
From: Interior, Secretary
Sent: Thursday, April 30, 2020 4:02 PM
Subject: Phased Return to Regular Departmental Operations



Colleagues,

I thank each of you for your dedicated effort to facilitate the continued operations of the varied missions of the Department of the Interior (Department) and its related agencies as America has worked to address the COVID-19 pandemic. I appreciate your commitment to public service and to our great Nation.

I also recognize that our lives at work and at home have been disrupted to varying degrees of severity. Throughout this period, and as we move forward, your health and well-being has been and will continue be critical to me.

We each confront challenges in our own way. Regarding any particular matter I must address, I look at the facts and the data as much as possible. I have placed an emphasis on learning from our public health experts all that I can about COVID-19 to ensure that my decisions are grounded in a real-time understanding of the virus and the expertise of our commissioned public health officers. This will continue as we proceed forward. As an aside, these commissioned public health officers, like so many of you, have been incredible assets for the entire Department. Their work continues to benefit the Department and the public.

President Donald J. Trump recently unveiled new guidelines for Opening Up America Again, a three-phased approach to assist State and local officials in safely reopening their economies, getting people back to work, and continuing to protect American lives. Within these guidelines, and in following guidance from the Office of Personnel Management, we are transitioning our operations to return to regular duty stations in phases.

Each Bureau is finalizing and will soon begin executing its plans to resume our regular operations. At the State and local level, our progression toward regular operations will appropriately vary, and the pace of our own actions will be guided by the pace of Governors and State and local public health officials. Each Bureau's plan will phase in regular operations at our offices and increase access to our public lands.

I believe the appointment of our Field Special Assistants (FSA) and the development of their regional executive leadership councils have profoundly strengthened inter-Bureau coordination as we dealt with the pandemic. I am grateful for their efforts. The FSAs will continue to play a corresponding role as we migrate back to normal operations.

In closing, I want to express my gratitude to you all for your efforts on behalf of the American people to address this pandemic over the past couple of months. Your flexibility to operate under different work arrangements has been vital to ensuring that our Department is doing its part to respond diligently and decisively to this public health crisis. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to our mission and service to the American people.

Sincerely,

David L. Bernhardt
Secretary of the Interior