



PARK COUNTY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

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March 22, 2020

Secretary of the Interior David Barnhardt:

The undersigned hereby collectively request that you order the temporary closure of Yellowstone National Park (“the Park”) immediately. The decision to submit this request is made in consideration of the health and welfare of the communities bordering the Park, Employees of the Park, the citizens of our state and those of our country, in light of the challenges we are facing due to the rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Park County has very limited resources with which to provide health care to its citizens. We are a county of 2,813 miles with a single critical access hospital located in Livingston, Montana. We have a very elderly population, approximately 30% older than 65. This is the group most at risk for severe infection and high use of our limited medical resources.

In light of the rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is accurate to assume that if we do not take steps to curtail visitation by non-county residents, Park County will not have the resources to provide essential care to its citizens during the pandemic. The number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Montana, has more than doubled in the last 36 hours, and there is every indication that the number of confirmed cases will increase exponentially in the near future. Further, we anticipate the closure of all non-essential services within Park County by the end of the business day March 23, 2020, per order of the Park County Health Department, and City and County Commissioners. This order is intended to limit travel, social interaction, and flatten the curve of transmission of COVID-19 in Park County.

Park County has a tourism based economy driven by our proximity to the Park. During winter months, the only access for vehicle traffic into the Park is through Park County. We have historically welcomed visitors to share in our beautiful culture, scenery, wildlife and open spaces. However, at this time, increased tourism puts our citizens and resources at unnecessary risk.

We have been informed that a decision to close the Park is pending; however, the undersigned believes that immediate closure is not only warranted, but imperative.

With the concerns outlined herein in mind, we are respectfully requesting that you immediately order a temporary closure of Yellowstone National Park.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,



Laurel Desnick, MD, FACP
Health Officer, Park County, Montana

Park County Incident Command

Park County Unified Health Command

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