



Reopening, Ugh!

Dr. Phil Stokes, Executive Director

Frank Scarpinato, Board Chair

Org Overview

- Mission: Hands-on science education at 54-acre fossil park
- Annual budget \$300k
- 1/3 of revenue from government sources; 2/3 generated by programming, memberships, merchandise, donations, grants
- ~20k participants each year including ~5k K-12 students
- 2019: 2 full time, 18 part time staff
- 2020: 3 full time, 9 part time staff
- Seasonal model

Pandemic Shutdown

- March/April: Lost community & school outreach season
- April/May/June: Lost all school field trips; 25th season delayed
- ~May 16, NYS Executive Order 2026 modified to include parks & low risk outdoor activities as essential businesses
- Prior to May 16, only members could access park. Staff retained to work on maintenance projects thanks to PPP
- We could have opened May 16, but were not ready
- Selected June 1 to give us time to prepare

13. Recreation

- Parks and other open public spaces, including playgrounds and other areas of congregation within the discretion of the state or local government so long as appropriate social distancing of at least six feet among individuals can be abided, acceptable face coverings are worn by individuals who are over the age of two and able to medically tolerate such coverings, and frequent cleaning/disinfection measures are in place for hard surfaces and objects frequently touched by multiple people (e.g., handrails, benches)
- Outdoor, low-risk recreational activities are permitted so long as social distancing and cleaning/disinfecting measures are in place:
 - tennis;
 - non-motorized boat use and rentals, such as row boats, kayaks, canoes;
 - golf and driving ranges, except miniature (mini) golf, with food and retail services subject to the restrictions that are currently in effect within the region;
 - racket games, such as badminton, pickleball, racquetball;
 - toss/bowl games, such as horseshoes, bocce, bean bag toss, croquet;
 - flying disc games, such as disc golf and frisbee;
 - shuffleboard;
 - aerial rope courses or zip lining;
 - rope courses including aerial rope courses;
 - batting cages;
 - shooting ranges; and
 - swim classes and swim instruction.
- Drive-in movie theaters so long as social distancing and cleaning/disinfecting measures are in place

**NYS Executive Order
2026 Rev. June 11**

What about gift shops? Food?

- These services may be offered as long as they are allowed in your region given the current reopening phase
- For us, gift shop is retail sale w/o curbside – we have no curbs
- We do not have food service. Since drinking fountains are no present, bottled water available. We assume this is okay.

Preparing to Reopen

1. Looked at other parks, businesses for good & bad ideas
2. Literature was scarce at first but has grown. Disney is gold standard so we took hints from The Mouse.
3. Medical advice is sometimes inconsistent. We took approach that more precautions are better than fewer.
4. Guiding philosophy: safety of guests and staff is most important. Inconveniences are preferable to infections, closure due to staff illness, exposure to negligence claims, bad publicity.

Reopening Plan

- A living document
- Written before NYS provided a template to businesses
- We reviewed ALL of our operations to examine risks & solutions
- Staff & board asked for input
- Reopening plan & NYS template posted to website

Things to Consider

- Imagine you are looking for a safe place to take your family.
 - 1) Is your plan easy to find?
 - 2) Will your plan put visitors at ease?
- Imagine your employees are afraid to return to work.
 - 1) How will you keep them safe from the public?
 - 2) How will you keep them safe from each other?
 - 3) Does reopening improve job security?

Things to Consider

- Imagine you are visited by health inspector.
 - 1) Is your plan thorough?
 - 2) Are you following your plan?
- Imagine someone claims to have caught the virus at your facility.
 - 1) You have a legal 'duty to care' to ensure the safety of all guests.
 - 2) Was the duty breached by your negligence, recklessness, intentional act or omission?
- Disclaimer: I am not an attorney. This is not legal advice. All definitions from Cornell Law.

Negligence

- “A failure to behave with the level of care that someone of ordinary prudence would have exercised under the same circumstances. The behavior usually consists of actions, but can also consist of omissions when there is some duty to act (e.g., a duty to help victims of one's previous conduct).”
- Example: Visitors remove face coverings in high traffic areas. Employees are aware of the problem but do not intervene.
- Example: A sick employee comes to work, risking the safety of others.

Recklessness

- “Behavior that is so careless that it is considered an extreme departure from the care a reasonable person would exercise in similar circumstances.”
- Example: You plan a large event.
- Example: Your plan states that your capacity is limited, but you do not take steps to control admissions.

Intentional Act (aka Tort)

- “A type of tort that can only result from an intentional act of the defendant. Depending on the exact tort alleged, either general or specific intent will need to be proven.”
- Example: A disgruntled employee coughs on a guest.

Omission

- “Failure to perform an act agreed to, especially if there was a duty to perform.”
- Example: You claim that hand sanitizer stations will be available. Upon arrival, guests find the sanitizer stations are empty.

General Capacity & Social Distancing

- Our park is 54 acres but most visitors congregate in a few regions
- We used a GIS tool to calculate the area of the main fossil hunting region
- This area is about 3 acres, 140,000 square feet, or the size of 2.4 football fields



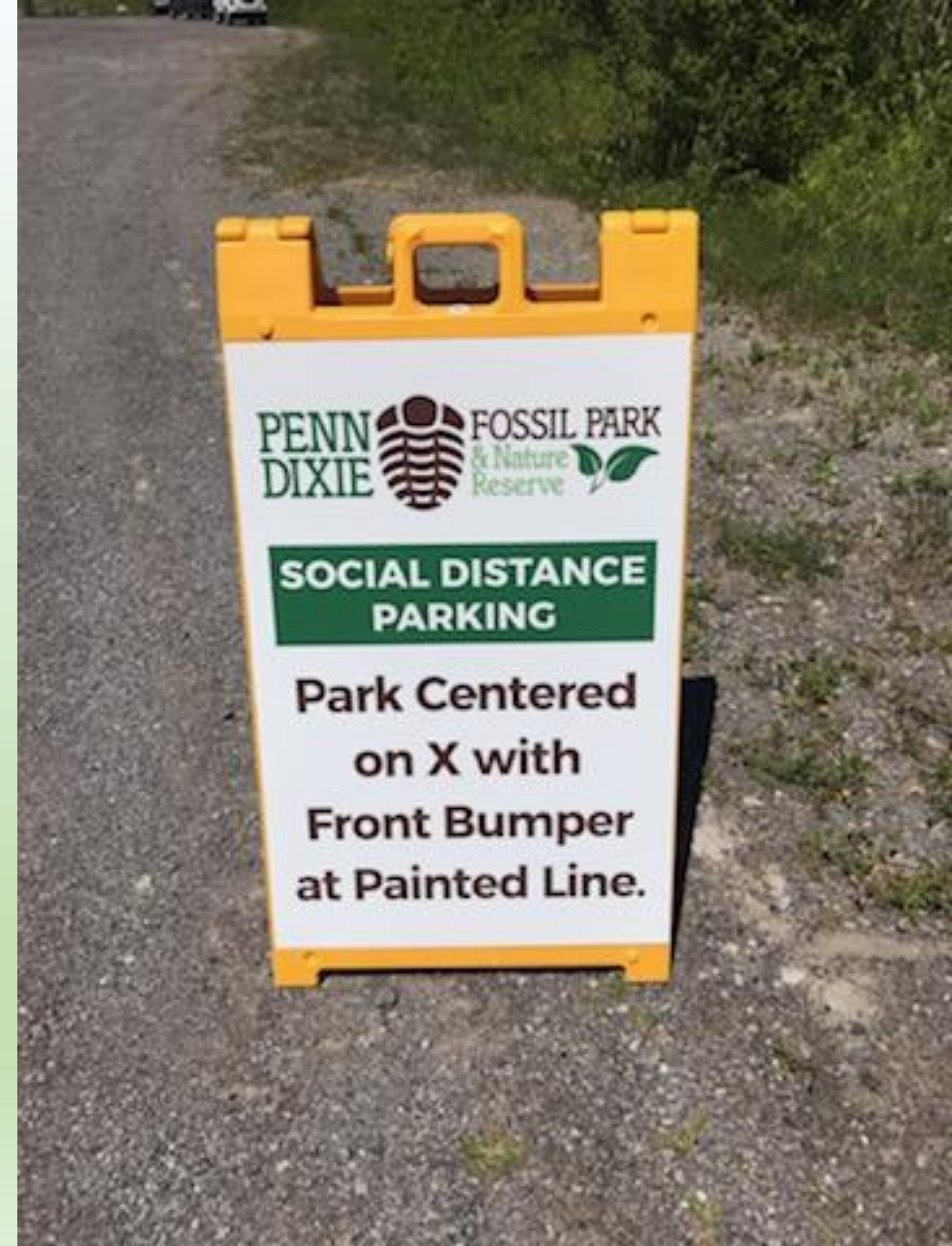
General Capacity & Social Distancing

- Given social distancing of 6 feet, each visitor needs a perimeter of 12'
- This equals 144 square feet per visitor
- We could simultaneously accommodate 972 visitors
- As extreme precaution we limited ourselves to 25% - 243 guests
- At this number, each visitor gets 600 square feet!



Parking

- Greatly increased spacing between vehicles
- Elimination of double parking rows
- Marked parking spaces -- spaces not previously labeled
- Signage
- Visitors discouraged from loitering
- Installation of additional gravel
- Minimize staff interaction with motorists in vehicles.



Registration

- Installation of transparent plastic barriers
- Online only purchase of admission tickets; walk-ons not allowed;
- Visitors required to read and acknowledge a complete list of rules and procedures
- Paperless check-in process;
- Cashless payments only
- Registration area setup for social distancing w/ signage
- Timed entry every 30 minutes to prevent bottlenecks
- Tickets sold during first half hour of each day reserved for high risk populations



Employee & Visitor Safety

- All employees, volunteers, and visitors will be required to wear a face mask or covering. Visitors without a mask not admitted
- No charge for disposable masks
- Employees wear nitrile gloves when cleaning, handling commonly used items, and working with commonly used surfaces
- Employees divided into teams



Sanitization

- We have 3-month supply of Steramine, an industrial sanitizer used in the restaurant industry
- Regular spraying of bathrooms, surfaces
- Hand tools soaked
- Plastic barriers sprayed daily






To Our Guests:

Due to the high frequency in which they are exposed to others, employees are required to use the same toilet each day.

For your safety, visitors are not permitted to use this unit.



**Face Covering
Required**

 Penn Dixie Fossil Park
& Nature Reserve



Our Plan

Phase Zero	Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three	Phase Four	Phase Five
Staff training	Members only	25% capacity	50% capacity	75% capacity	100% capacity
2 days	2 weeks	2 weeks	2 weeks	2 weeks	Indefinite
No visitors	Limited operations	Limited public tours	Increased tours	Increased tours	Increased tours
Review & practice safety procedures	Test & refine procedures	Test & refine procedures	Test & refine procedures	Test & refine procedures	Test & refine procedures

How did it go?

- A few grumpy comments when we released our new measures
- Staff loved and appreciated safety measures, had great feedback
- An almost overwhelming amount of new & renewed memberships
- Most visitors support measures. They were just happy to get out and do something fun and educational
- Out of 165 guests, only 2 complained about face coverings
- **Currently inundated** with inquiries from the public and members
- Revenue is slowly creeping upwards

One Unexpected Challenge

- Kids don't have school. Adults "working" from home, or unemployed. Many more people than usual out and about.
- More trespassing & vandalism this spring than any other time in recent memory
- Jerks aplenty riding on ATVs and dirt bikes. Cops chased them out! Sadly no footage exists. 😞
- We installed new fencing and security cameras
- These measures seem to be working!