



## USDA Forest Service - Summary

### Guidance and Protocols to Implement the USDA Reopening Playbook

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The USDA Forest Service has developed a strategy to operationalize the [\*\*\*USDA Reopening Playbook\*\*\*](#), the framework created to guide the return to facilities based on White House [\*\*\*Opening Up America Again\*\*\*](#) guidance and Office of Management and Budget guidance [\*\*\*Aligning Federal Agency Operations with the National Guidelines for Opening Up America Again\*\*\*](#). This strategy outlines the specific criteria, resources and tools for managers when making decisions that allow employees to gradually, effectively and safely return to work in a Forest Service facility.

#### **SUMMARY**

The Forest Service mission statement is to *“Care for the Land, Serve the People.”* This has remained true throughout the COVID-19 pandemic even as the way we worked looked much different. Forest Service employees have exhibited resilience in the midst of struggle, and innovation in the midst of chaos. We recognize that many of the more than 1,100 facilities across the nation remained operational in some way due to the determination and passion of employees. The [\*\*\*USDA Reopening Playbook\*\*\*](#) provides a framework for our strategy and has allowed us to build agency-specific guidance, so we are able to take into account the unique circumstances of our facilities and employees. Whether we are reopening facilities or increasing operations, we will do so with the safety and well being of our employees, contractors, volunteers and the public in mind.

#### **Leaders Intent**

- Our priorities will reflect our core values of **safety** for our employees and the people we serve and **service** to the American people, and the interdependence between them.
- Decisions will be made at the local level based on local conditions, workforce and mission needs.
- We will transition through phases of resuming operations gradually and thoughtfully.
- Our decisions will be date-driven and supported by risk assessments.
- We care for our employees and will work to guard their physical and emotional well-being.

#### **Employees**

- The safety and well-being of employees will be carefully considered throughout each phase.
- Telework will be utilized through all phases of reopening. Supervisors will keep in close communication with employees throughout each phase to discuss individual and local circumstances, including:
  - Child and dependent care needs
  - Employee health
  - Availability of public transportation in some areas
- Clearly and expeditiously communicate decisions to employees, volunteers and contractors.

#### **Facilities**

- Decisions to resume operations at Forest Service facilities will be informed by the following:
  - State or community compliance with federal gating criteria;
  - The state or community has begun implementing phased in reopening of public and commercial activities, and lifted mandatory travel restrictions;

- The increase in operation of the facility is necessary to fully serve constituents, ensure customer service, and support the USDA Forest Service mission; and
- The Forest Service facility has appropriate face coverings or masks, personal protective equipment (PPE), cleaning supplies and services, and has a plan to ensure sufficient social hygiene practices are in place to protect employees, contractors, and the public.

#### State and Local Communities

- We will comply with gating and phasing criteria outlined in the *USDA Reopening Playbook* and follow federal, state and local recommendations aimed at mitigating the spread of COVID-19.
- In the spirit of Shared Stewardship, we will work closely with local and state officials, and with our partner Federal land management agencies to coordinate decisions regarding facility operations.

#### The Public

- We will identify methods to provide important customer services in ways that protect our employees and our visitors.
- We will screen visitors to our facilities, and allow escorted access in some cases, while adhering to CDC guidelines regarding human interactions.

#### PHASED APPROACH

The three phases outlined in the strategy include guidelines for determining where and when the physical presence of employees is a necessary component, and mitigation actions that reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure to employees and the public.

Each phase describes:

- **Eligibility for Return to Facility** – Telework options to meet employee and mission needs
- **Onsite Practices** – Mitigation measures for employees based on CDC protocols
- **Visitor Considerations** – When and how visitors may be allowed into the facility
- **Travel Considerations** – Allowable travel and adherence to quarantine recommendations
- **Reduction in Phase** – Status of employees, local and state governments, availability of PPE

#### DOCUMENT LINKS

- [Strategy to Operationalize the USDA Reopening Playbook to Sustain Customer Service and Mission Delivery During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [Excel Template: Facilities Status Change Request](#)
- [White House: Opening Up America Again](#)
- [OMB: Aligning Federal Agency Operations with the National Guidelines for Opening Up America Again](#)
- [USDA Reopening Playbook SUMMARY](#)