

Sedona Westerners Committee on Coronavirus Preparation

Report to the Sedona Westerners Board

Committee Members:

Judy Dolloff, Ambler Boss
Donna Forsythe, Rustler Boss
Ray Laporte, Drover Boss
Dave Minott, Wagon Boss
Janet Oliver, Dogie Boss
Charlie Schudson, Tracker Boss
Dave Vanderwater, Mustang Boss
Curtis Kommer, MD, Chair

Overview: The COVID-19 viral pandemic has profoundly impacted every aspect of American life, requiring sweeping restrictions on activity, work, travel, and social interaction. In March, 2020 the Westerners suspended all Club activities in an effort to protect the health of our members. As the pandemic continues, and some restrictions and precautions have lessened, Westerners leadership has begun to consider options for cautiously restarting Club activities for the coming season. This committee has attempted to evaluate those options, using resources including the Arizona Department of Health (AzDHS), the World Health Organization (WHO), the American Hiking Society, the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Red Rock Ranger District, and Attorney Jim Kemper. The committee recognizes the fundamental importance of socialization and physical activity to the overall health of Club members, but also acknowledges the risks associated with COVID-19 infection. Our recommendations reflect an effort to provide Westerners members with a low-risk environment in which to enjoy the spectacular hiking and good fellowship that has defined our Club for over 50 years.

Brief Summary of Recommendations:

- With precautions in place, the Westerners Hiking Club hopes to be able to offer members a full spectrum of hiking opportunities this coming season.
- Hiking and sign-in recommendations presented below should apply to all Westerners Club hikes, including scouting hikes, Tracker hikes and educational activities.
- Meetings and events involving the Westerners membership will need to be considered with caution, but may eventually be possible with the adoption of COVID-19 related safeguards and precautions.
- For liability and informational purposes, a few changes to the Club Website and the Hike Sign-In Sheet are recommended.
- The Committee recognizes that **the recommendations offered today may require modifications over the course of the Hiking Season** depending on the trajectory of the COVID-19 pandemic and the changing status of federal, state, and local guidelines.
- A protocol should be in place outlining the Club's policies and procedures should a hiker test COVID-19 positive during the hiking season.
(Attachment 3)

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS:

Hiking Recommendations:

1. Hikes that involve "tight places" such as Grandma's Cave or the Lava Tube should not be scheduled.
2. Hikes can continue to accommodate as many hikers as want to participate, with hikes being separated into groups of 10 or less including the leader(s).
3. Hikers may choose to wear face masks while hiking, but face masks will not be required during hikes as long as appropriate separation can be maintained.
4. Each hiker is required to bring a face mask, pen, and hand sanitizer for each hike.
5. Physical distancing (with at least 6 feet of separation between hikers) will be required during hikes. Hikers will hike in single-file.

6. Separation of groups will be required per our usual policy, and hikers may not change groups during a hike. Having groups merge for snacks and breaks during hikes will not be allowed.
7. Shared snacks and treats will not be allowed.

Sign-In and Trailhead Recommendations:

1. Sign-In meeting locations (i.e.: Posse Grounds, VOC) should be chosen to provide enough area to practice good separation while parking and signing in. For hikes requiring significant driving time, sign-in locations should be chosen with an effort toward minimizing travel times for those who choose to carpool.
2. Hikers will be **required** to wear a face-mask at the Sign-In areas.
3. Hikers arriving at a Hike Sign-In for a Club hike should be separated by the Hike leader(s) into groups of NO MORE THAN 10 (including the Leader), as necessary. Club rules can be read by each co-leader to their individual group if attendance is high, and sign-in sheets should be done individually for each group of 10.
4. Sign-in sheets should not be passed person-to-person. A clipboard secured on a fixed surface can allow hikers to sign the form in a NO TOUCH manner.
5. Hikers will be required to bring their own pen. Hike Leaders may wish to have a few extra pens available for those who forget, to be sanitized after each use.
6. The Hiking Rules listed on the Hike Sign-In form will be amended to include COVID-19 related information that must be read at each pre-hike meeting (**Attachment 2**).
7. Physical distancing will be most important at the Sign-In meeting and will need to be observed.
8. Hikers who wish to carpool may do so with the following recommendations:
 - No more than 4 hikers per vehicle. Drivers should keep a record of which hikers carpool in their vehicle.
 - Each occupant should wear a face mask and use hand-sanitizer on entering and exiting the vehicle.
 - Vehicle windows should remain at least partially open during travel.
 - Vents should be placed on Outside Air and NOT the Recycle setting.
 - Drivers should wipe down their vehicle's interior surfaces with disinfectant wipes after carpooling to and from hikes.

- **It is recommended that the Westerners Club: not officially encourage or discourage carpooling; consider removing the “Suggested shared cost” from the Sign-in sheet (Attachment 2) and, for now, allow cost sharing to be handled unofficially by those involved.**

Liability and Informational Issues:

1. **“COVID-19 Hiking Rules and Precautions”** informational box (**Attachment 1**) should be added to the website and should be reviewed by all members before signing the liability waiver.
2. The liability waiver itself should not require modification as it already addresses “illness,” and specific COVID-19 related liability policies and procedures may take months or years to formulate.
3. The **Hiking Rules** read at the beginning of each hike will need a few COVID-19 related additions, requiring changes to the **Sedona Westerners Hike Sign-in** form (**Attachment 2**).

Meetings and Events:

1. Currently the State of Arizona and the CDC, while providing guidelines for the eventual safe resumption of large meetings and events, is discouraging non-essential functions. That discouragement is likely to continue as long as the COVID-19 caseload is increasing. **It is our current recommendation that the Club postpone any attempts at in-person membership meetings or events** until there is more clarity regarding the course of the virus and guidance from local, state, and federal authorities.
2. If and when restrictions ease, the Club may be able to have meetings and events with minimal risk (per the CDC) by considering the following:
 - No guests from outside of our local area.
 - Outdoors, if possible.
 - Physical distancing and face mask for attendees.
 - No “buffet style,” only individually boxed or plated items or a “bring your own ...” option.
 - No self-serve options (drinks, condiments).
 - Frequent cleaning of shared surfaces (podium, microphone, laptop), and plenty of hand sanitizer available.
 - Avoidance of lines for sign-in, bathrooms, etc.

Items for Discussion/Consideration by the Board:

1. **Hiking in groups of 10 or less:** There is no definitive recommendation from either the State of Arizona, the American Hiking Society, or the CDC regarding this issue. Our recommendation was based on the following:
 - a. Pima County and the two largest hiking organizations in the state (Arizona Trail Association and the Southern Arizona Hiking Club) have set their hiking group limit at 10.
 - b. Our local Red Rock Ranger District recommends hiking in groups of 10 or less (per FC Adrian, Trail and Hiking Liaison).
2. **Carpooling:** The State of Arizona, AzDHS, and OSHA have not recommended against carpooling, but just recently the CDC recommended to avoid it if possible. However, the statement was primarily focused on urban centers and the Verde Valley is still considered low-moderate risk. Our local members may be able to safely carpool if they wish, with precautions in place. Refer to **CDC.gov: COVID-19 guidance for taxi and rideshare vehicles.**
3. **Meetings and Picnics:** Currently the CDC is still ranking our area as low-moderate risk. However, during the current viral spike, Arizona is actively discouraging “non-essential meetings and events,” and under the Governor’s current Emergency Order, gatherings of > 50 people are forbidden. It appears that if the viral caseload goes down it may be possible for the Club to hold events using the precautions listed above and found at **CDC.gov: Considerations for events and gatherings.**

Curtis Kommer
June 25, 2020
Updated July 15, 2020
Updated July 17, 20, 2020

Attachment 1: ATTENTION COVID
Attachment 2: Hike Sign-In
Attachment 3: COVID + Hiker
Consistency changes, C Schudson comments