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Cape Cod National Seashore

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## Cape Cod National Seashore News Release

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### **Cape Cod National Seashore and Six Outer Cape Towns Join Forces to Promote Ocean Safety Awareness**

*Public Education is a Top Priority to Promote Safety and Awareness at All Seashore Beaches During Covid-19*

WELLFLEET, Mass.— Cape Cod National Seashore Superintendent Brian Carlstrom, in collaboration with Outer Cape town managers, held a media briefing today to outline joint education efforts to promote safety and awareness for the public to recreate responsibly when enjoying the national seashore and other Outer Cape beaches.

As the seashore officially opens its 2020 summer season on July 2, it is important to remind the public of safety measures already in place and address changes that will occur due to the unusual circumstances of operating during the COVID-19 pandemic. “This is clearly a summer like no other. This is the first time in history that Cape Cod National Seashore will operate during a global pandemic,” said Cape Cod National Seashore Superintendent Brian Carlstrom. “Even in these unusual times, we will provide public access and do our best to educate the public about how to safely recreate during the pandemic, while reminding them of regular safety precautions they need to take when visiting the wild and wonderful beaches on the Outer Cape. I want to thank all the town managers on the Outer Cape for their continued commitment to working together to help the public recreate responsibly.”

The unique coastline of Outer Cape Cod is dynamic and changes from year to year. The tides, wind, and waves all influence regional sediment transport that causes coastline erosion and accretion. In addition, seals and sharks have become more prominent on the Outer Cape, presenting additional challenges to public safety at the beach.

The public needs to understand that with coastline topography changes and sharks and seals in the ocean, any level of activity in the ocean, whether wading, swimming or surfing will pose a different degree of risk. Everyone going into the ocean should exercise caution and be willing to assume the level of risk associated with their behavior prior to entering the water. Modifying human behavior is the most effective form of ocean safety.

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### **Standard Safety Precautions during COVID-19**

**Be Shark Smart.** Currently, there is no single alternative or suite of alternatives that can 100% guarantee the safety of individuals who choose to enter the water.

- Look for products developed by the Regional Shark Working Group to increase public awareness and safety, including beach signage, brochures, purple shark flags, the Sharktivity app, and a “shark smart” video.
- Stay away from seals and schools of fish, as they attract sharks.
- Use the Sharktivity app to track and report shark sightings
- Know the location of the emergency call box and Stop the Bleed kits at your beach.

### **Ocean Safety Basics**

- Never turn your back to the ocean.
- Never swim alone. Swim, kayak, paddle, and surf in groups.
- Avoid murky and low visibility water.
- Stay close to the shore where rescuers could reach you if needed.
- Be alert for rip currents, shore break, and strong undertows.
- If caught in a rip current:
  - Remain calm to conserve energy and think clearly.
  - Don't fight the current. Swim out of the current in a direction parallel to the shoreline.
  - When out of the current, swim towards the shore.
  - If you cannot swim out of the current, float or calmly tread water.
  - If you cannot reach the shore, draw attention to yourself - wave your arms and yell for help.
  - If you see someone in trouble - get help from a lifeguard. If there is no lifeguard on duty, call 911.

### **Beach Safety Basics**

- Wear sun protection.
- Glass containers are not allowed on national seashore beaches.
- Rafts, rubber tubes, masks, and snorkels are not allowed on lifeguarded beaches.
- Sand collapses easily. Undercut cliffs can collapse at any time without warning. Deep holes can lead to burial and suffocation. Do not climb slopes and dunes or dig holes deeper than knee level of the smallest person in your group.

### **Changes at National Seashore Beaches During COVID-19**

#### **Staffing Reductions and Limited Facility Availability**

- To protect the health and safety of national seashore staff and visitors, there will be several changes to business as usual.
- Many facilities usually open to the public will be closed, including visitor centers and public showers.

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- Bathroom facilities are available at all beaches. They will be sanitized on a regular basis.
- Rangers will provide information and orientation services outdoors on the visitor center grounds. There will be no programs, and historic buildings will remain closed.
- Due to the seashore's health precautions during COVID-19, there is not enough housing to allow for proper social distancing protocols for seasonal staff. Therefore, fewer lifeguards will staff the beaches this summer.

### **Herring Cove and Head of the Meadow Operational Changes**

- Herring Cove and Head of the Meadow beaches will not be staffed with lifeguards this summer.
- All other national seashore beaches will have lifeguards from July 2 through Labor Day. They are: Coast Guard Beach and Nauset Light Beach in Eastham, Marconi Beach in Wellfleet, and Race Point Beach in Provincetown.
- Fees will be collected beginning July 2 at the four lifeguarded beaches and at the Herring Cove entrance gate.
- There will be no fees collected at Head of the Meadow Beach this summer.
- Visitors are advised to read and heed all safety advisories posted at the beaches.

### **Public Advised to Follow CDC and Baker Administration Guidelines on COVID-19 Safety**

- Cape Cod National Seashore and town beach operations are limited due to COVID-19.
- Visitors should not rely upon site staff to ensure their protection from contagious disease.
- Visitors should adjust their expectations accordingly and should practice social distancing, personal hygiene, and other behaviors to avoid infection in public areas.
  - Practice social distancing of at least 6 feet between you and others.
  - Place beach blankets at least 12 feet apart so there is walking room between you and others.
  - Wear a face covering where social distancing cannot be maintained.
  - Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
  - Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.
  - Stay home if you feel sick.
  - Avoid touching eyes, nose, mouth.

Public education efforts will extend through the summer. The Regional Shark Working Group, established in 2012, will continue meeting and sharing information to enhance public education and awareness to help people make informed decisions about their water activities at Outer/Lower Cape beaches.

Managers at Cape Cod National Seashore and from the towns of Provincetown, Truro, Wellfleet, Eastham, Orleans, and Chatham will also continue to monitor beach activity, encourage safe behavior including new safety protocols to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and work together to mitigate and eliminate risk where feasible.

For more information on the Cape Cod National Seashore, go to <https://www.nps.gov/caco>