



May 21, 2020

Town of East Hampton Sears Park and Boat Launch Operational Plan Overview

Town Parks and Boat Launch, and other town outdoor recreation areas comprise of over 90 acres spread across the town. These public open spaces have been providing the opportunity for individuals and immediate families to get outside and exercise in these difficult and stressful times. This Operational Plan provides current guidelines for town staff and residents for the operation and use of the Town of East Hampton ball fields, walking and hiking trails, park grounds, Sears Park beach, boat launch and other areas in a manner that is consistent with safety protocols and social distancing guidelines. This Plan is based on consultation with the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH), and guidance documents and executive orders associated with the public health emergency and recommendations from the Chatham Health Department. This Plan is also informed by Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance issued for the parks and recreation sectors. This Plan will be updated as new information and operational conditions require.

Any questions about this guidance should be referred to jhall@easthamptonct.gov. Any questions about COVID-related health issues associated with outdoor recreation activities should be referred to the Chatham Health Department.

General Physical Space & Occupancy Limits

The Town of East Hampton recreation areas remain open and available for the public to enjoy, while practicing social distancing. The Parks and Recreation Departments recreation areas are currently implementing operational changes to eliminate gatherings of groups of six or more people and ensure minimum distances of six feet between visitors. Play structures, park buildings and most other enclosed structures, including restrooms, have been closed to the public for the foreseeable future.

Health Advisory for Visitors

While this guidance provides a way for the public to enjoy East Hamptons recreation opportunities, the risks to visitors cannot be fully mitigated. Visitors who choose to visit these facilities during this time should be aware of the potential risks. Individuals over the age of 65 or with underlying health conditions should consider not visiting town parks, particularly on warm weather days or during peak mid-day times when visitor numbers are high. If you are not feeling well, stay home! Signs and

symptoms of coronavirus include fever, cough and shortness of breath. A full list of signs and symptoms of COVID-19 is available from the CDC.

- ☑ Stay close to home. Do not travel long distances to parks or other recreational areas.
- ☑ Avoid crowded recreational areas.
- ☑ Practice proper social distancing; stay at least 6 feet from other people.
- ☑ Wear a face covering over the nose and mouth, at all times when proper social distancing cannot be maintained.
- ☑ Engage in outdoor recreational activities with members of your household, only.
- ☑ Practice good hygiene when outdoors. Wash your hands, carry and use hand sanitizer, cover your mouth and nose when sneezing and coughing, and avoid surfaces that are often touched: picnic tables, doorknobs, handrails, equipment, etc.

Social Distancing Measures

Restrictions on Gathering Size

- ☑ Sears Park Picnic shelter and Gazebo has been closed to groups. They are open for individual use only and social distancing must be maintained. Signage has been posted to alert visitors.
- ☑ Picnicking is limited in parks. Tables have been removed in some locations to adhere to safe social distancing. Groups of 5 or less (household members only) are permitted to sit at picnic tables and eat food. Park Staff will sanitize tables every half hour.
- ☑ Town staff are actively monitoring usage of our facilities and grounds for social distancing compliance. If appropriate social distancing is not observed, town staff will inform and educate visitors, directing them to spread out.
- ☑ Contact sports and ball games are not authorized at this time. Staff will discourage all contact sports within the park. Basketball shooting and tennis play will be acceptable with small groups of 5 (household members only)
- ☑ Playscapes are closed.

Capacity Daily Closures

Sears Park has been evaluated as to whether the pre-existing capacities can be utilized while assuring proper social distancing. Sears Park can accommodate 200 people and will initiate a closure once 80% population is present (160 people in the park). Once a closure is implemented by staff additional parking outside of a facility and walking in will not be allowed. Total capacity targets have been established for beach front and Sears Park based on a variety of factors, including:

- ☑ Daily observations of the number of cars and the quality of social distancing at peak times
- ☑ The size and characteristics of the park, including potential concentrations of visitors in certain areas (beaches, courts and picnic areas) based on facility usage at the time
- ☑ capacity reaches 80% of maximum beach capacity.

Additional tools that can be utilized to set capacity limits include surveys and GIS overlay. Parking capacity levels notwithstanding, park attendants are prepared to close parks to additional visitors when the attendant and Parks and Recreation Director concludes that park visitation reaches a point that proper social distancing is difficult to maintain. If Sears Park closes to capacity on a given day reopening will occur in the following manner: one car exits another one enters until 50% capacity is observed (see guidelines noted under capacity daily closure). If this approach of limited capacity closures proves unsuccessful or unsustainable, more restrictive measures such as prohibiting swimming or closing a park indefinitely could be implemented.

Governor Lamont's Executive Order 7R, dated March 30, 2020, authorizes Municipalities to prohibit visitors from parking outside a closed park and walking in after a facility reaches capacity. As these facilities reach capacity on busy days, staff will close the entrance to new visitors, and work to eliminate additional visitors from parking outside the facility.

Parking Stickers

Parking stickers are free of charge, you can get a parking sticker from the gate attendant when you arrive. You will need your car registration showing proof of residency available to receive your sticker. The gate attendant will take your name, address and license plate number for our records.

Boat Stickers must be purchased online at www.easthamptonrec.com a \$50 fee will be needed at the time of purchase as well as your registration of the vessel you will be launching. Please give staff at least 3 days to process this request and send out your sticker by mail. Gate attendants will NOT be giving out boat stickers.

Services and Amenities

Swimming and Beach front

Guidance from the Connecticut DPH indicates that recreational swimming is not a known form of transmission of COVID-19, in saltwater or freshwater. At this time, the Town of East Hampton is making the decisions to allow swimming at Sears Park. Safe social distancing will be encouraged and monitored by our lifeguard staff.

Please help us to ensure all residents and staff are safe by following the guidelines above. The Parks and Recreation Department understands the importance of recreation space for families of East Hampton. Please help us stay safe during this difficult time.

Jeremy Hall

Parks and Recreation Director
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