



NOVA SCOTIA TRAILS FEDERATION

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For Immediate Release, COVID 19 Update to Members and Trail Users

A message from Beth Pattillo, Chairperson of the Nova Scotia Trails Federation

As cases of COVID 19 (Corona Virus) are confirmed in Nova Scotia I am addressing our continued goal of keeping our staff, board, contractors, members and the trail managers and users safe and informed. To this end I have tasked the NS Trails Federation Risk Management Committee with conducting a thorough risk analysis of the situation as it pertains to our federation, members and trail using public. The committee was further tasked with developing and maintaining in concert with our staff, a business continuity plan. The committee has sought and obtained collaboration on this work from leaders at NS Health, Emergency Measures, NS Internal Services Risk Management and Risk Analysis.

This is a pandemic and we will not be able to alter the global picture or outcome; we can however mitigate the risks to ourselves, our volunteers and our trail users and their loved ones. The following socially responsible actions are being implemented to curtail the spread and contracting of this highly contagious virus. Social Distancing will be of the utmost importance. The NSTF business continuity plan is being implemented.

NSTF staff members, contractors and volunteers will postpone all non-essential travel and conduct meetings and conferences digitally whenever possible. Any in-person meetings or work trips — including volunteer trail member groups — should be limited to no more than twelve people in one location to reduce the risk of infection. Any staff member or volunteer who displays the symptoms of COVID 19 virus is asked to stay home until cleared to return to work by a medical professional. We are also encouraging staff members and volunteers to work from home whenever possible. While we do not anticipate this will significantly alter our ability to quickly respond to emails, phone calls, membership requests, risk management and other important communications, we appreciate everyone's understanding and patience as we transition to this new model.

Due to the risks inherent with large gatherings, **the 2020 Nova Scotia Trails Conference** is under review and a statement will be issued in the next few days. The Risk Management Committee has completed their risk analysis of the event and will be consulting with our partners.

Take Trails to HEART!

Trail use and the need for trail maintenance is expected to increase with the closure of most recreational and community venues. Trail use remains one of the safest recreational activities during the pandemic and a good way to relieve the stress and anxiety associated with this event. A few simple rules as adopted from other trail jurisdictions will assist in making it even safer:

For Nova Scotia Trail users, distancing yourself from other users and maintaining good hygiene is the best defense for reducing your chances of contracting any illness:

- **Wash your hands** frequently with biodegradable soap at least 200 feet from water sources. When soap is not available, use hand sanitizer that contains 60-95% alcohol.
- **Avoid sharing food.** Do not eat out of the same food bag, share utensils or drink from other users' water bottles.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.**
- **Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing.** Use the crook of your arm (inner elbow) or use a tissue and dispose of it using Leave No Trace Principles.
- **Keep some distance between you and other users whenever possible,** especially if anyone shows signs of being sick. Avoid shaking hands or other close contact — instead, waving is a safer way to greet others.
- **Avoid congregating in groups along the Trail.**
- If you are an older adult or have serious chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes or lung disease, you are at a higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19 contraction. **Hike and camp away from others to minimize the likelihood of infection.**
- If you begin feeling sick, **stay away from others and leave the trail** until examined and cleared for return to the trails by a medical professional.

For volunteers working on the trails, the additional guidelines are also recommended:

- **Minimize carpooling to work locations.** While this is not ideal regarding environmental impacts, personal safety and health take priority.
- **Work in groups of no more than 6 people in any location.**
- **Avoid sharing tools and equipment whenever possible.**

We recognize that this is the time of year, that many of our member trail groups hold Annual General Meetings (AGM). **We have been in communication with the Registry of Joint Stock Companies and have been informed that non-profit societies are self-governing and due to concerns relating to COVID-19 and public gatherings may postpone an AGM beyond what is outlined in your organization's Bylaws.** It is important that non-profit societies record any decision to postpone their AGM and the reason why in the meeting minutes and follow the Bylaws regarding notice to members.

The Nova Scotia Trails Federation will continue to monitor the pandemic and will relay guidance and communications as warranted. Enjoy trail activities and be safe.

Beth Pattillo
Chair, Nova Scotia Trails Federation