



## COUNTY OF DEL NORTE COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

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May 05, 2020

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California Natural Resources Agency  
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Wade Crowfoot, Director

Director Crowfoot,

The Del Norte County Board of Supervisors is writing to request that you direct staff to engage in discussions to open State Parks within Del Norte County to vehicular traffic. The Del Norte County Board of Supervisors previously agreed with a request from California State Parks to close a local road to traffic as a response to issues with social distancing. We did so in good faith and as a partner with the understanding there were issues with visitors congregating in parking lots and parking areas within State Parks. The Del Norte County Board of Supervisors have since acted to revise that decision and open that local road due to local concerns of limitations to healthy outdoor recreational options provided by State Parks.

Additionally, State Parks staff has installed multiple permanent barriers in the form of gates that restrict the public from accessing trails and river bars for outdoor recreation. When discussed with State Parks staff the primary issue became apparent, temporary barriers placed to limit parking were damaged. People actually congregating were not indicated to be a concern. The resulting response to place permanent gates where none have existed has created tremendous local concern, and our Board has been contacted to address the situation through coordination with State Parks.

As the Stay at Home order has progressed, visitors have complied and people have become more in touch with social distancing and it has become apparent the need for limiting vehicular traffic and parking in State parks has become a non-issue. State Parks website, specifically the State Parks COVID-19 Resource Center page, states "The department is also working closely with local county and public health officials, and assessing operations on a daily basis to provide access to healthy outdoor options while emphasizing the need for safe, physical distancing. The Department understands local agencies each have unique operational considerations and strategies. As such, State Parks is partnering with locals to align park operations and help the public understand and comply with directives from local public health authorities."

While this is a noble statement it has not been what we have experienced in Del Norte County. During our discussions with local staff the Department proceeded to file a Categorical Exemption to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act and simultaneously began the project of placing the permanent gates. This is not consistent with the goal of working closely with local County and Public Health Officials.

The County firmly believes with guidance from our public health officer that these restrictions have the opposite affect on the States objectives to social distance and promote behaviors which will ultimately limit opportunities for a community which has managed to effectively the spread of this virus.

Please consider this a formal request to work with Del Norte County to remove the restrictions to vehicular access to site specific areas within Del Norte County in order to allow recreational activity while meeting social distancing guidelines. The Del Norte County Board of Supervisors is eager to discuss solutions and open areas within State Parks for responsible and much needed outdoor recreational activity. Please contact County Administrative Officer Jay Sarina at (707) 464-7214 or by email at [jsarina@co.del-norte.ca.us](mailto:jsarina@co.del-norte.ca.us) to coordinate a time and date to meet. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Gerry Hemmingsen, Chairman  
Del Norte County Board of Supervisors

CC.

Lisa Mangat, Director  
California State Parks and Recreation