



## [See NWCCOG Coronavirus Resource Guide here](#)

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### SPECIAL EDITIONS

*News is developing as fast as the speed of the spread of the virus. For the next few weeks - hopefully not months -- we'll publish more frequently as needed to get the most current information to our members. If you have information you think should be shared on this newsletter, please send suggested content to [jstavney@nwccog.org](mailto:jstavney@nwccog.org).*

## From the Director's Desk: Travel during a Stay at Home Order?

There are no Roadblocks or Checkpoints in Colorado-Yet.

In an radio story April 15, on KUNC entitled "[Frustration Palpable](#)" As Mountain Counties Batten Down the Hatches," Rae Ellen Bichell references a letter sent by 13 counties through Colorado Counties Inc (CCI) to Governor Polis requesting a state issued ban on travel to mountainous areas for recreation and requesting that the ban be enforced by the National Guard. [The letter](#) issued April 8th is signed by Grand County Commissioner Merrit Linke through his role as President of the CCI Mountain District.

Mammoth Lakes in Mono County, California (Eastern Sierra) have established roadblocks to turn away visitors reports the [New York Times](#) as of April 6th. The L.A. Times reported the Mono County Sheriff as saying "[don't come here](#) " on March 28th as confirmed cases were occupying 8 of the 17 beds in the rural hospital. This well-written piece in [Politico](#) warns of the impacts of Coronavirus on rural America from the perspective of a Skagit County physician, noting that the health infrastructure and supply chains in rural places are weaker than in urban areas, in part because of the lack of buying power of smaller retailers including grocers and rural hospitals. Notably, it cites that the Makah Tribal Nation on the Olympic Peninsula has set up 24 hr. checkpoints to deter visitors. Here is the [Makah Public Announcement](#).



In lieu of action by the Governor, Counties and municipalities in Western Colorado, wary of visitors, are taking less dramatic steps. The Grand County (Colorado) BOCC published an open letter in the Sky-Hi News April 10th, requesting that [visitors stay home - at their primary residence](#). Judging from subsequent conversations with leaders in those communities highly dependent on visitors, they appreciate what a haven it appears. They also respect that many visitors own property and have been visiting for years, it is a touchy subject. Sky Hi News also had a article around that time warning residents in the so-far lightly infected County that it is not a safe haven. So far, the polite request, unbacked by a regulation appears to be largely respected. Grand County officials have been on high alert since the beginning, ready to ramp up or ramp down response.



*Dean Krakel, Special to The Colorado Sun*

Some nearby Counties are getting much more aggressive. In this story by the Colorado sun, it is reported that Gunnison County has so far taken the most dramatic steps toward a travel ban, "[It's Unclear if Colorado Counties can legally evict visitors to slow coronavirus. But One is Doing it Anyway.](#)" It hasn't been without controversy. In this story, NWCCOG's 2004 Second Homeowner study was mentioned, as was NWCCOG attorney

Barbara Green who was quoted regarding the legality of Gunnison County's public health order. Basically, local governments have broad powers to protect the health and safety of citizens.

Highway signs near the city of Gunnison warn tourists that Gunnison County is basically closed for business.

## **Recreation and Trails**

Everyone wants to get out to somewhere. Where do many Western Coloradoans go to recreate in Spring? Not Moab. [Discover Moab website](#) notes that a Public Health Order is in effect across South East Utah. The Health Department which issued the order notes that as of April 19th, the Governor of Utah has issued an [executive order](#) to [notify motorists entering the state](#) via targeted wireless emergency alert to fill out a declaration. Notable also is that Arches and Canyonlands are closed. The Discover Moab website states that until May 4th, "all camping is prohibited until further notice. If you are caught camping on Public Lands in Grand County (Utah), you will be subject to a citation and a mandatory in person court appearance."

[Eagle County's public health order](#) states clearly, "the authorities will not stop vehicles, nor question reasons why they are moving." It states, "Outdoor recreation activity at Parks, Open Spaces, or Open Lands is limited to local residents." Gracefully, it also expands on the definition of "locals" to extend to nearby counties on the Roaring Fork side, and to Grand County residents wishing to recreate on the Upper Colorado when the weather breaks.

Eagle recently announced the seasonal opening of trails with a warning from Police Chief Staufer, "[locals only use must be respected](#)." The Vail Daily reports that this is no idle warning as the BMX park and Haymaker trailheads were recently closed because many users were observed ignoring social distancing restrictions.

The messages are clear; respect the fragility of rural areas. Stay home, stay local, respect distancing.

*Jon Stavney*

Executive Director

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For some, knowing that others went through such times can be reassuring. If you want a brief history lesson in plagues as told by ancient historians, [this from Governing Online](#) is an especially good read.

## Local News about Local Newspapers

While you are scrupulously buying local to help keep local businesses afloat, don't forget how much local news matters. Even in the era of social media, there is a whole lot of research about how foundational a local newspaper is to the health of a community. If your free local newspaper matters to you, now is the time to step forward and donate to keep it afloat if you can muster. Those who visited websites of newspapers published by Swift Communications may have noticed something new recently—a request to donate. Those who still pick up those papers in boxes may have noticed something unusual. Without all the ads from local businesses, those papers is getting frightfully thin. On April 14, Editors from some of the papers published explanations of the unusual request. They say it better, so I will not quote. Here are a few that I found around the region:

- [Emma Trainor](#), Publisher of Sky Hi News
- [David Cook](#), Publisher Aspen Daily News
- [Jerry Raehal](#), Publisher Glenwood Post Independent
- [Meg Boyer](#), Publisher Summit Daily News

Papers published at the press in Gypsum where the boxes are located at 200 Lindbergh Drive include: The Craig Daily Press, The Steamboat Pilot & Today, The Aspen Times, the Post Independent, the Vail Daily, the Summit Daily, Sky High News among others.



**Northwest Colorado Council of Governments**

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