

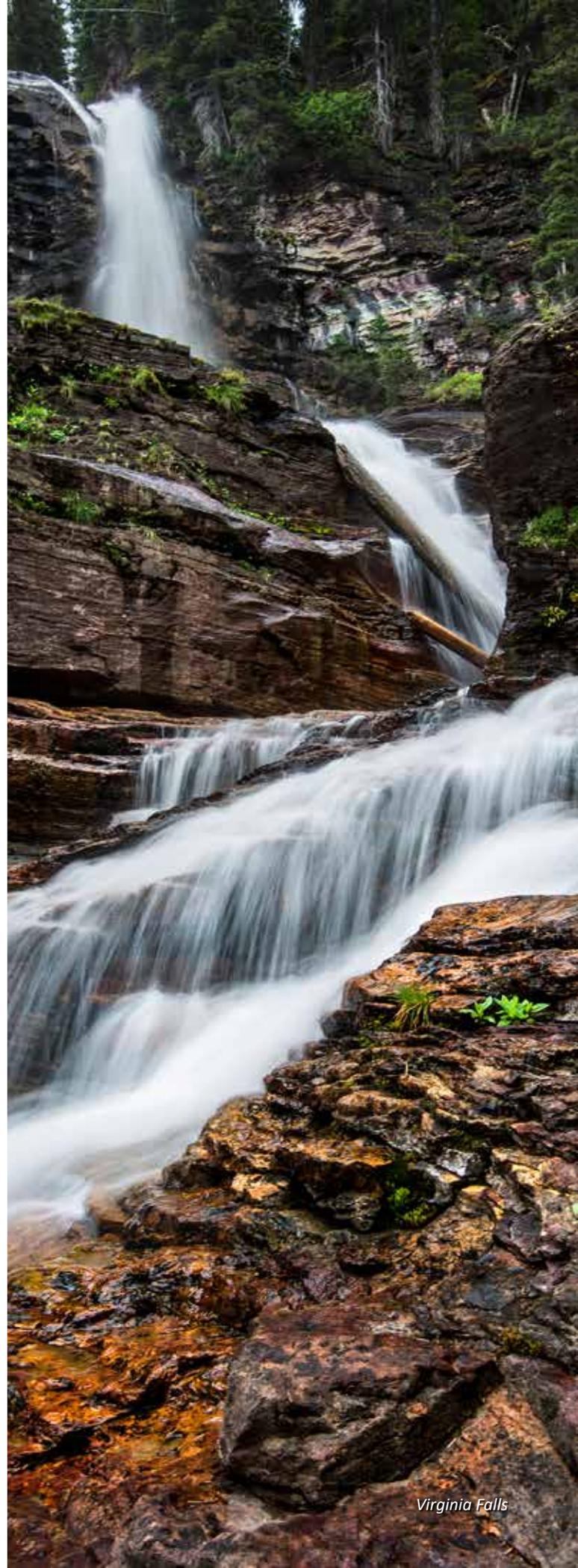
COVID-19 REOPENING PLAN GLACIER NATIONAL PARK



MAY 21, 2020

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Reopening Priorities	2
Visitor Messaging	2
Summary of Mitigation Actions	2
Phased Reopening Details	
Phase 1	3
Phase 2	4
Phase 3	5
Workforce Protection, Housing, & Staffing	6
Contractors	6
Surveillance & Monitoring	6
Contingency Planning	6



Executive Summary

Background

Glacier has been closed to visitors since March 27, 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The decision to close was based largely on requests and recommendations from local health officers in Flathead and Glacier counties, the Blackfeet Nation, and the State of Montana. Over the course of the closure, the park has maintained very close contact with these partners. The park phased reopening plans will align with Montana as the state adjusts to certain COVID-19 restrictions.

This plan articulates the phased reopening sequence that is focused on protecting the park employees, volunteers, partners, and the public. Visitor service operations will start conservatively and will expand if conditions allow, or contract if necessary. There will be fewer staff and services available in the park in 2020.

Partner Engagement

The decision to reopen the park is largely based on the recommendations provided by Flathead and Glacier County health officers, the Blackfeet Nation, and the State of Montana. These professionals understand the transboundary nature of visitors traveling to Glacier and are best positioned to understand local and regional health concerns.

The park has and continues to hold discussions with business leaders, stakeholders, and internal business partners. The park listened to these perspectives and considered them when developing this phased approach. While the timing of the park's temporary closure occurred during the shoulder season, the economic stress and impacts associated with the closure are continuing to grow substantially as the summer months approach. While these economic stressors do not override health concerns, they are being considered. The park's goal is to reopen safely, minimize risks to visitors and employees, allow visitor access Glacier and help restart local economies.

Phased Approach

In general, the park's reopening will follow three flexible phases (Figure 1). Phase 1 would allow vehicle access to some of the park roads with no services other than restrooms. In Phase 2, some visitor services and facilities would open if they can be staffed and operated safely. If conditions allow, the opening of the Going-to-the-Sun Road over Logan Pass would happen during Phase 2. Elements in Phase 3 will not be implemented until the park and its partners have had time to evaluate the impacts from opening operations and facilities outlined in Phases 1 and 2 and it is deemed safe to open additional services and facilities. Phase 3 will require additional staffing for the National Park Service (NPS) and park partners, which means associated risks will need to be assessed.

Implementation Timing

During the park closure, the park superintendent has worked closely with the Montana state governor's office to determine the proper timing for reopening based on COVID-19 conditions in Montana. As an iconic unit of the national park system, Glacier serves a worldwide audience. Once open, the park will attract large numbers of visitors from outside the area to our local communities.

At present, Montana has a 14-day quarantine restriction for out-of-state travelers until June 1. The Blackfeet Nation has an ordinance in place through May 31 that restricts non-essential travel on the Blackfeet Reservation including the boarders and roads accessing Glacier National Park from the Blackfeet Reservation. The park will continue to work closely with the State of Montana and the Blackfeet Nation to reopen when conditions allow.

Phase 1

Roads Open
Early June 2020

- ROAD ACCESS
- PUBLIC RESTROOMS
- LIMITED TRAILS

Phase 2

Initial Services
June and July
As Health Conditions Allow

- GOING-TO-THE-SUN ROAD AND VISITOR TRANSPORTATION SERVICE
- LIMITED CAMPGROUNDS
- BACKCOUNTRY PERMITS
- LIMITED VISITOR CENTERS AND RANGER STATIONS
- BOOKSTORES
- LIMITED PERSONAL BOATING
- LODGING AND ON-THE-GO FOOD SERVICE

Phase 3

Expanded Services
As Health Conditions Allow

- EXPANDED CAMPING
- EXPANDED BOATING
- ADDITIONAL FACILITIES AND SERVICES
- ADDITIONAL CONCESSION SERVICE

Figure 1: Tentative Glacier National Park Reopening Sequence

Reopening Priorities

Be safe. Be flexible. Monitor. Adjust.

1. Protect employees and the public from COVID-19 transmission risks by implementing mitigation actions consistent with local, state, and federal health guidelines.
2. Develop consistent operating plans (NPS and partners) that focus on safe reopening actions.
3. Actively monitor changing conditions (in park and out) and adjust operations accordingly.
4. Ensure flexibility to expand or adjust operations depending on conditions and risk factors.
5. Support local communities and partners.

Visitor Messaging

The park and its partners will actively message to visitors to reduce chances of COVID-19 exposure and transmission.

- Visitors will be advised to prepare for limited food services, lodging, and activities prior to traveling.
- Visitors who are sick should not to visit the park.
- Use of face coverings will be voluntary, but visitors will be encouraged to wear appropriate facial protection during their visit.
- Visitors will be asked to adhere to CDC and local health guidance regarding social distancing and other actions designed to reduce COVID-19 transmission.

Examples of Visitor Safety Messages

COVID-19 Precautions

Glacier is modifying visitor services to help prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Some facilities and events will be closed or canceled. Please check locally and on the park website for current information and continue to follow CDC guidelines. As circumstances continue to change and we modify our operations as necessary, we thank you for your patience and cooperation. **Follow local, state, and national health guidance.**



Come prepared. Visitor services are very limited. Expect wait times at the park entrances and parking lots.



Wear face-coverings in high-visitation areas and inside visitor facilities. A reduced number of visitors will be allowed in visitor centers at a given time.



Maintain social distancing of six feet (1.8m), especially in high-visitation areas (in visitor facilities, on popular trails, while viewing wildlife, etc.).



Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer.



Sneeze or cough into a tissue, or the inside of your elbow.



Avoid touching your face.



If you are sick, do not visit the park. Self-isolate to avoid exposing others.

Summary of Mitigation Actions

A range of mitigation measures both indoor and outdoor will be implemented throughout the park to protect both visitors and employees.

Indoor

Public indoor facilities will not open until proper risk assessments have been conducted and mitigation measures have been developed and implemented (e.g., protective barriers, facial coverings, metering visitors, increased cleaning frequency, signage with CDC and local health guidelines).

Outdoor

The park is evaluating high congestion areas to determine appropriate management and mitigation measures (e.g., additional signage, parking considerations, one-way traffic on trails, and visitor spacing at public restrooms). The park may also limit the number of vehicles and/or people entering high congestion areas.

Phased Reopening Details

Phase 1

Roads Open

early June 2020

- ROAD ACCESS
- PUBLIC RESTROOMS
- LIMITED TRAILS

Based on conversations with the governor's office, tribal partners, and local county health departments, the park superintendent expects that the reopening of the park will occur during Phase 2 of the State of Montana's plan, *Reopening the Big Sky Phased Approach*. Additional coordination with the Blackfoot Nation will determine access from the Blackfoot Reservation.

Public access to some roads and limited trails will be permitted. Restrooms will open. Risk assessments and mitigation actions will be developed throughout the park. Visitors should understand prior to trip planning that operations and facilities will not open and visitor services will be unavailable in Phase 1.



Ranger and child on Trail of the Cedars

Phase 1 Facilities and Operations

Road Access

Law enforcement, emergency medical service, and fire personnel will be in place when the road systems open. Additional staffing will focus on visitor/ wildlife interface and other services as needed.

Public Restrooms

The NPS will operate a range of public restrooms throughout the park and is developing the safest methods and time frames for cleaning and disinfecting (following CDC and NPS guidance). Personal protective equipment (PPE) and specialized cleaning and sanitizing equipment will be used to improve cleaning efficiency and staff safety.

Spring Hiker-Biker Access

As plowing operations and road conditions allow, spring hiker-biker access will be allowed on the Going-to-the-Sun Road from Lake McDonald Lodge or Avalanche Creek once the park reopens and until the Going-to-the-Sun Road opens in its entirety for the season. The hiker-biker shuttle will not operate.

Limited Trails

Visitors can use trails and boardwalks that are accessible from open park roads. High-use areas will be signed and monitored. However, the park may not be able to actively manage visitation in high-use areas and will depend on the public to adhere to CDC and local health guidelines.

Apgar Village

Private businesses in Apgar Village may decide to operate when the park reopens.

Many Glacier Access

The Many Glacier Road will remain closed to public access until June 12 due to road construction.

Waterton Lakes National Park and Goat Haunt Area

Waterton Lakes National Park has suspended all operations until at least May 31. The Waterton Inter-nation Shoreline Cruise operations are to be determined. There will be no visitor services at Goat Haunt in 2020.

Phased Reopening Details

Phase 2

Initial Services

June and July

As Health Conditions Allow

- **GOING-TO-THE-SUN ROAD AND VISITOR TRANSPORTATION SERVICE**
- **LIMITED CAMPGROUNDS**
- **BACKCOUNTRY PERMITS**
- **LIMITED VISITOR CENTERS AND RANGER STATIONS**
- **BOOKSTORES**
- **LIMITED PERSONAL BOATING**
- **LODGING AND ON-THE-GO FOOD SERVICE**



Lake McDonald Lodge Lobby

The park will open facilities listed in Phase 2 when safe and appropriate mitigation measures have been developed and implemented. Subsequently, services will begin at different times in Phase 2. Facilities and operations will undergo risk assessments and be subject to a range of mitigation actions consistent with local, state, and national guidance. Phase 2 will likely extend through July, at a minimum.

Phase 2 Facilities and Operations

Going-to-the-Sun Road and Visitor Transportation Service

The Going-to-the-Sun-Road will open over Logan Pass during Phase 2. It is uncertain if conditions will allow the Visitor Transportation Service (shuttles) to operate.

Limited Campgrounds

In Phase 2, Fish Creek and St. Mary Campgrounds will open for reservations through recreation.gov. Cleaning frequency of campground restrooms will increase. The remaining campgrounds are not expected to open.

Backcountry Permits

All backcountry camping advance permit reservations have been canceled for the season. When Glacier can safely provide backcountry experiences including trail maintenance and open backcountry campsites, the park will issue first-come, first-served, walk-in backcountry camping permits as conditions allow.

Limited Visitor Centers and Ranger Stations

Once proper mitigation measures have been implemented, select visitor centers and ranger stations may begin to open. Prior to opening, park staff may utilize protective barriers at information stations, control access, and increase cleaning frequency. Visitors will be encouraged to wear appropriate facial covering when entering buildings to protect themselves and others.

Glacier National Park Conservancy Bookstore

Glacier will provide maximum flexibility to park partners to adjust operations and operating hours. Bookstore operations will be subject to the same safety and mitigation measures outlined for visitor centers. Park partners will determine their opening schedules in coordination with the park.

Limited Personal Boating

The park will open personal boating on Lake McDonald as part of Phase 2. Aquatic invasive species inspection stations will be operational in Apgar.

Lodging and On-the-Go Food Service

Glacier National Park Lodges will gradually open all five lodges across the park. On-the-Go food service will be offered during Phase 2 and 3. Lobby access to buildings will be allowed for overnight guests only.

The park is working with individual commercial visitor service operators to ensure appropriate COVID-19 mitigation measures are in place.

Phased Reopening Details

Phase 3

Expanded Services

As Health Conditions Allow

- ADDITIONAL CAMPGROUNDS
- EXPANDED PERSONAL BOATING
- ADDITIONAL FACILITIES & SERVICES
- EXPANDED BACKCOUNTRY USE
- RANGER-LED PROGRAMS

The park may open facilities listed in Phase 3 once conditions are safe and appropriate mitigation measures have been developed and implemented. These facilities and operations will undergo risk assessments and be subject to a range of mitigation actions consistent with local, state, and national guidance. It is unknown when the park will transition into Phase 3.



Enjoying a day out on the lake



One of Glacier's spectacular backcountry trails



Ranger-led hike



Pausing to capture that last ray of sunlight

Phase 3 Facilities and Operations

Additional Campgrounds

During Phase 3, Apgar Campground may open to first-come, first-served, walk-in camping. Many Glacier Campground may open for camping by reservation-only through recreation.gov. The park will continue to assess operations and anticipated services based on the latest public health guidance. Rising Sun, Two Medicine, Cut Bank, Avalanche, and Sprague Creek Campgrounds, along with the campgrounds in the the North Fork area are not expected to open in 2020.

Expanded Personal Boating

The park may open additional waters to boating on a limited basis.

Additional Facilities & Services

Services not listed will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Expanded Backcountry Use

Additional backcountry trails and campgrounds may be maintained as conditions and staffing allow.

Ranger-Led Programs

Limited ranger-led programming may resume based on staffing availability and current health guidance.

Workforce Protection, Housing, & Staffing

National Park Service

The NPS will reduce exposure potential to employees by:

- Limiting public/visitor interface during Phases 1 and 2. The NPS has identified certain facilities that will need to operate during Phase 1, including public restrooms.
- Developing protective measures to reduce exposure risks in areas open in Phase 1 and 2 including PPE and special equipment to enhance cleaning of facilities; established response protocols for first responders; and adjust to the types of medical calls that NPS personnel respond.
- Providing maximum flexibility for park positions eligible for telework. Supervisors will ensure employees physically coming to work are protected, use staggered schedules, and minimizing shared vehicles use.

- Assigning seasonal employees separate housing units with individual bedrooms and bathrooms will be utilized as much as possible. Dormitory and shared housing configurations will be adjusted to support COVID-19 health and safety protocols. As a result, there will be less housing available for park employees.

Park Partners

- Concession and partner operators will develop specific guidelines for workforce protection, consistent with facility opening.
- Shared bathroom configurations will be reviewed by public health officials and will determine what actions will be taken to reduce exposure risks.



Frosty morning at Lake McDonald

Contractors

Contractors are required to provide COVID-19 plans to the NPS and receive approval prior to beginning work. These plans should outline actions taken to protect contract employees at work, in remote housing areas, and in other areas frequented.

Surveillance & Monitoring

The NPS will continue working with state and local health officials and the Blackfeet Nation to share information regarding COVID-19 infection rates, hospital and testing capacity, monitoring actions, and the ability to isolate infected employees. The park is also preparing response protocols for visitors who test positive for the virus.

The park is working with public health officials in Flathead and Glacier Counties to expand testing and surveillance capacity.

Contingency Planning

Should states, counties, or the Blackfeet Nation reinstate major health restrictions due to unacceptably high COVID-19 infection rates, the park is prepared to scale back facilities and operations as necessary, in conjunction with these restrictions. The detection of community spread within the park will trigger the closure of facilities and potentially affected geographic areas.