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April 24, 2020

CONCORD, NH – Spring in New Hampshire is an invigorating time to enjoy the outdoors as wildlife emerges, trees bud, and birds return. In the wake of the COVID-19 public health emergency, many Granite State residents are spending this spring exploring their back yards and local trails and learning more about what their immediate surroundings have to offer for recreational opportunities. Being engaged with the outdoors is important for people’s physical and mental health, and connecting with nature helps to enhance the current remote learning experiences of many students in the state.

While this spring represents a renewed natural connection for many, **all** outdoor enthusiasts must be aware that recreation this spring requires personal awareness, preparation, and responsibility for oneself and toward others while continuing to practice the recommended social distancing of six feet on all trails, at all trailheads, and in common areas such as parking lots.

“People must be aware of their physical limitations, weather conditions, and know when to turn back,” said Fish and Game Law Enforcement Chief Colonel Kevin Jordan. “This is not the season for challenging hikes or dangerous backcountry adventures in ever-changing spring conditions. It is imperative that people enjoying New Hampshire’s natural resources exercise a high degree of caution. Unsafe and irresponsible behavior puts first responders at extreme risk of injury and exposure to

COVID-19 because social distancing becomes very difficult to manage in search and rescue situations,” concluded Jordan.

Colonel Jordan also strongly recommends that hikers be prepared and carry with them the top 10 essentials for changeable spring weather conditions and unanticipated emergencies:

- Map
- Compass
- Warm Clothing:
 - Sweater or Fleece Jacket
 - Long Pants (wool or synthetic)
 - Hat (wool)
- Extra Food and Water
- Flashlight or Headlamp
- Matches/Firestarters
- First Aid Kit/Repair Kit
- Whistle
- Rain/Wind Jacket and Pants
- Pocket Knife

Read more about safe hiking at www.wildnh.com/outdoor-recreation/hiking-safety.html.

Outdoor enthusiasts are also encouraged to purchase their voluntary annual Hike Safe card for 2020. Card sales help defray the costs of training and rescue equipment for

NH Fish and Game Law Enforcement Conservation Officers, preparing them to come to your aid if the unexpected happens.

Valid for the calendar year, the 2020 Hike Safe cards cost \$25 for an individual, or \$35 for a family, and are good for the calendar year ending December 31, 2020. The price is the same for both residents and nonresidents.

Cards can be purchased online at www.wildnh.com/safe and at New Hampshire Fish and Game Department Headquarters, 11 Hazen Drive, in Concord.

Purchasing a hunting or fishing license also provides you with the same protection as a Hike Safe card. In addition to Hike Safe card revenues, Fish and Game's Search and Rescue Fund is supported by a \$1 fee collected for each boat, snowmobile, and OHRV registered in New Hampshire.

It's your responsibility to hike safe. Be sure to follow the hiker responsibility code by being knowledgeable about where you are going and what the local weather and terrain conditions will be, leaving your plans with someone, turning back in inclement weather or if you are running out of daylight, and planning for emergencies. Visit www.hikesafe.com for more information.

<https://nhfishgame.com/2020/04/24/be-aware-be-prepared-and-be-responsible-when-hiking-this-spring/>