



## GMC's GUIDELINES FOR SECTION OUTINGS IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

Edited January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021 with newest items in red

These guidelines were created by the Section Outings Working Group (SOWG) in early June 2020. The SOWG is made up of trip leaders, outings coordinators, and experienced section representatives who considered all aspects of section outings. This guidance has stayed relatively consistent since January and GMC trip leaders and participants have done a great job of putting safety first. Between November 14<sup>th</sup> and December 22<sup>nd</sup> all multiple household social gatherings, including outdoor recreation were suspended. The Governor's latest guidance on outdoor recreation, issued December 22<sup>nd</sup>, allows limited multi-household outdoor recreation, permitting the return of Section Outings.

Vermont's caseload is still higher than any point during the 2020 hiking season. While multi-household recreation is permitted, we encourage each leader and participant to consider their own COVID-19 risk profile and take every possible precaution when considering outdoor recreation with others.

There is specific guidance for the Organization, Outings Coordinator, Trip Leader and the Participant. For trip leaders and participants, we've broken the guidance into specific time frames.

1. *Planning a Trip*
2. *Before the Trip*
3. *At the Start of the Trip*
4. *During the Trip*
5. *At the End of the Trip (Not for Participants)*
6. *After the Trip*

These guidelines are prescriptive but will inevitably fail to cover some questions and answers. Without being too verbose, consider the below summary of rationale for establishing guidance.

1. Minimize the chances of including potential sources of contagion on our trips.
2. Reduce the opportunities for transmission spread on our trips.
3. Follow rules and regulations established by relevant governing bodies and maintain some semblance of consistency with GMC's other guidelines.
4. Provide consistent and simple guidance for outings leaders and participants.

## **Resources for COVID-19 Guidance**

Vermont Department of Health COVID FAQ's- <https://apps.health.vermont.gov/COVID/faq/#4761>

Dec 22<sup>nd</sup> Update On New Work Safe Additions to the Be Smart, Stay Safe Order- <https://accd.vermont.gov/news/update-new-work-safe-additions-be-smart-stay-safe-order#outdoor-recreation-and-fitness>

Governor Scott's COVID-19 Response- <https://governor.vermont.gov/covid19response>

ACCD Cross-State Travel Guidance- <https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/restart/cross-state-travel>

FPR Outdoor Recreation and COVID-19- <https://fpr.vermont.gov/recreation/outdoor-recreation-and-covid-19>

Vermont Department of Health- <https://www.healthvermont.gov/response/coronavirus-covid-19>

Green Mountain Club Response- <https://www.greenmountainclub.org/covid-19-response/>

## **ORGANIZATION**

- Provide initial guidelines.
- Disseminate guidelines to outings coordinators, including pushing out updates as they occur.
- Securely file for 30 days all trip leader contact lists.
- In the event a trip participant tests positive, coordinate with the VT Department of Health for participant list and contact tracing.
- Make guidelines available online in an easily found location and share that location with Section President's and Outings Coordinators.
- In consultation with Section Outings Working Group, provide updates to guidelines.
  - Receive feedback from trip leaders and outing coordinators.
  - Monitor guidance from governing organizations.

## **OUTINGS COORDINATORS**

- Act as conduit for guidelines, training (or training opportunities), questions, and feedback, communicating all in a timely manner.
- Ensure that trip leaders who have signed up to lead trips acknowledge that they have read, understood and accept section outing guidelines.
- Ensure trip leaders are collecting participant contact information and sending it to the GMC for filing.
- Outings coordinator will share and inform trip leaders of the following:
  - These guidelines for section outings.
  - Virtual training for trip leaders.
  - Availability and assistance from Outings Coordinator and GMC-staff contact.
- Consider buying PPE supplies (masks and sanitizer) in bulk to make available to trip leaders.



## GMC's GUIDELINES FOR SECTION OUTINGS IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

### TRIP LEADER

These are the minimum safety guidelines for GMC Section Outings. A trip leader may impose additional limitations (e.g., reduce group size, limit breaks) if they wish to.

If planning a bike, paddle or other recreational outing, follow all guidelines of that waterway/trail network and communicate questions or concerns with your Outings Coordinator and/or GMC.

The trip leader's Section Outings Coordinator as well as the GMC Staff are available for specific questions or clarifications related to this guidance.

#### *Planning a Trip*

- Identify a backup trip option if the trailhead parking lot is at or over capacity.
- Aim for a route that is less likely to be crowded on the day and time of the trip. Consider weekdays or early starts. This is a good opportunity to get out on less traveled trails.
- **Do not plan any trips that involve carpool or shuttles outside of you or your participant's household.**
- **Do not plan trips out of state.**
- Plan day trips only.
- Be sure to have an experienced hiker (up front) and sweep (at the rear), to reduce need to move back and forth throughout the group, and to increase safety.
- **Plan trips well within the trip leader's and expected participant's capabilities.**
- Any publicity (papers, website, e-mails) should include either full participant instructions or a link to the same, and **should not include the meeting place**, to ensure pre-registration by participants. Note that [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) requires an event date/time, but not a location.

#### *Before the Trip*

- Communicate with and require pre-registration by all participants, giving them participant instructions and getting an **acknowledgment that they have read, understand and agree to follow participant instructions**. In particular:
  - Participants should not come if they or anyone in their household shows symptoms of COVID-19, has been exposed to someone sick or has traveled out of state and not quarantined upon returning.
  - **For out-of-state participants, the state of Vermont has suspended its leisure travel map and anyone returning or traveling to Vermont must complete either a 14-day quarantine or a 7-day quarantine followed by a negative test prior to participating in any GMC Outings.**
  - Participants should bring a mask and hand sanitizer that they can keep accessible during the hike, plus all their own usual hiking stuff (water, food, clothing, sunscreen, bug dope....)

- Participants need to be certain of their ability to do the planned trip, and trip leaders should verify the same. This is not the time to try pushing your limits and thereby take on added risk for the individual or group.
- Limit trip size to ten participants, including leader(s).
- Collect contact information (name, email, phone number) for all participants before trip. This information is to be used only for contact tracing.
- Trip leader should consider bringing extra masks and hand sanitizer for emergencies (e.g. forgot mask, damages mask). This is not a substitute for participants bringing these items. Section outings coordinators may make these available to leaders.
- Communicate with your outings coordinator and check the GMC website for any updates to outing guidelines.

### *Start of Trip*

- Adopt an “arrive, play, leave” mentality, minimizing to every extent possible *start of* trip gathering time.
- Wearing masks and standing at least 6-feet from others, give brief name introductions and repeat “guidelines” of the hike.
  - Ask to ensure everyone has read the participant guidelines.
  - No sharing, food, water or equipment outside your own household members.
  - If it must happen outside of your household, use hand sanitizer.
  - Stay spaced out on the trail at least 6-feet apart, and preferably more.
  - Minimize passing, and when you pass wear a mask, say “hello” and communicate with the hiker about the next best move to preserve trailside vegetation and social distancing.
  - Wait (spaced out) at any trail junction or place where there is any uncertainty about the route.

### *During Trip*

- Follow above guidelines.
- Leader picks spots for breaks that are not crowded, where people can spread out without blocking the trail and without treading on sensitive plants and soils. Consider splitting the group into two and breaking those two groups slightly separate from each other. Avoid using shelters and picnic tables during breaks.
- **Wear masks at all times and avoid coming within 6 feet of others outside your household. This may be difficult when you are breathing hard and sweating, but is required by the current public health directives.**
- Communicate with the scout, sweep and all participants the need for hiker awareness and consideration of others.
  - When approaching another hiker to pass, slow down, give a friendly “Hello” and communicate with hiker the next best move for passing while preserving social distancing and the trailside vegetation.
  - Step off trail when needed. In areas that don't allow for six-feet of passing, step at a 90-degree angle off the trail onto a durable surface, wait until the passer is gone, and retrace your footsteps to the trail.
  - Sweep should make any hikers passing from the rear aware of the remaining group up ahead.

### *At End of the Trip*

- Ensure trip leader has contact information (name, phone, email) for all participants.
- Remind participants to immediately contact the Vermont Department of Health if they feel any symptoms of COVID-19.
- In a gentle and kind way, encourage the group to move along and not linger in the parking lot.

### *After Trip*

- Trip leader will send contact information for all participants to [lcurrier@greenmountainclub.org](mailto:lcurrier@greenmountainclub.org) to be securely filed for at least 30 days.
- If trip leader show signs and symptoms of COVID-19, contact your primary care provider or health provider immediately to request further guidance.
- Give feedback on the outing and these procedures to the outing's coordinator.



## GMC's GUIDELINES FOR SECTION OUTINGS IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

### Participant

#### *Planning a Trip*

- Look for a trip that is well within your hiking ability. This is not the time to try pushing your limits and thereby take on added risk for the individual or group.
- **For out-of-state participants, the state of Vermont has suspended its leisure travel map and anyone returning or traveling to Vermont must complete either a 14-day quarantine or a 7-day quarantine followed by a negative test prior to participating in any GMC Outings.**

#### *Before the Trip*

- Sign up with the trip leader and provide contact information to be filed securely by GMC Staff for 30 days. Participant contact information will be used only in the event contact tracing is required.
- Review and **acknowledge that you have read, understood and agree to follow these participant instructions.**
- **DO NOT COME** if you or anyone in your household shows symptoms of COVID-19, has been exposed to someone sick or has traveled out of state and not quarantined upon returning. Alert the trip leader you will not be coming.
- Bring a mask (a "buff" is not acceptable) and hand sanitizer that you can keep accessible during the hike, plus all your own usual hiking stuff (water, food, clothing, sunscreen, bug dope...). Bring multiple masks to swap out if one gets dirty or sweaty.
- Drive separately and **do not carpool** to the trailhead or meeting location designated by the trip leader (ride sharing from a single household is OK).

#### *Start of Trip*

- Adopt an "arrive, play, leave" mentality, and minimize gathering time.
- Wear a mask as you exit your vehicle, meet the leader and other participants, hear the hike instructions and depart from the trailhead.

#### *During Trip*

- Do not share food, water, or equipment outside your own household members.
- Stay spaced out on the trail at least 6 feet apart.
- All participants should be aware of the need for hiker awareness and consideration of others.
  - When approaching another hiker to pass, slow down, give a friendly "Hello" and communicate with hiker the next best move for passing while preserving social distancing and the trailside vegetation.

- Step off trail when needed. In areas that don't allow for six-feet of passing, step at a 90-degree angle off the trail onto a durable surface, wait until the passer is gone, and retrace your footsteps to the trail.
- Don't pass the lead hiker and be sure to stop at any trail junction or place where there is any uncertainty about the route.
- Avoid sharing anything and use hand sanitizer if you must share.
- At breaks, stay spread out and avoid blocking the trail or treading on sensitive plants and soils. Avoid using shelters and picnic tables during breaks.
- **Wear masks at all times and avoid coming within 6 feet of others outside your household. This may be difficult when you are breathing hard and sweating, but is required by the current public health directives.**

### *After Trip*

- Give your name and contact information to the trip leader if they haven't received it already.
- If you show signs and symptoms of COVID-19, contact your primary care provider or health provider immediately to request further guidance.