintendent Sholly for his thoughtful communication with all interested parties about the park's plan for reopening," Governor Gordon said. "This measured approach will help protect employees, visitors, and neighboring communities. It will also give us useful experience as we look ahead to opening other areas of the park, provide a boost to Wyoming's tourism industry, and help get America's economy up and going again."

This limited opening approach will accomplish three objectives in the short term: 1) allow the park to continue buffering with states that are maintaining restrictions; 2) help the park and internal business partners improve and refine mitigation actions with lighter levels of visitation; and 3) allow for an assessment of how returning visitors affect COVID-19 curves within surrounding Wyoming counties.

The park's reopening priorities center on protecting employees and the public from transmission risks through a variety of mitigation actions consistent with local, state, and federal guidance. The park will actively monitor changing conditions (in the park and in surrounding counties); and will maintain flexibility to expand, adjust, or contract operations as conditions warrant.

"The park's goal is to open safely and conservatively, ensure we take the right actions to reduce risks to our employees and visitors, and help local economies begin to recover," said Superintendent Cam Sholly. "I appreciate the cooperation we've had with our surrounding governors, counties, communities, and health officials in working through these challenging decisions. Our goal is to get the remaining entrances open as quickly and safely as possible."

The park has developed a range of mitigation actions that include: providing protective barriers where needed, encouraging the use of masks or facial coverings in high-density areas, metering visitor access in certain locations, increasing cleaning frequency of facilities, adding signage on boardwalks and other public spaces, and messaging to visitors through a variety of methods.

What will be open beginning May 18?

- Phase 1 will begin on Monday, May 18 at 12:00 p.m. with the opening of the South and East entrances in the state of Wyoming.
- Visitors will be able to access the lower loop of the Grand Loop Road (see attached map) coming in and out of the South and East entrances only.
- Visitors will be able to access restrooms, self-service gas stations, trails and boardwalks, and other Phase 1 facilities that are prepared to open.

What will remain closed until later phases of the plan?

- The Montana entrances (North, West, and Northeast) will remain closed. The park is consulting with the Governor of Montana to establish reopening dates for the Montana entrances.
- Commercial tour buses will not be allowed in the early phases of opening.
- Overnight accommodations will be unavailable until later in the season.
- Campgrounds, backcountry permits, visitor cabins, additional stores, expanded tours, takeout food service, boating, fishing, and visitor centers will remain closed. These Phase 2 services and/or facilities will open when safe and appropriate mitigation measures are in place. This will happen at different times.
- Hotels, full-service dining, commercial tour buses, and ranger programs will remain closed. These Phase 3 services and/or facilities will reopen when health conditions allow.

Visitors should come prepared and follow all CDC and local health guidance by practicing good hygiene and social distancing. Face coverings are recommended where social distancing is not possible. People who are sick should stay home and not visit the park. The CDC has provided specific guidance on [visiting parks and recreational facilities](#).

“I’m asking the public to partner with us to prevent the spread of COVID-19,” said Superintendent Cam Sholly. “Visitors can protect their family and friends by skipping areas that are too crowded and always maintaining social distance from other people, including rangers. The National Park Service can’t do this alone and will continue to work with all stakeholders to best protect the public and our employees.”

Previously-scheduled [road construction](#) projects will continue this summer. Normal annual [bear management area](#) closures will be in effect. Many areas of the park are still experiencing winter conditions. The park will provide details and updates for operations as they change on <http://www.nps.gov/yell> and on the park’s social media channels. Updates about NPS operations will be posted on www.nps.gov/coronavirus.