

RESOURCES—EARTH DAY NOW A VIRTUAL EVENT

We Can STILL Make a Difference

It has been hard to see the cancellation of Earth Day events all around the world and consider just how much hard organizational work went down the drain with it. And even as we express much heartfelt gratitude to the previously underappreciated cashiers, delivery people, shelf stockers, truck drivers and railroad workers, and health care providers of every kind who are keeping the rest of us going, we also salute those of you who are now taking a little breather.

This time to step back and re-evaluate the level of busy-ness that makes up much of our modern life gives us an unexpected chance to give a little back to the Earth in a very different way.

- Sport your Earth Day 50 apparel; take a picture and share to social media!
- Keep an eye on our YouTube channel for Marci’s backyard video series at [YouTube.com/PAParksandForests](https://www.youtube.com/PAParksandForests)
- Learn about a conservation hero: [PAConservationHeritage.org/Documentaries](https://www.paconservationheritage.org/) and check our events calendar for an online discussion of the films during Earth Week
- Make an Earth Day playlist: share with your friends and dance all day!

- Write a thank you letter to your favorite park or forest. Or to the staff.
- Plan future visits to PA Parks and Forests. Not sure where to go? Let a PPFF passport be your guide. bit.ly/PPFFOnlineStore
- Check out [EarthDay50PA.org](https://www.earthday50pa.org) for teaching resources to incorporate earth science into your at-home learning
- The reading lists for adults (and for youngsters) grows nearly every day with recommendations from librarians, teachers, bookstore owners, and people just like you who enjoy the outdoors.
- *EarthDay4Everyone* includes ideas to “green up” your home and office (which may well be the same thing now); the Leave No Trace guidelines are a perfect reminder for behavior in now-closed park and forest facilities; you can learn to compost, fight invasive species, combat climate change, AND Use Your Outdoor Voice to speak up on behalf of Planet Earth.

Thanks to Graphics & Design for the #PracticeSafeRec infographic



Download the infographic (and a version in Spanish) at [PAParksAndForests.org/Get-Involved/Get-Outdoors](https://www.PAParksAndForests.org/Get-Involved/Get-Outdoors)



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From the Desk of the President

April 2020

PARKS & FORESTS IN THE DAYS OF COVID-19

Closures and an Appeal for Safe Behavior

We all play a part in spreading the novel coronavirus responsible for COVID-19, an extremely contagious and untreatable disease, and as a result the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources took a leadership role and closed our parks and forests across the state. The most recent “deadline” for such closures is April 30. If the spread of COVID-19 is not brought under control by then, these closures may well extend beyond the current date.

What does “closure” mean? It means that buildings are closed to public access, staffing is limited, and public programming and volunteering are not permitted. Recognizing the important role spending time in the outdoors plays, the public can still access trails, lakes, roads, and parking for passive and dispersed recreation, such as hiking

If you visit a park or forest, know that there is limited staff available, so enjoy low-risk activities. We also encourage you to practice social distancing while enjoying open spaces avoiding groups and crowds, and implore all visitors to be respectful of our natural places and remove any waste or refuse you may bring with you, use the bathroom before you leave home, and—in short—exercise patience, good judgment, and grace in the face of what is for all of us an unexpected interruption to Spring 2020.

Take a minute to view PPFF President Marci Mowery’s video message on our YouTube channel ([YouTube.com/PAParksandForests](https://www.youtube.com/PAParksandForests)).

Please stay in touch with PPFF as we help you negotiate these strange new days. Our social media is a valuable resource for the latest news and even a little bit of fun.

 [Facebook.com/PennsylvaniaParksAndForestsFoundation](https://www.facebook.com/PennsylvaniaParksAndForestsFoundation)

 [@ppff](https://twitter.com/ppff)

 [@paparksandforests](https://www.instagram.com/paparksandforests)

 [Pinterest.com/ppff](https://www.pinterest.com/ppff)

 [YouTube.com/PAParksandForests](https://www.youtube.com/PAParksandForests)

Have an idea for a social media resource or a pressing question? Send to: HereToHelp@PAParksAndForests.org.

At the Foundation, we have taken some steps to ensure we are here for you when we emerge from the other side. We are:

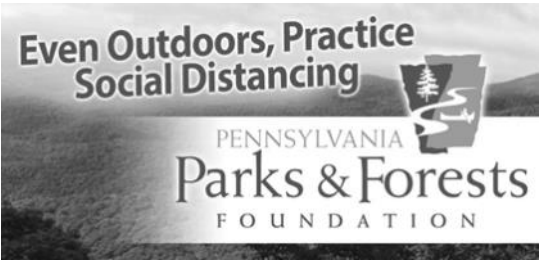
1. Working remotely and with reduced staff hours, so please be patient if you don’t hear from us immediately.
2. Deploying cash preservation strategies so that we can continue to provide services to our parks and forests and to ensure access to healthy outdoor recreation.

3. Providing up-to-date information to the public through our social media channels. This includes providing ways to engage the public through links to information, ideas for stress relief, places to explore, and ways to reduce the potential for exposure.
4. Communicating with our chapters/ volunteers to keep them alerted to changes and protocols.
5. Continuing to monitor legislation that might negatively impact parks and forests.
6. Having weekly executive committee calls with board of directors to monitor and react to changing circumstances.
7. Engaging with other non-profits to share resources and provide support.

The heavy use of our parks and forests at this time strongly indicates their value to the public, and the valuable role that YOU have enabled us to play through your membership and donations. We know that the needs of our parks and forests will continue to grow and we will be there for them, and YOU. **Thank you for being a Park and Forest Champion!!**

HAVE YOU SEEN OUR BILLBOARD?

Thanks to Lamar Advertising for donation of the design and placement of the message!



FOREST BATHING—THE ART (AND SCIENCE) OF ENJOYING NATURE

A Reminder to Take a Moment to Breathe

For a while doctors have said time in the outdoors is good for our health, and that incorporating outdoor time into a fitness routine can up the ante on the benefits of exercise. Taking your fitness goals out there can lift your mood, improve your focus, provide faster healing and less pain, and even makes the very act of exercising easier.

Shinrin-yoku, translated as “forest bathing,” puts a different spin on exercising outdoors and suggests there are significant health benefits to be derived from engaging all five senses in a gentle contemplative walk through a forest.

Says Ben Page, a certified forest therapy guide from Los Angeles, “Whereas a ... hike’s [objective] is to reach a destination, a *Shinrin-yoku* walk’s objective is to give participants an opportunity to slow down, appreciate things that can only be seen or heard when one is moving slowly, and take a break from the stress of their daily lives.”

Echoing ideas featured in *Last Child in the Woods*, Richard Louv’s groundbreaking work on nature deficit disorder in children, research on forest bathing confirms that simple engagement of the five senses in a forest provides:

- A boost to the immune system (important now as we fight a disease with no known cure).
- Reduced blood pressure and stress
- Improved mood and sleep
- Increased ability to focus, even in children with ADHD
- Accelerated recovery from surgery or illness
- Increased energy level.

The practice brings forest bathers:

- Deeper and clearer intuition

- Increased flow of energy
- Deepening of friendships



The Japanese healing art of Shinrin-yoku has been a part of preventive health care since the 1980s. Can some time with the trees fix what ails you?

- Overall increase in sense of happiness.

There’s Something in the Air

Both the philosophy and research are fascinating. For example, while improved immune system function could be demonstrated in research subjects who spent time in nature, no similar improvement was noted in comparable outings in an urban setting. A measurement in the air of the natural chemicals secreted by evergreens, collectively known as *phytoncides*, corresponded to the improvement in immune function. This is even more interesting if you recall that treatment for tuberculosis once involved a “forest cure,” with sanatoriums in Germany’s pine forests and in the Adirondack forests of New York, for example. There was speculation among the physicians of the time that pine trees secreted a healing balm into the air. And like many a long-forgotten theory, it seems they may have been right!

Five Steps to Forest Bathing (from Mind Body Green):

See the trees, the plants growing under foot, the fungi, moss and lichen. Look up, down and all around for animals hiding under rocks, in burrows, and on tree branches. Notice the colors, shapes and textures.

Hear the rustling of leaves, the bird songs, or running water. Listen for the subtle sounds.

Feel the ground beneath your feet, the strength of tree trunks, the softness of leaves, or the prickliness of pine cones.

Smell the fresh air and the evergreens. Get close and smell the flowers.

Taste pine needle or ginkgo leaf tea. (Be sure to accurately identify any plant you are going to taste.)

Like many Eastern healing methods, the idea of *Shinrin-yoku* is quite simple—and hardly “new” or trendy. Go outside, breathe, stroll.

- Shinrin-yoku—www.shinrin-yoku.org
- Mind Body Green: Why You Need to Try Forest Bathing—www.mindbodygreen.com/0-21066/why-you-need-to-try-japanese-forest-bathing.html

Find a longer version of this article at PAParksAndForests.org/Get-Involved/Get-Outdoors. Look for the Downloadable Fact Sheets.

ADVOCACY DAY A VICTIM OF THE VIRUS

Your Voice Will Still Be Heard

In truth, planning for the May 19 Advocacy Day at the Pennsylvania state capitol came to a halt a few days prior to announcement of the closings resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic when the partners learned that the PA House had canceled their previously-scheduled session days that week.

A retooled Advocacy Day was in the works when the dominoes began to fall. As the situation stands now, all of Pennsylvania’s legislative delegation will be wrapping up their work on the budget as quickly as possible and returning to their homes to do what the rest of us are doing—waiting for this crisis to pass.

THE UN-BANQUET IS A GO!

The Year of the Trees Keeps Growing

Everywhere we turn, events are being cancelled.

Isn’t THAT the beauty of having already decided that this year’s annual awards banquet would instead be a non-event event? We look downright smart!

As you know, our **UN-Banquet** supports the effort to raise \$600,000 to replace trees in our state parks and forests. Proceeds will be dedicated to the purchase and planting of native species (ppff.events/year-of-the-trees-unbanquet-info).

Buy a ticket or a table and we’ll send you an Earth Day bandana, a seed packet for sowing wildflowers in your own Earth space, and a bookmark to use as you mark tomes off your reading list.

These efforts WILL continue even in the face of the quarantines and closings that are a part of the never-to-

We intend to restart the legislative tours begun last fall, using these events to introduce your parks and forests to elected officials who may never have had the time to see what these important public lands have to offer.

In the meantime, we are gratified by the outpouring of vocal support the unexpected closure of your favorite places unleashed! Now we know beyond a doubt that when the legislative tours take place—and Advocacy Day is rescheduled in whatever form possible—your voice will be among those raised to declare the need for dedicated funding and a serious plan for improvements and maintenance.

The Coloring Book Craze has swept the nation and Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation is happy to give you three options to join in.



And check out our other **FREEBIES** for download at the About Us/ Publications page of the website.

Many scheduled showings of winners of the 2019 contest had to be cancelled with park office closings. Watch the PPFF website for details of rescheduled galleries.

READY ... SET ... CLICK!

Submit your photos before 9/8/20 to Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation’s State Parks & Forests Through the Seasons Photo Contest

Choose your category/categories:

- ♦ Selfie
- ♦ Park & Forest Adventures
- ♦ Dogs in the Outdoors
- ♦ Intergenerational Moments
- ♦ Other Wildlife Sightings
- ♦ Young Photographers (ages 12-17)
- ♦ Motion

Contest rules and category information available at <http://bit.ly/2020PPFFPhotoContest>

Sponsorships available! Please contact Marci Mowery at mmowery-ppff@pa.net for information.

