

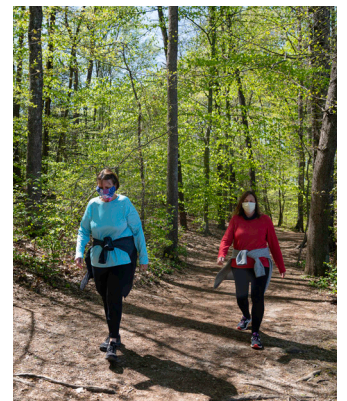


Parks have been a part of my life since before I can remember. When my family moved back to Fairfax County in 1966 following my dad's retirement from the U.S. Navy, I started using the county park system. Some of my best memories are learning to play tennis with my friends at Stratford Landing Park and camping and fishing at Burke Lake Park as a youth. Parks have been an essential part of my life and of the lives of many Fairfax County residents over the years. The Fairfax County Park Authority is celebrating 70 years this December, and it has provided outstanding service to the community to enhance the quality of life.

A few years ago, to meet demand, we changed our inclement weather policy and continued operating in cases of snow, even when schools closed, because we recognized the importance of providing park and recreational opportunities for the community. Snow day camps became a part of what we offered in four RECenters. The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic changed everything this year.

At the outset of the pandemic, we followed the Governor's, CDC and health professionals' recommendations and requirements to close our recreation facilities and places where people gather in order to help "flatten the curve" and help prevent the spread of the virus. To meet those requirements and guidelines, we closed nearly every aspect of our park system except the trail system. We closed parks, playgrounds, fields, courts, community gardens, indoor facilities and so much more, and we posted signs reminding the public of the health guidelines related to COVID-19.

The decision to close parks was not an easy one. Locking gates and barricading our parking lots goes contrary to my belief in the value that parks bring to the community. But given the enormity of the pandemic, it was a decision made to protect the community and to help flatten the virus curve. And, we were not alone, as other jurisdictions like Arlington, Alexandria, NOVA Regional Parks and the National Park Service also closed their parks to help curb the spread of the virus.



Our hope is that we all have taken actions to help improve our health in the long run and to fully open our park system in time for the summer season. However, the pandemic situation is fluid. In the meantime, our staff will continue to maintain parks at the highest standard possible, while following health guidelines so that we will be prepared to welcome you back when we are open again. That day will be a true celebration!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "K.W. Kincannon".

Kirk W. Kincannon, CPRP, FULL, FAAPRA
Executive Director
Fairfax County Park Authority

For the latest operating status information, visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/coronavirus.

