



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Apostle Islands National Lakeshore News Release

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Apostle Islands National Lakeshore Suspends Overnight Island Use

Bayfield, Wisconsin – Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, in response to guidance from Bayfield and Ashland Counties and Wisconsin Department of Health Services, is supporting federal, state, and local efforts to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). To encourage visitors to stay at home, overnight island use (8:00 pm to 8:00 am) in the lakeshore is suspended until at least Saturday June 20, 2020. This includes both camping and docking overnight. Day use of islands is still permitted. Visitors are asked to practice *Leave No Trace* principles and to manage all their own trash and waste. Due to safety concerns for both visitors and park staff, vault toilets are not available and campfires are not permitted.

“The health and safety of our employees, local residents, and visitors to Apostle Islands National Lakeshore is our number one priority,” said park superintendent Lynne Dominy. “Overnight use encourages people to travel to Bayfield and to congregate around docks and camping areas which is contrary to what local and state health authorities are recommending. This change is in alignment with recent closures of recreational uses on state and other federal lands in Wisconsin.”

“Following the lifting of Safer-at-Home orders, we will need time to get our staff back at work, launch our boats on the lake, assess all island docks and shorelines for winter damage, and gear-up our emergency response team before permitting overnight use on these remote islands,” said Dominy. “We cannot even consider overnight island uses until we can do these things. Due to the delay in on-boarding summer staff, the visitor centers in Bayfield and Little Sand Bay remain be delayed in opening. Limited staff are available by email and phone, with ‘virtual visitor centers’ opening closer to Memorial Day. Trip planning information is available on the lakeshore website.”

“The National Park Service (NPS) is working nationally with federal, state, and local authorities to closely monitor the COVID-19 pandemic,” added Dominy. “We will notify the public when we resume camping reservations and will provide updates on our website www.nps.gov/apis and social media channels. We will keep evaluating the situation so that we know if, and when allowing overnight use is appropriate and possible to do with COVID-19 prevention recommendations.”

Outdoor spaces in the mainland areas of **Apostle Islands National Lakeshore** remain accessible to the public, in addition to parking fees at Meyers Beach being waived for visitors. However, the park is still experiencing winter conditions, including snow covered shorelines, icy trails, and frigid waters with ice in harbors on Lake Superior. See Current Conditions on the park's website ([go.nps.gov/ApostleConditions](https://www.nps.gov/ApostleConditions)) for the status of various areas within the park.

If contemplating a visit to a national park during this pandemic, the NPS asks visitors to adhere to guidance from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov) (CDC) and state and local public health authorities to protect visitors and employees. Wisconsin is under a *Safer at Home* order, until at least April 24, 2020, to slow the spread of COVID-19. This includes staying at home, with limited exceptions and, if using shared or outdoor space, maintaining social distancing of at least six feet. Three cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in Bayfield County and the county is asking all seasonal residents to stay in their winter homes due to limited health services and supplies in this area. A high percentage of the local population is over 65 so COVID-19 exposure could have devastating consequences to this at-risk community.

The NPS encourages people to take advantage of the many digital tools already available to explore Apostle Islands National Lakeshore from home, including the lakeshore website and Facebook page. Teleworking park educators are creating fun learning tools for kids. Parents and teachers can find resources at [go.nps.gov/ApostleKids](https://www.nps.gov/ApostleKids), with more resources added every week.

Updates about NPS operations will be posted on www.nps.gov/coronavirus. Please check with [individual parks](#) for specific details about park operations. For more information about Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, visit www.nps.gov/apis, email apis_webmaster@nps.gov or call (715) 779-3338. Virtual visitor centers will open closer to Memorial Day, with hours and services to be announced on the park website [go.nps.gov/apis](https://www.nps.gov/apis) and Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/apostleislandsnationallakeshore/>.

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