



## **Guidance from Nova Scotia Trails Federation Risk Management Committee Regarding COVID 19 and Trail Maintenance, Monitoring and Compliance**

Following consultation with our partners, the Risk Management Committee offers the following guidance to our members managing all types of trails.

NS Lands and Forestry recently issued the following statement ***“We expect trails will become busier. Trails should be monitored to ensure everyone can safely enjoy them and follow the guidelines and directives. If you feel a community trail on Crown land has become too busy, please contact us for advice or to discuss options.”***

Monitoring to ensure everyone can follow the directives and guidelines, is defined as; making sure that the trail infrastructure allows for users to maintain social distancing. This does not refer to monitoring behaviours of users around social distancing, trail managers have no duty, experience, training or obligation to engage non-compliant users. Enforcement agencies have clear guidelines and will deal with this. The number of cars parked at trail heads is just as visible to enforcement agencies as it is to you. Nova Scotia Trails Federation has previously suspended the trail patrol program administered and sanctioned by NS Trails, therefore, no community trail groups should be conducting trail patrols in regard to social distancing requirements. Any type of trail patrol activity will increase social interactions on trail that are unnecessary, this type of engagement can also be confrontational in nature. The Public Health Authority and Province have issued clear guidelines and delivered them with such sufficiency to ensure no extra educational component by trail groups is mandated.

A trail group’s safety obligations should be limited to emergent infrastructure related safety concerns. That being, stop signs down, trees down etc. The timing of the pandemic precludes the need for trail mowing and vegetation control, as well, grading and surfacing activities would not normally be conducted for another month. Many of our trails are under snow cover today. Maintenance activities should be minimized and conducted by the minimum number of volunteers possible, one person can install a sign, if two are needed to remove a tree using a chainsaw, they should travel separately, complete the task and leave the trail. Extra trail use will only result in slight variations in trail experience quality. Adding extra maintenance and crews to the trails will cause trail users to bunch up, subject workers to undo exposures to COVID 19 and is more likely to cause an adverse collision with maintainers etc. on busy trails. Collection of trailside garbage etc. can expose volunteers without proper training and personal protective equipment to the Corona Virus.

When seeking guidance to determine if your trail is too busy, keep in mind that in particular Trails to Trails are designed to allow folks to pass easily while allowing 2 meters distance, therefore with 2 way traffic, and users spaced at 2 meter intervals a kilometer of trail will support 1000 users at once while allowing compliance. It is highly unlikely that any trail in the province will see these

types of user numbers. Where narrow trail infrastructure precludes social distancing the trail group is advised to close the trail. Closed hiking or single-track trails should be posted at points of entry.

We encourage all trail managers to take a deep breath, we realize that uncertainty and wide-ranging restrictions are causing much stress. Remember that trail users can ultimately decide to not use your trail if they wish, we simply need to understand that a lot of folks will be out on our trails as one of the few current recreational activities available. Please direct users to <https://nstrails.com/trailguide/> for trail info, contacts, closures and conditions. Monitor <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/> for updates.