The Prairie Enthusiasts

Policies for TPE Events during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Adopted May 20, 2020 by the TPE Board of Directors

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major effect on individuals, societies, businesses, and organizations across the world, and TPE is no exception, with a critical impact on in-person events by chapters, members, and the organization, including field trips, work parties and burns, educational and social events, and meetings. As we learn to adapt to a very uncertain and dynamic situation, it is important to have policies to guide our ongoing response to the pandemic and to provide up-to-date guidance for the many people in our organization and the general public who plan, lead, and participate in these events.

Objectives

- Take the threat of COVID-19 seriously, and do our part to help protect public health
- Carry on our important conservation and educational work as much as we safely can at any given time
- Comply fully with all government orders and recommendations
- Enable both leaders and participants in TPE events to be and feel as safe as possible
- Provide a mechanism for adjusting and updating our guidelines as the situation changes
- Clarify the authority and responsibilities of the staff, leadership, and event leaders for decision-making, communicating, and complying with our events policy

TPE-sponsored Field Trips, Work Parties and Other Events

These policies cover all in person public events sponsored by TPE, which may include field trips, work parties, prescribed burns, workshops, lectures, courses, social events, meetings, and conferences. Most such events are planned and led by chapters and individual members, but the TPE organization provides publicity, support, and an organizational “umbrella” for these events, some of which are held on TPE-owned preserves. As such TPE has a responsibility to ensure that these events are safe and in compliance with applicable government orders as well as recommendations by public health authorities while the COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing.

Current TPE Event COVID-19 Guidelines

Until the COVID-19 pandemic is effectively over, TPE will maintain, update, and broadly communicate a Current TPE Event COVID-19 Guidelines document. The Current Guidelines will be developed and approved based on both current government orders in effect and authoritative public health recommendations from both Centers for Disease Control and state authorities. The Current Guidelines will be reviewed periodically and updated as conditions, orders, and recommendations change.

The Current Guidelines will incorporate the following elements:
Applicable Jurisdiction
Although uniform guidelines are highly desirable, TPE has events in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois, which may have different current orders and recommendations. If necessary, the Current Guidelines may be different for each state. Applicable orders at the county and municipality level may also take precedence, and event leaders will have responsibility for compliance with these local orders.

Event Cancellation or Postponement
Events of a certain type may be cancelled or postponed under the Current Guidelines. For example, indoor events might be cancelled or postponed while outdoor events are permitted. Whenever cancellation or postponement is in effect, TPE will not sponsor or publicize events of this type.

Attendance Limits, Pre-Registration, and Attendance List Requirements
Events may have attendance limits. If attendance limits are in place, pre-registration will be required for events. An onsite attendance list with at least the email address and/or phone number of all participants must be returned to TPE after the event to facilitate contact tracing.

Social Distancing Rules
Social distancing is the most critical practice for carrying out events safely during the pandemic. TPE will require the following social distancing rules at events, which may be updated as conditions change:

- No one should attend who has a fever or other symptoms, or an active COVID-19 infection.
- All leaders and participants should always stay at least 6 feet apart (except for members of the same household).
- All leaders and participants should wear a face mask while at the event. This is required to help protect others and to help everyone feel safe.
- Everyone should wash or sanitize their hands before and after the event.
- Everyone should cough or sneeze away from others and cover themselves appropriately.
- Avoid exchanging physical objects (e.g. pens and papers, tools, equipment, etc.). Where this is not possible, objects should be carefully sanitized before and after use.
- Do not share vehicles during an event, except between members of the same households.

Authority, Responsibility and Communications
The Current TPE Event COVID-19 Guidelines document will be written and updated by the Executive Director and will be approved before release by the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors.

The Executive Director will be responsible for reviewing at least monthly current federal and state orders in effect and authoritative public health recommendations from both Centers for Disease Control and state authorities and will recommend updates to the Current Guidelines when conditions change significantly.

The TPE Staff, under direction of the Executive Director, will be responsible for communicating the Current Guidelines to the membership, leadership, and event leaders whenever updates are made. A copy of the Current Guidelines will always be made available in a prominent location on the TPE website.

Event leaders are responsible for staying within attendance limits, returning onsite attendee lists and enforcing social distancing rules under the Current Guidelines during events, as well as for properly complying with applicable county or municipal orders.
Current TPE Event COVID-19 Guidelines
Approved by the Executive Committee and effective May 27, 2020

These Current Guidelines cover all in person public events sponsored and/or publicized by TPE, which include field trips, work parties, prescribed burns, workshops, lectures, courses, social events, meetings, and conferences. The purpose is to enable us to continue our important conservation and education work as much as possible while staying safe and protecting the public health during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Current Guidelines are applicable throughout TPE’s service area in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois.

Cancellation and Postponement: All indoor TPE-sponsored events are cancelled or postponed until further notice. Outdoor events are permitted, unless prohibited by local orders.

Attendance and Pre-Registration: Attendance at TPE-sponsored Events is limited to no more than ten (10), including the leader and participants. Pre-registration for each event is required. An onsite attendance list with at least the email address and/or phone number of each participant must be returned to the TPE staff after the event. TPE will be using the website calendar and event registration functionality to enable online registration.

Social Distancing Rules: Social distancing during events is the most critical element of carrying out our work safely during the pandemic. TPE will require the following social distancing rules at events during the pandemic, which may be updated as conditions change:

- No one should attend who has a fever or other symptoms, or an active COVID-19 infection.
- All leaders and participants should always stay at least 6 feet apart.
- All leaders and participants should wear a face mask while at the event to help protect others and help everyone feel safe.
- Everyone should wash or sanitize their hands before and after the event.
- Everyone should cough or sneeze away from others and cover themselves appropriately.
- Avoid exchanging physical objects (e.g. pens and papers, tools, equipment, etc.). Where this is not possible, objects should be carefully sanitized before and after use.
- Do not share vehicles during an event, except between members of the same households.

Please contact Diane Hills, Outreach and Development Coordinator (outreach@theprairieenthusiasts.org) for more information and assistance with setting up and publicizing your Event.