**Alert Level 4**

**In New Zealand under a Level 4 Covid-19 alert, our parks are the only public facility still open for people to visit. More than ever, parks are essential to our physical and mental wellbeing.**

**The New Zealand Parks Leaders Forum have these key messages for the New Zealand public:**

***“Keep it local and close to home; get out in the park for a walk, bike or run and then go home. Keep your 2m distance. No meetups, korero, or food stops along the way. Remember to tell someone where you are going and take your phone with you. Thoroughly wash hands on returning home”.***

***Check with your local council or park agency website as to parks, trails and facilities that are open. There are many variations depending on the type of park and its location.***

In the table below, is a *summary* of park services. Actions and descriptions are to be determined by each agency. Key: **Red= Not operational, Orange= Operational but under restrictions, Green= Resuming normal operations.** For more detail and updates and further modelling, go to <https://www.parksmanagers.org.nz/>

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| **Detailed Status** | **Description Level 4** | **Level 1** | **Level 2** | **Level 3** | **Level 4** |
| Arboriculture | Arboricultural services will be restricted to emergency work only |  |  |  |  |
| Biosecurity | On parks, general operations suspended. Exemptions for mainland predator free sanctuaries. |  |  |  |  |
| Burials and Cremations | Burials and Cremations continue, restrictions on funerals and services however. |  |  |  |  |
| Capital works and construction | Ceased. Continuing with procurement and engagement as a conscious stimulus approach for communities, planning for the return to work. |  |  |  |  |
| DOC National Parks and Conservation lands, tourist hubs and  major trail heads with visitor centres | All DOC huts, toilets, campsites etc. are closed, even if there is no sign up to say so. All Great Walks closed, and other multi-day walk and/or bike tracks. Short tracks suitable for day trips and picnics are open (note that toilets are shut.)  No hunting, kayaking, 4WD or rafting, or any other potentially risky activities. |  |  |  |  |
| Dog parks | Check with your park agency or council website. |  |  |  |  |
| Events, large gatherings | Still not permitted. |  |  |  |  |
| Golf, Bowls, Croquet | Maintenance only, for government permitted exceptions for essential services. |  |  |  |  |
| Maintenance | Only very limited maintenance will be taking place, where possible under strict controls. |  |  |  |  |
| Parks | Many local parks could be partially open, operating as open spaces but with facilities and playgrounds closed. Check your council or agency website. Food service, concessions and attractions closed. It is critical social distancing is  observed or an agency could close the park. Large gatherings prohibited. |  |  |  |  |
| Parks Furniture | All drinking fountains, outdoor beach showers and BBQs off limits. |  |  |  |  |
| Planting restoration activities | Ceased all volunteer activities, all planting prep, planting. |  |  |  |  |
| Playgrounds | Closed. Skate sites and pump tracks, scooter trails also closed. |  |  |  |  |
| Regional parks and large urban gated parks, e.g., regional councils and unitary authorities and Cornwall Park Auckland | All bookings for Auckland Council network of baches, campgrounds, lodges and self-contained camping sites are cancelled.  All Greater Wellington Regional Council campgrounds and self-contained camping sites are closed.  Vehicle gates generally closed; parks are open to foot and cycle access only (Only close to where people live and not  driven to). |  |  |  |  |
| Rubbish removal | Continuing, assume a limited service. |  |  |  |  |
| Tangata Whenua Parklands | Mixture of closed and restricted access. Iwi agency websites provide clarification. Only generally advised status  indicated here (Not comprehensive). |  |  |  |  |
| Temporary vehicle storage  (Carparks) | Closed. People are not to drive to parks, that is not isolation. Many parks now closed to traffic. |  |  |  |  |
| Toilets | Most public toilets closed, assume all closed with only few exceptions. Some remaining open, check on council websites in particular. |  |  |  |  |
| Trails | All DOC sites, trail ends, Great Walks closed. Many local trails could be open, operating as one-way or signposted as  closed. Check your council or agency website. |  |  |  |  |
| Volunteer work | All work ceased. No staff present to communicate with volunteers. Pest control is not deemed an essential service by government. |  |  |  |  |
| Zoos, public aviaries, bird Flights, sanctuaries | Closed. Essential service for animal care, which will see animals fed and cared for. Assurance that the animals are being cared for. |  |  |  |  |

***Descriptions and further information:***

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| **Category/ location/ asset**  **type** | **Comments** | **Staff or operations continuing as essential services?**  **Level 4** | **Level 3** | **Level 2** | **Level 1** |
| **Latest access and closures advice** | **Check the DOC, Sport New Zealand, New Zealand Cycle trail, Te Araroa New Zealand’s Trail and Walking Access Aotearoa websites for specifics.** | **No. There will be significant disruption.**  **Cessation of nearly all maintenance on parks, gardens, sportsfields and closure of most facilities. This means no mowing[[1]](#footnote-1), gardening, litter patrol, pruning, weed removal or general upkeep. All parks could look very wild for some time to come. Sport on natural surfaces could be severely affected for some time.** |  |  |  |  |

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|  | **Mountain Safety Council advice:** [https://medium.com/@nz\_msc/can-you-go-](https://medium.com/%40nz_msc/can-you-go-walking-tramping-trail-running-or-hunting-during-covid-19-alert-level-4-9448630eae78) [walking-tramping-trail-running-or-hunting-](https://medium.com/%40nz_msc/can-you-go-walking-tramping-trail-running-or-hunting-during-covid-19-alert-level-4-9448630eae78) [during-covid-19-alert-level-4-9448630eae78](https://medium.com/%40nz_msc/can-you-go-walking-tramping-trail-running-or-hunting-during-covid-19-alert-level-4-9448630eae78) | **Complaints are unlikely to be attended to for some time and a long backlog of issues will occur. These will be prioritised and resolved accordingly.**  **Assume all buildings closed, including huts and gathering places, arrival and visitor centres. Leased sports club areas are closed.**  **DOC lands closed**  **Some ‘Great Ride’ cycle trails closed**  **Burials and cremations continue.**  **Some councils waive fees in this situation.**  **Online services available, e.g., eBooks**  **Security continues. Either business as usual contracted security or limited vehicle patrol of parks by in-house staff. Police and military patrol envisaged if issues emerge.**  **Emergency presence only and occasional essential services visits, e.g., some toilets being serviced, fauna and stock welfare, plant nursery and botanical conservatory monitoring and overall security related tasks. Vertebrate pest control may continue for predator free facilities.**  **Some prioritised rubbish collection continues but assume a drastically reduced service and no recycling.**  **Tree work will continue as an essential service for limited powerline clearance and weather events if an emergency. However, fallen, vandalised or broken trees may remain unattended to if not deemed a risk to public safety.**  **Assume all drinking fountains, park BBQs and outdoor beach showers closed as they are not being cleaned or sanitised. Avoid these facilities.**  **Assume general first aid and park patrol not available if entering open space areas.** |  |  |  | |
|  |  | **No camping permitted; no casual camping areas open. NZMCA sites closed.** Parks closed to all camping, regardless of type, unless permitted by council bylaw, e.g., self-contained responsible camping  **Playgrounds all closed.**  **Some dog parks and dog exercise areas may be open. Check with your council website.**  **Councils’ and agencies entire front of house, main service centres fully closed, customer contact is entirely via phone or internet.**  **Assume requests for service being prioritised as life threatening or not.** |  |  |  |
| **Social media and communications** |  | * Social media messaging about first and foremost people knowing MoH guidelines and adhering to them – wherever they are, including in parks and open spaces. * Tracks open to recognise the need for people to get out, messages again “to abide by guidelines”. If it is not possible to stay 2m from others, and separate if proximity looks possible or go somewhere else. * DOC lands closed however, in all cases. |  |  |  |
| **Detailed status** | | |  |  |  |
| Arboriculture | Emergency only | Arboricultural services will be restricted to emergency work only. |  |  |  |
| Biosecurity | On parks, general operations suspended | Exemptions could be mainland predator free sanctuaries. |  |  |  |
| Burials and Cremations | Burials and Cremations continue, restrictions on funerals and services, however. | Maybe some limited grounds maintenance (see below item on maintenance). |  |  |  |
| Capital works | * Cessation orders issued, indefinitely * Securing sites undertaken. * Continuing with procurement and engagement as a conscious stimulus approach for communities, planning for the return to work. |  |  |  |  | |
| Compounding events | * Weather events. * Civil/ unlawful. | * Existing emergency plans would be implemented. * As a national pandemic response is already in place, further resourcing may be available. * Police and potential for military patrol envisaged   + Unauthorised tree felling, theft of fauna/ rare flora   + Illegal gatherings, e.g., beach or park parties   + Self-harm in parks   + Illegal camps. |  |  |  | |
| Dog parks | * Some will be open. * Some fenced Dog Parks will be closed due to the gated situation and the need to be “hands on” to access the dog park areas. * Parks available to exercise dogs in line with the NZ government advice regarding level 3 and 4 isolation measures. * Some other locations will permit dogs, e.g., some beaches and trails. * Check with your park agency or council website. | * The key with dogs is that the owners need to maintain the 2m physical distance. If they do that dog parks could stay open, but up to individual agencies based on the specifics of the parks involved (One size doesn’t fit all). Rationale: keeping dog parks open could potentially make other parks safer for people without dogs. |  |  |  | |
| Facilities fees and charges | * Check with your council website. | * Some typically suspend fines and fee payments as well as membership payments at gym, pools etc, e.g., Hamilton City Council. |  |  |  | |
|  |  | * (Removing fees and charges) could be a simple way for councils to relieve the pressure on community groups and businesses who have leases they have to pay for, to support those affected by Covid-19 by reducing/removing the costs of burials (which hopefully won’t become a major issue) and increasing accessibility of accessible community services   e.g. EBooks. |  |  |  | |
| Golf | In 2020 the playing of Golf, Bowls and Croquet received early exemptions to open but so now in Level 4 | Should be closed in Level 4 |  |  |  | |
| Maintenance | * **Assume no maintenance will take place.** Assume non-life-threatening work simply will not occur and open space areas reverting to a natural and weedy state. * Some agencies will run a marginal service, if available at all. * No autumn renovations likely, affecting sport in the much longer term. Some work may occur, reprogramming to Spring as an optimistic scenario, to be confirmed. * Vertebrate pest control e.g., vermin, to still occur in some urban areas. * Maintenance programmes to be ceased. | Also, what we consider “essential services” in parks:   1. *Sexton services, and associated cemetery administration services* 2. *Ongoing public convenience checks for open toilets to maintain hygiene, noting not all toilet blocks can be closed physically* 3. *Dumping and rubbish checks and cleaning to avoid fire risk and maintain vermin control.* 4. *Mowing related to fire fuel reduction minimum service is maintained over the next 4 weeks due to dry conditions* 5. *Stock water checks* 6. *Routine drive by security of high frequency dumping areas to reduce risk* 7. *Response to storm event activity* 8. *Animal Management.* 9. *Rare and endangered plant collections within glass house facilities require watering – consequence is loss of collection – note all facilities will be closed to the public.* 10. *Scheduled key asset checks for health and safety purposes against vandalism* 11. *i.e. viewing platforms, boardwalks etc – closure unlikely to prevent use.* 12. *Leaks and overflows not under the control of 3 waters.* |  |  |  | |

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|  |  | **PLF view is that no mowers should be out during the lockdown as we have to reinforce the collective message. Mowing is not an essential service other than for fire control directed by FENZ or Police operations connected with the pandemic during this concurrent official drought period.** |  |  |  |  |  |
| National Parks and Conservation lands, tourist hubs and major trail heads with visitor centres | **DOC’s position is that recreation in the Great Outdoors should be put on hold over the next four weeks. DOC have no staff maintaining or monitoring our infrastructure be it backcountry or front country. All DOC huts, toilets, campsites etc. are closed, even if there is no sign up to say so. Tracks and**  **national parks should be considered ‘out of bounds’. We do not want to put strain on SAR and emergency services through people coming unstuck in the hills.**   * No more face-to-face services. * Visitor centres closed. * All huts, campsites, lodges and Great Walks are closed due to COVID-19. * Visitors not allowed to be in locations where people are in proximity. | No cover or staff on-site.  DOC is not classified as an essential service and will not be undertaking maintenance or checking all visitor facilities in the immediate future to keep our staff safe. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Parks not easily secured or able to be obviously ‘closed’, (Generally all categories) | * Reliance on social uptake of public health campaign. * Expect large numbers of well-spaced people to continue to use the park as   well as trails and beaches (Only close to where people live and not driven to). |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Parks furniture | * All drinking fountains, outdoor beach showers and BBQs off limits. |  |  |  |  |  |  |

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|  | * Reliance on social uptake of public health campaign, no signage or site advisement likely to be in place. |  |  |  |  |
| Planting restoration activities | * Ceased. * Includes pest/weed control e.g. contractors weeding/spraying, volunteers managing traplines, planting prep, planting of plants by contractors and volunteers (plants for this season already all ordered) etc. | * Stopped all pest/weed control other than vital work, e.g., at Maungatautari to ensure the maunga remains pest free. * Stopped all volunteer activities. * Stopped all planting prep. * Revising where and when we can use ordered plants in order to honour commitments and support our contractors. * Looking at other ways we could support contractors to work from home   e.g. our pest/weed control contractors could together to be preparing long term management plans for each site. |  |  |  |
| Playgrounds | * Closed. Many will have closure advisement with tape and signage. * Reliance on social uptake of public health campaign, no signage or site advisement may be present, but   assume closed. | * Skate sites and pump tracks, scooter trails also closed. * Such sites may not conspicuously be closed with reliance on social uptake of public health campaign, no signage or site advisement. |  |  |  |
| Regional parks and large urban gated parks, e.g., regional councils and unitary authorities and Cornwall Park Auckland | * All bookings for Auckland Council network of baches, campgrounds, lodges and self-contained camping sites are cancelled. * All Greater Wellington Regional Council campgrounds and self-contained camping sites are closed. * Vehicle gates generally closing; parks are open to foot and cycle access only (Only close to where people live and   not driven to). | * Some running skeleton maintenance crews for essential services. * Staff and farming personnel will manage stock welfare as an essential service. |  |  |  |

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|  | * Some closing areas with signage and tape only. |  |  |  |  |
| Rubbish removal | * Continuing, assume a limited service. |  |  |  |  |
| Temporary vehicle storage (Carparks) | Closed where there is a gate and remaining closed. | * Staff cars likely to be locked in car parks, so they are not used and visibly stood down * People are not to drive to parks, that is not isolation |  |  |  |
| Toilets | * Most public toilets closed, assume all closed with only few exceptions. * Some remaining open, check on council websites in particular. * CBD toilets or known homeless areas will have some toilets left open. | *“For toilets that remain open, extra cleans have been scheduled”* |  |  |  |
| Trails | ***Mixture of open and closed***  Open   * Many trails remain open unless on a closed park (this will be advised at entrances and trail heads). * Most open trails are near urban areas.   Closed:   * All DOC sites, trail ends, Great Walks. * Some Great Rides: | * Often where concessionaires/ tourist operations usually operate and hire bikes or conduct tours, these trails are advised as closed. * Treat all trails (or where you walk, even roads and foot paths) as areas where social physical distancing is required at all times and only recreate with the people you are isolating with. |  |  |  |

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|  | * Old Ghost Road. * St James Cycle Trail. * Concessionaires/ tourist operations/ hire bikes or tours. * Please check: [https://www.walkingaccess.govt.nz/about-](https://www.walkingaccess.govt.nz/about-us/news/unite-against-covid-19/)   [us/news/unite-against-covid-19/](https://www.walkingaccess.govt.nz/about-us/news/unite-against-covid-19/) |  |  |  |  |
| Volunteer work | * All work to cease. | * No staff present to communicate with volunteers. * Pest control is not deemed an essential service by government. |  |  |  |
| Zoos, public aviaries, bird  flights | * Closed. | * Essential service for animal care, which will see animals fed and cared for. Assurance that the animals are being cared for. |  |  |  |
| **Sector wide comment** | * *“Crucial that we continue to promote our open spaces for people to engage with and exercise along with biophilic benefits – especially at these uncertain times.* * *Playgrounds are closed, but “have you tried the A, B, C in our park”. Promote some experiences for people to engage with. Key messaging will be to undertake this in isolation – or with those they are isolating with to ensure they comply with government guidelines.* * *Information needed to be spread, so parks can reinforce government*   *messaging”* | *“Trails, cycling, running and dog parks should remain open”* |  |  |  |

The Medical Officer of Health has powers to close other areas e.g., entire beaches, other areas and to requisition resources from parks and under this national emergency, these powers are extended to a national level.

In these trying times for all, the therapeutic values of open space must not be underestimated. The PM has already laid out the benefit of short walks and exercise at this time during a Level 4 lockdown while observing only doing this as a solitary act or with the people you’re already isolating with. [https://www.beehive.govt.nz/speech/prime-minister-covid-19-alert-level-increased](https://us-west-2.protection.sophos.com/?d=beehive.govt.nz&u=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuYmVlaGl2ZS5nb3Z0Lm56L3NwZWVjaC9wcmltZS1taW5pc3Rlci1jb3ZpZC0xOS1hbGVydC1sZXZlbC1pbmNyZWFzZWQ%3D&e=bWFyaWEuYmFycmllQGhjYy5nb3Z0Lm56&h=68fdae423b474af48d7d5f240ec7c920&t=WThmNFpvZ0psUUtDTzZsaWVWbWZ5OHJLVWtRQkwvNlhGKzBKWVErQW9pTT0%3D)

What better time for people to “Find their park” (Or trail!) in their neighbourhood.

1. Parks will be busier than ever in Lockdown and mowing can wait. There is the obvious viral transmission risk that a mower operator may pose to entire communities by introducing the sole travelling viral source to where they live and play. Moving from neighbour to neighbourhood, across a town or district in multiple site schedule on a typical mowing round introduces the greatest risk to neighbourhoods and puts the mower operator under unnecessary risk. Cutting grass during Level 4 restrictions, and in other circumstances in an attempt to prevent complaints or to keep to a calendar, is NOT an essential service.

   The PLF view is that no mowers should be out during the lockdown as we have to reinforce the collective message. Mowing is not an essential service other than for fire control directed by FENZ or Police operations connected with the pandemic. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)