



March 26, 2020

The Honorable Ralph Northam
Governor of Virginia
State Capitol
3rd Floor
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Governor Northam,

On behalf of the outdoor recreation industry, we thank you for your prudent leadership in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the actions you have taken to keep our employees and communities safe. In particular, we are grateful for the encouragement of safe, responsible outdoor activity in compliance with social distancing requirements and the outdoor industry stands ready to be a resource for you and your team.

The physical and mental health benefits of outdoor recreation are well known. Studies have shown that healthy, active outdoor recreation helps combat anxiety, depression, obesity and more. As people grapple with the effects of COVID-19, outdoor recreation can be essential to maintaining physical and mental health. Hiking, biking, hunting, paddling, running, boating, fishing, camping, SCUBA diving, ATVing, RVing, horseback riding and more are all activities that can be engaged in while adhering to CDC guidelines for social distancing. Now, more than ever, we think it is critical for communities to have access to opportunities for outdoor activities.

Access is an important component for our communities when participating in outdoor recreation. No matter what activity they enjoy, the public needs open access to state facilities. We applaud your attention to preserving these opportunities as communities navigate this unprecedented pandemic and encourage you to continue to allow public access to recreation sites if federal social distancing measures can be practiced.

Additionally, we encourage you to consider outdoor recreation repair, manufacturing and service businesses as “essential”. Outdoor recreation companies provide vital services for all Americans and often are a critical partner to law enforcement and public health agencies. For example – many marinas offer slips to law enforcement to ensure quick response for water safety; dealerships offer critical repair services for outdoor recreation products; and campgrounds might offer space for housing for traveling nurses and those in RVs. Gear manufacturers provide headlamps and gloves to workers and are adapting their facilities to the changing needs of our nation.

We understand the measures needed to protect health and safety and stand ready to work with the state to fully open public access to the outdoors once practical. We hope to work with you and your team in the months to come to bolster the health of your citizens and the outdoor economy that will ensure revitalized communities and economies for years to come.

We commend your leadership during these uncertain times and stand ready to assist your efforts as the state leads residents through this difficult time.

Sincerely,

America Outdoors
American Sportfishing Association
Archery Trade Association
Association of Marina Industries
CHM Government Services
Diving Equipment and Marketing Association
International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association
Marine Retailers Association of the Americas
National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds
National Forest Recreation Association
National Marine Manufacturers Association
National Park Hospitality Association
Outdoor Industry Association
RV Dealers Association
RV Industry Association
Snowsports Industries America
Specialty Equipment Market Association