

MEMORANDUM

TO: Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt
FROM: Tom Gonzales, MPH, Larimer County Public Health Director
DATE: March 20, 2020
RE: Urgent Request to Close Rocky Mountain National Park

On behalf of the Larimer County Department of Health and Environment (“LCDHE”), I am writing this letter in support of the Town of Estes Park’s request for immediate closure of Rocky Mountain National Park, as outlined in the letter sent Thursday March 19, 2020. I believe such action is necessary to assist our community, our county and our state in addressing the rapidly spreading COVID-19 pandemic.

We agree with the Town of Estes Park that allowing the park to remain open without fees promotes increased travel and visitation to the area.

A continued influx of visitors at this critical time presents a grave public health concern to Estes Park and our surrounding communities. The first Estes Park related COVID-19 case was announced yesterday. I have formally advised Estes Park to encourage visitors to not travel through other parts of the County to Estes Park.

Estes Park has an older high-risk population with many retirees, and limited critical resources. Some of our businesses are closing and others are on restrictions to comply with public health orders.

Furthermore, adequate social distancing is not possible in many of the crowded areas of the Town of Estes Park.

For the sake of prospective visitors and our residents I urgently request that you consider the temporary closure of the park. If this is not an option, please reinstate fees and staff the gates.



In this case, we request you modify your public messaging to exclude promotion of park visitation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas K. Gonzales".

Tom Gonzales, MPH
Public Health Director

Cc Governor Polis, Senators Bennet and Gardner, Representative Neguse, Superintendent Sidles