



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency (COSCA) Opens Trails in the Conejo Valley for Weekend Visits

As part of a phased open space and trail management strategy, COSCA trails are now open on weekends beginning May 9, 2020. This step follows the opening of trails for weekday use implemented on April 22, 2020. Trailhead parking lots, except for the lot in Hill Canyon, remain temporarily closed.

The change in policy has been anticipated as part of a phased re-opening strategy and has been approved for implementation based on the coordinated reopening of other outdoor areas in Ventura and Los Angeles Counties. Starting May 9th, some, but not all, trails will be open in Los Angeles County, making more trails available regionally. Additional Ventura County trails are also expected to open. Making more outdoor space available meets community needs related to physical and mental health and provides additional outdoor space where residents can enjoy nature while maintaining required social distance. Before traveling to Los Angeles County trails, visitors should check their status online because some will still be closed.

“COSCA has remained in close contact with trail agencies in both Ventura and Los Angeles County to coordinate trail openings to reduce crowding. By making more trails accessible, visitors can spread out over larger areas. As visitors return to our open space areas, it will be important to maintain social distancing and adhere to all Ventura County health orders.”
– Brian Stark, COSCA Administrator

The Ventura County Stay Well at Home Order describes hiking on trails close to home for exercise as an essential activity. COSCA’s mission is to provide this resource as a benefit in the community. Since the trails opened for weekday use, most visitors to COSCA open space have been maintaining social distancing and are being considerate of others.

While trails will be open, COSCA reminds visitors that the coronavirus will remain in our community for an extended time, and this is not the end of social distancing and County health orders. Visitors must take responsibility for their personal and community safety when out in public. Compliance with the Ventura County Stay Well at Home Order, as well as posted COSCA directives and recommendations, are essential to this effort. Visitors are still asked to walk to neighborhood trails and avoid driving if possible. Group uses are still prohibited by the Ventura County Stay at Home Order. COSCA strongly advises that visitors follow Centers for Disease Control (CDC) advice to wear face coverings when utilizing the trail system both for personal safety and the safety of

others. It is vital for visitors to COSCA trails observe these rules, as failure to do so could cause future closures.

As visitors return to weekend use, it is anticipated there will be some initial impacts, such as increased numbers of visitors. There is a significant demand for outdoor access. Some visitors may also be unfamiliar with new and changing rules. Visitors can reduce these impacts by adhering to the following:

Visitor requirements:

Visitors are **required** to adhere to the following rules.

- 1) Follow all posted regulations at trails and trailhead facilities.
- 2) Do not visit public trails and trailheads if feeling sick, have a fever, cough and/or exhibiting any symptoms of illness.
- 3) Keep at least six (6) feet of physical distance from others at all times.
- 4) Avoid areas where physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- 5) Do not gather in groups and keep them to members of your household. Do not linger at any one location except as needed for brief rests.
- 6) Pack out all trash.

Visitor Recommendations:

Trail users are **recommended** to employ the following measures for personal protection:

- 1) Upon arrival, assess conditions and determine if physical distancing and required precautions seem feasible. If the ability to implement required trail user safety protocols is questionable for any reason, do not proceed to use the trail.
- 2) Be alert and observant of surroundings while using the trails.
- 3) Understand and follow standard trail use etiquette and safety guidelines, which can be found at <https://www.conejo-openspace.org>.
- 4) Individuals over the age of 2 are asked to wear face coverings at trailheads, parking lots and while passing people on the trails.
- 5) Become familiar with the following trail user passing protocols:
 - a. Provide adequate physical distancing.
 - b. Gain and maintain eye contact.
 - c. Step off trail and stand to the side to allow others to pass as needed and where safely possible, but do not continue walking off the trails. Be aware that there are risks associated with stepping off a trail including snake encounters and unstable ground. Visitors should always look before they step
 - d. Announce your intention before passing to give slower trail users an opportunity to move to a safe location (off trail where possible).
- 6) While biking on trails, maintain safe speeds, utilize bike bells, and slow down and/or stop when passing others to adhere to the passing recommendations listed above.
- 7) Move aside, where safely possible, if standing still for a brief rest along the trail.
- 8) Bring water, hand sanitizer and/or disinfecting wipes to wash or sanitize hands frequently.
- 9) Observe standard trail use safety recommendations by bringing water, a hat, sunscreen, sturdy shoes, and a snack.