

Concise Explanatory Statement (CES)

Concise Explanatory Statement for Emergency Closure of State Lands

Rules amended as part of this rulemaking:

WAC 220-500-040 Regulating public access.
WAC 220-500-100 Camping.

Rules repealed as part of this rulemaking:

N/A

Rules created as part of this rulemaking:

N/A

1. Background/Summary of Project:

This emergency rule closes all public access, including all camping, to WDFW Lands – Wildlife Area Units and Water Access Areas. We are doing this in order to comply with the Governor’s “stay at home” order and the social distancing and public safety precautions associated with the COVID-19 threat.

This full closure is being implemented in coordination with the Governor’s office, State Parks and the WA Department of Natural Resources. At this time, we intend to keep the closure in place until April 8th at a minimum, at which time we will reassess and modify as necessary. The camping closure is intended to continue through April 30th at a minimum and we may need to reassess at that time. This includes all campgrounds, water access areas, and dispersed camping on Wildlife Areas.

2. Reasons for adopting the rule:

Governor Inslee issued an order for all Washington residents not engaged in essential work to “stay home” on March 23, 2020 in response to threat of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Several local, state and federal land managers are responding by closing public access which has already led to observations of increased usage on our Lands. Due to associated staff capacity limitations, the destination attraction of our lands, and the inability to ensure social distancing and recommended sanitization practices in the event of groups larger than 10 gathering on our Lands, WDFW has decided to close public access to our Wildlife Areas and Water Access Areas.

Camping in particular on WDFW Lands encourages gatherings of people in locations without the ability to maintain the social distancing and sanitation measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Due to much work and school being suspended due to the

COVID-19 threat, we are seeing increasing use at our campgrounds. Data indicate most state campground users travel significant distances to experience camping, thus increasing the potential incidence of human interaction and contact that we are all trying to minimize. Additionally, we are aware that the following local, state and federal campground closures will lead to increasing demand on our Lands for camping: Snohomish County, Grant County PUD, State Parks and State forestlands in Oregon, State Parks in California, Washington State Parks, Washington Department of Natural Resources, Mount Baker Snoqualmie National Forest. We are coordinating with our sister state land management agencies and the Governor's office on this decision.

3. Differences between the text of the proposed rule and the rule as adopted:

N/A

4. Public comments, response to comments, and consideration of comments

No public comments were solicited for this emergency rule.