

Monday, April 20, 2020. A Listening Call with Cam Sholly – Yellowstone National Park Superintendent, and GoPaul Noojibal – Grand Teton National Park Superintendent

**Introductory Comments from Cam Sholly:**

The National Parks are in this with us. Today was a 2 hr listening session that encouraged questions and thoughts. A way to share information and perspectives about what is concerning business and what each group wants to see. It will be repeated in a few weeks

Governor Gordon – joined the conversation. Thanked the NPS for this opportunity to open the door and listen. Thanks for letting us voice our concerns, we don't want to see a virus resurgence, don't want to burden bordering communities. But essential for our communities to do business.

How we got here: State lines delineate the park but we are so interlinked. Need to understand how we are all responding. Enacted limited closures commensurate with the three States. To protect employees and visitors in the park. But mid-March began conversing with Governors office's wide spread consensus having parks open was putting communities at risk. Groceries/supplies used by visitors. DOI approved closure. It's been over a month.

The further we get into spring and closer into summer some of these opinions will change and this is happening. Expect these opinions to get more divided. Trying to reconcile divergence of opinions. They are engaged with all expected community partners,

Going with Each County Health Officer, but worse-case scenario is different opinions within different counties in same state. Critical to get on same page for re-opening.

Does not want to overburden local communities, can be flexible and move along.

Currently they are working hard to be prepared as possible for re-opening. Road ploughing,

At a point (don't know when this is), there will be an easing on restrictions. Based on trends in the virus, what our ability to mitigate is, when we get to that point. Please ask yourselves when we are ready to have an influx of transient visitors to our communities. This will not be a light switch, one of our biggest challenges.

No decisions made – no recommendations forwarded, we need to be ready, when the time is right, what open could look like? what it looks like in May or June vs July or August. Want it to be agreeable to business partners in communities. One that can accelerate if things are ok, contract if things get bad.

## **Operating Principles –**

Developing Consistent Plans that are shared, conservative state start, maximum flexibility, minimize risk to employees, working to share best practices, constant communication, restricting lodging to phase one seasonal only.

Park – public health recommendations – shared employee housing – delayed hiring vast majority of most seasonal employees. They can only hire the number of employees that can be in single occ housing.

Wave 2: undetermined yet.

## **Reopening Questions: 4/20-2020 – these were covered in much more detail, but I have tried to give the short answers for clarity**

1. How is the NPS working with the lodging companies to coordinate reopening services?  
Very closely
2. Would the parks themselves still open even without user facilities and if Park hotels are also still closed?  
Not determined yet
3. How is the NPS working with other commercial operators to coordinate reopening services (like guides/buses)? Will there be restrictions on large motor coaches?  
Not determined yet
4. What will phase 1 of reopening look like as a visitor? What will be maintained? Trailheads? Toilets?  
Not determined yet
5. Will the park open by different gates – staged? Such as inner park road? South Gate vs West? Cody?  
It could but its not what they want to do
6. Do you have an outline of what (phase 1 and onwards) would look like reopening of Visitor Centers, so we can mirror, and give a consistent experience for visitors?  
Not determined yet
7. Do we have a concrete date for opening?  
no

## **Communications:**

8. How much notice will Gateway towns get to be able to message the parks re-opening (even with limited services?)  
As much as possible, we will work closely with the communities
9. How will the NPS notify the Gateway Towns/public of a change of operations – i.e reopening  
Through continued communication with Governors Office, Local Contacts,

**Staffing:**

10. Has the Federal Govt furloughed year-round employees? Will NPS have to rehire and bring people back from out of the region?

No, but those who are returning are having a quarantine

11. What about seasonal employees – did you suspend seasonal hiring? what is in place to bring people here safely?

For instance, YNP usually hires 450 seasonals,

Wave 1: probably looking at 160-170 seasonal employees into park housing, 40-60 housing in local communities. Looking to operate front country facilities. Would need to have one bed/one bath each per staff.

12. Is the NPS looking to the local workforce rather than introducing people from outside the community? yes

**Safety:**

13. How is the NPS planning to react if there is a virus cluster created in the Park shortly after re-opening?

Internal Testing Questions are being considered: How do you isolate a visitor or employee who tests positive? One employee test positive and could affect all employees and visitors that person interacts with. Capacity in clinics? Being prepared and taking advantage of testing. Doing table top exercises now what these could look like. What response do they need to be prepared for.

**Changes to Operations:**

14. Will entry gates be publicly manned or will the NPS introduce an online park payment system to avoid human interaction?

Not determined yet

15. Can NPS (especially Yellowstone) use this as their opportunity to limit daily visitation to the park, since existing infrastructure likely cannot safely handle the unrestricted flow of visitation under their current program? Perhaps using an advance reservation system with a cap on total daily or per entrance gate admissions could help the park staff and concessionaires anticipate and mitigate the inevitable influx of summer visitors?

Do not have the systems in place yet but this is an opportunity for the future

16. Does the Park envision having to limit visitation overall or to certain popular areas to maintain social distancing?

No, but may need to consider in the future if challenges from meeting physical distance norms are becoming impossible to meet.