

Pacific Crest Trail Association

Safely Reengaging on Trail Maintenance Activities

The COVID-19 pandemic affects every aspect of the Pacific Crest Trail community, from the feasibility of long-distance hikes and horseback rides on the PCT, to the health and safety of the PCTA's 14,000 members and 2,000 volunteers. We empathize with all those impacted by this public health crisis. The PCTA has taken steps throughout the pandemic to reduce the risk of spreading the virus to the trail community. On March 13, 2020, all in-person PCTA-related events were immediately canceled or postponed. That restriction was extended to June 1, 2020. As California, Oregon and Washington state governments lift stay-at-home orders and progress through phased re-openings, so too will in-person PCTA-related activities, with safety remaining the top priority.

The PCTA's volunteer activities are **optional** and **non-essential**. Your health and safety is our top priority, and **your participation is at your discretion**. We understand everyone has different levels of comfort and acceptable risk. **If you aren't comfortable returning to trail work when others are, we support you in returning to trail work when you are ready!** Also, note that if stricter local, county, or city regulations apply, they must be followed.

For 2020 season or until further notice:

- All volunteer activities will follow all enhanced COVID-19 safety protocols outlined in this document, including physical distancing.
- Volunteers under 18 must be accompanied by a parent.
- Volunteers will not accompany corps crews.
- PCTA projects will not have a communal base camp or kitchen gear. Each volunteer (or volunteers from the same household unit) will provide, store, and prepare food and drinks including water for themselves only.
- Projects involving volunteer packers are permissible if each volunteer (or volunteers from the same household unit) is completely self-sufficient. All gear and equipment must only be handled by the individual volunteer and packer, both must wear gloves.
- PCTA will provide all required PPE including hand and equipment sanitizer.

PCTA will monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and adapt this reengagement plan, as necessary, including reverting to previous levels.

Pacific Crest Trail Association Reengagement Levels

	Stay Home, Stay Healthy	Level A	Level B	Level C	Peak Reengagement
Activities Allowed	No volunteer activities. Staff may take part in essential work as approved by agency staff.	Scouting, project planning, tool maintenance. (No tool use in field.)	Day projects that can be completed by small groups while maintaining physical distance from other participants who are not from the same household. Examples include brushing and tread work as well as logout.	All trail maintenance or construction activities, not requiring closer than 6 feet spacing.	All trail maintenance and construction activities.
Timeframe		As individual land management agency units reinstate sponsored volunteer agreements. As allowed by individual States as they reduce stay-at-home orders. When PCTA can provide required PPE and sanitizing equipment.	As soon as three weeks after Level A is implemented, if consistent with State and local guidance, and if no reported COVID-19 incidents trailwide on volunteer projects. Dispatch and Search and Rescue must be operational.	As soon as three weeks after Level B is implemented, if consistent with State and local guidance and if no reported COVID-19 incidents trailwide on volunteer projects. Dispatch and Search and Rescue must be operational.	PCTA will resume normal operations when California, Oregon, and Washington lift all restrictions. This may happen on a state by state basis.
Participants	None	PCTA volunteer leaders, existing section adopters, caretakers, stewards, scouts with members of volunteer's household.	Experienced volunteers with working knowledge of a wide variety of basic trail maintenance tools and techniques and at least 100 volunteer hours of previous service with PCTA	Same as Level B.	Participants of all ages and skills levels.
Overnight Projects	No	No	No	Yes – No campfires.	Yes
Group Size	0	Solo or based on shared households	6	10	
Travel*	0 miles	Within 100 driving miles of residence. No air travel permitted.	Within 250 driving miles of residence. No air travel permitted.	Same as Level B.	Air travel permitted.
Carpooling **	No	No	No	No	Yes
Food & Beverage		Each volunteer must provide their own.	Each volunteer must provide their own.	Each volunteer must provide their own.***	PCTA resumes offering snacks, meals, beverages.

* Travel should be conducted to minimize exposure to gas stations, stores, restaurants, and communities outside of your home community.

** Travel should only occur with members of your household. No carpooling, shuttling, use of public transit, taxis, rideshare, or hitchhiking.

*** Reimbursement for meals on overnight projects may be available if planned in advance and in coordination with PCTA staff, and according to PCTA's Volunteer Expense Reimbursement Policy.

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COVID-19 Enhanced Safety Protocols

Basic Prevention:

- Keep anyone showing COVID-19 symptoms completely out of the worksite. Any volunteer experiencing symptoms must stay home in isolation or quarantine as per CDC recommendations: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine-isolation.html>
- Encourage proper respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes with the inside elbow of the arm, or in a tissue to be immediately discarded, and avoid touching the face. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/stop-the-spread-of-germs.pdf>
- All volunteers must bring/wear their cloth face coverings (non-N95) to help avoid touching face, eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands and to reduce the spread of aerosol droplets. Cloth face coverings must be worn when within 10 feet of others. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>
- Utilize frequent and thorough hand washing, especially before and after meals, touching your face or after sneezing, coughing. If soap and running water are not immediately available, alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropyl alcohol should be used, or biodegradable hand soap used away from water sources and the trail. <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/pdf/hand-sanitizer-factsheet.pdf>
- Follow all equipment guidance.
- Practice physical distancing by keeping six feet or more away from others—best practice being ten to 15 feet apart when physically exerting one’s self and/or downwind of other people. Cloth face coverings must be worn when within 10 feet of others. No trail work shall be conducted requiring people to be closer than six feet, including most forms of rock work, small crosscut saw use, clearing of bucked logs requiring more than one person, etc.
- For Reengagement Level B and C:
 - Eye protection and gloves must always be worn by every volunteer while on every project to reduce the likelihood of transmission. Work gloves should be worn at all times while conducting trail maintenance activities.
 - All group volunteer projects must include a foot-pump-operated handwashing station staged at vehicles with soap and water for participants to use. While on trail, crew leader will carry and make hand sanitizer available and/or allow volunteers to return to staging vehicle to use hand washing station.

Screening:

- All sign in sheets, waivers, JHAs, etc. will be completed electronically before the project.
- Volunteers are required to sign a COVID-19 waiver that they:
 - Have read the [CDC guidelines](#) regarding underlying conditions that would put them at high risk of severe illness to determine if participation in an activity will not unduly jeopardize their safety.
 - Complete a COVID-19 self-evaluation before attending project: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>
 - Acknowledge and are willing to abide by PCTA’s COVID-19 policies and procedures.

- Exposure to, or a diagnosis of, a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case within 14 days before a work trip will rule out volunteer's participation.
- For Reengagement Level A projects: Each volunteer will need to attend pre-field video training with PCTA staff to cover COVID-19 protocols and paperwork. (More than one training may be required as protocols change.)
- For Reengagement Level B and C projects: Advanced registration for all volunteer projects is required through the PCTA's Sacramento office.

Worksite:

- Conduct meetings, planning, and discussions over the phone/video whenever feasible. If in-person contact is required, continue physical distancing of six or more feet and make every effort to meet outside.
- Before project starts, crew leader will communicate with every crew member about possible interactions with infected people, steps to take if they start feeling ill and remind them of proper protection and spread prevention.
- Limit contact with local communities and trail users to protect the public and all volunteers; as much as possible, avoid purchasing project supplies outside your home community. Avoid busy trails or peak use times, including weekends. Choose access points that allow sufficient parking space for all participants while still allowing for passage of emergency vehicles.
- Carpooling to the access point is only allowed by those who live in the same household. Other volunteers must drive their own vehicles to the access point.
- Maintain a self-contained and self-sufficient work site as is feasible. If trail users outside the volunteer work crew are in proximity to trail work or the volunteers, volunteers must step off the trail to maintain at least six feet of distance.
- Snack, water, and lunch breaks must allow for physical distancing (10 feet).
- For Reengagement Level B and C projects: Each project will have a pre-project video check in with all participating volunteers to cover COVID-19 information as well as the normal tailgate safety session information.
- For Reengagement Level C projects: If camped at a project site, the following precautions must be taken:
 - Each volunteer or family unit must be self-sufficient, no borrowing personal, kitchen or camp items.
 - Set up tents/trailers/cooking areas at least 20 feet apart from each other.
 - Maintain at least six feet of physical distance in common areas such as toilets, wash areas, and campfires. Cloth face coverings must be worn when within 10 feet of other volunteers.
 - A daily attendance log of all visitors to a project site must be kept and submitted to PCTA's Sacramento office at the conclusion of a project. The log must include the name, phone number, and email address of all visitors.

Equipment:

- Volunteers should provide their own gloves and cloth face coverings. If they cannot, PCTA will provide but not have the volunteers return used gloves or cloth face coverings.
- Assign tools and equipment to a specific volunteer for the day, including hand tools, tool-specific PPE, radios, etc. Tools should remain as assigned and not be swapped throughout the day.

- Volunteers can bring their own tools but they can't be shared with others. We encourage them to clean and sanitize them at the end of the day.
- No fire lining or chain passing of tools and equipment in and out of tool caches and vehicles.
- At the end of each day or work trip, the crew leader is responsible for properly cleaning, sanitizing and returning tool(s) and equipment to the storage area.
- PPE, including hard hats, eye protection, and gloves, should be sent home with participants. These items should be returned to PCTA once COVID-19 safety protocols are no longer in place.

Evacuation & Exposure Plan:

- Isolate and quarantine a sick volunteer as quickly as possible from other volunteers, making sure the project First-Aid Lead has appropriate PPE, is able to monitor the health of the sick individual and provide supportive care as needed and at a distance if possible.
- Notify PCTA and Forest Service dispatch immediately per local communication protocols to advise if the sick volunteer will self-evacuate or requires assistance. Be sure to advise dispatch of the potential of a COVID-19 case so first responders and medivac personnel are aware.
- Monitor rest of the volunteers for signs of exposure/infection.
- Evacuate sick volunteer and remainder of crew according to established plans under the COVID-19 protocols.
- Volunteers who test positive for COVID-19 will be directed to self-quarantine.
 - <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Testing-Guidance.pdf>
 - Volunteers that test negative and are symptom free may return to volunteering when at least seven (7) days have passed since the test date and have not had a subsequent illness.
 - Volunteers who test positive and are directed to care for themselves at home may return to volunteering when at least 72 hours (3 full days) have passed with no fever; and symptoms improved; and at least ten (10) days have passed since symptoms first appeared. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/end-home-isolation.html>
 - Volunteers who test positive and have been hospitalized may return to volunteering when permitted to do so by their medical care providers. The PCTA requires volunteers to provide documentation clearing their return to volunteering.
- Volunteers who have come into close contact with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 (co-volunteer or otherwise) will be directed to self-quarantine for 14 days from the last date of close contact with that individual. Close contact is defined as six (6) feet for a prolonged period. If the PCTA learns that a volunteer has tested positive, the PCTA will:
 - Conduct an investigation to determine co-volunteers who may have had close contact with the confirmed positive volunteer in the prior 14 days;
 - Direct those individuals who have had close contact with the confirmed-positive volunteer to self-quarantine for 14 days from the last date of close contact with that volunteer;
 - If applicable, notify any staff, vendors/suppliers or visitors who may have had close contact with the confirmed-positive volunteer.

- If a volunteer learns that they have come into close contact with a confirmed-positive individual outside of the trail project but within the 14 days prior to the project, they must alert PCTA of the close contact and self-quarantine for 14 days from the last date of close contact with that individual.
- Sanitize all gear, equipment, vehicle, tools, etc. after quarantine period is over, to prevent contamination/re-contamination of gear.
- A volunteer who becomes sick with COVID-19 and suspects it to be from volunteering on a PCTA-sponsored project should work with PCTA staff to contact the Forest Service to submit a claim.
- Except for circumstances in which the PCTA is legally required to report workplace occurrences of communicable disease, the confidentiality of all medical conditions will be maintained in accordance with applicable law and to the extent practical under the circumstances. When it is required, the number of persons who will be informed that an unnamed volunteer has tested positive will be kept to the minimum needed to comply with reporting requirements and to limit the potential for transmission to others. The PCTA reserves the right to inform other volunteers that an unnamed co-volunteer has been diagnosed with COVID-19 if the other volunteers might have been exposed to the disease so the volunteers may take measures to protect their own health. The PCTA also reserves the right to inform staff, vendors/suppliers or visitors that an unnamed volunteer has been diagnosed with COVID-19 if they might have been exposed to the virus so those individuals may take measures to protect their own health.

Frequently Asked Questions

PCTA is maintaining a real-time FAQ document to answer additional questions and implementation details that we are working out.

<https://pcta.box.com/s/6zh3o9rsmmqm4g83k1kv6ots8t2dzrlv>

If you have additional questions, please email them to volunteer@pcta.org or your local PCTA Regional Representative.