



Board of Chosen Freeholders

County of Hunterdon
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MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Hunterdon Freeholders Ask Governor To Reconsider Order To Close County Parks

Unfair to Hunterdon Residents Who Were Following Rules County Should Make Decision, Not State

Hunterdon County's Freeholders have called on Governor Phil Murphy to reconsider his decision to close all county parks and trails in the state, calling it a one size fits all decision that punishes county residents who have been following the social distancing rules.

Freeholder Board Director Shaun C. Van Doren said he is forwarding a communication expressing the Board's concerns to Governor Phil Murphy.

"The Governor should have left the decision on county parks to County governments, as he did in leaving the decision on municipal parks with local officials," Van Doren said. "The one size fits all state wide decision punishes our residents who have been complying. The reports from Hunterdon County Park Rangers is that the many residents using our parks and trails have been observing social distancing."

Van Doren noted, "Our residents who are remaining at home to help flatten the curve need access to county parks and trails more than ever for fresh air, exercise opportunities and physical activity that studies demonstrate reduces stress and improves mental health, in addition to physical health."

"The fact that the Governor gave counties only seven hours' notice to implement the closings is also concerning. Hunterdon County has thirty parks and twenty-six trails. While some gates to parking areas can be closed, many areas have numerous, uncontrolled access points.

That is why this kind of decision should be left to those who have knowledge of and responsibility for the park systems," Van Doren stated.

"Hunterdon County's Parks Division had already taken steps to close park facilities, ball fields and soccer fields, and to fence off playgrounds, had put in place signage directing that social distancing be observed, and had Park Rangers taking action to ensure there were no gatherings. These steps have been effective.



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If there are Counties where people have not been observing social distancing for their own protection, the Governor should call them out along with all his other 'knuckleheads,' and encourage those counties to close their parks. According to the media Bergen and Ocean Counties had already closed their parks," the Freeholder Director continued.

"Finally, allowing municipal parks to remain open will result in residents flooding those parks to gain a break from their self-imposed isolation at home, putting undue strain on already overburdened local resources.

Governor, let's return this decision to the County level, where it belongs," Van Doren concluded.