

# Physical Distancing Measures for Landowner Engagement During the COVID19 Pandemic

## Centre for Disease Control General Guidance

- There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).
- **The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.**
- The virus is thought to [spread mainly from person-to-person](#).
  - Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
  - Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks.
  - These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.
  - Some recent studies have suggested that COVID-19 may be spread by people who are not showing symptoms.

### ***Everyone Should***

#### *Wash your hands often*

- [Wash your hands](#) often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, **use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol**. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth** with unwashed hands.

#### *Avoid close contact*

- **Avoid close contact** with people who are sick
- [Stay home as much as possible](#)
- Put **distance between yourself and other people**.

- Remember that some people without symptoms may be able to spread virus.
- Keeping distance from others is especially important for [people who are at higher risk of getting very sick](#).

#### *Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others*

- You could spread COVID-19 to others even if you do not feel sick.
- Everyone should wear a [cloth face cover](#) when they have to go out in public, for example to the grocery store or to pick up other necessities.
  - Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- The cloth face cover is meant to protect other people in case you are infected.
- Do NOT use a facemask meant for a healthcare worker.
- Continue to keep about 6 feet between yourself and others. The cloth face cover is not a substitute for social distancing.

#### *Cover coughs and sneezes*

- **If you are in a private setting and do not have on your cloth face covering, remember to always cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow.
- **Throw used tissues** in the trash.
- Immediately **wash your hands** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

#### *Clean and disinfect*

- **Clean AND disinfect [frequently touched surfaces](#) daily.** This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
- **If surfaces are dirty, clean them.** Use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- **Then, use a household disinfectant.** Most common [EPA-registered household disinfectants](#) will work.

## **Specific Implications for Landowner Engagement**

The COVID19 pandemic will require an extended period of physical distancing well beyond the timeframe for emergency orders that suspend non-essential business activity. Emergency orders are designed to slow the spread of infection when rates are spiking so that healthcare capacity is maintained for those who become ill. Lifting of specific emergency orders does not mean the risk of infection has passed. Practicing deliberate physical distancing until a vaccine or effective therapeutic treatments are available will likely continue to be essential to community health and avoiding a return to more restrictive emergency measures. In all cases, emergency orders issued by appropriate authorities will supersede our workplace guidance.

The work of engaging landowners in the stewardship of their forests remains critically important throughout these disruptions. Well managed family forests provide timber products for essential supply chains in the US – including fiber used in vital PPE for healthcare workers and other industries. Conservation challenges still drive urgent need to proactively address the risks of catastrophic wildfire, biodiversity loss, and climate change through forest management. Many landowners rely on technical assistance and professional capacity to implement forest stewardship actions on their land. Building a trusted relationship between a landowner and forestry professional often necessitates direct dialog and in person connection.

To accommodate these ongoing needs, landowner engagement being provided through AFF must follow protocols to prevent COVID19 infection from spreading between forestry professionals and landowners through our work.

### ***Events (On hold until local emergency orders are lifted or amended to permit gatherings and non-essential business activities)***

All AFF gatherings and events must abide by local emergency orders for physical distancing and business activities. If local emergency response orders are lifted to allow for re-opening of non-essential workplaces, AFF staff are being asked to abide by the following additional safety protocols to maintain participant safety and physical distancing.

- Hosting or participation by AFF staff in workshops, meetings, field days or events of more than 10 people should not occur until further notice or specific plans have been developed and approved by AFF leadership.
- All events should use virtual conferencing wherever possible as a suitable alternative

- If a gathering of 10 or fewer people is necessary, participants must be able to maintain a 6-foot distance from each other at all times during the event.
- All surfaces in the event space must be disinfected prior to and after the event
- Hand sanitizer stations must be provided at all entrances to the event
- Participants must sanitize their hands whenever entering or exiting the shared space
- Participants should self-monitor and any sign of fever or illness must preclude in-person participation. Thermometers may be made available to scan participants at the beginning of the event.
- Participants are discouraged from shaking hands, hugs, and other forms of direct physical contact
- Documents being distributed during the event should be in cases, plastic covers, or plastic bags that can be disinfected easily
- Participants must ensure that if they need to cough or sneeze, they do so into a sleeve or tissue and turn away from other participants. Hands should be sanitized immediately following a cough or sneeze.
- Water bottles, coffee cups, and food should not be shared unless appropriate sanitary measures have been taken by catering staff

### ***Field Visits***

Field visit activities must follow current federal, state, and local laws, including emergency measures in place for the COVID19 pandemic. In the case that states have mandated the closure of some business activities, site visits should only take place where forestry and associated forester visits to private property are approved activities.

For AFF related programs and projects in-person site visits are not a requirement. In-person visits are strongly discouraged for people who are, or have a member of their household who are, at [high risk for severe illness](#). If at any point a forester or landowner decides they are not comfortable participating in in-person site visits, alternative no contact options must be implemented, or site visits should be postponed. The safety and health of forestry professionals and the landowners we serve together is of primary concern.

We greatly appreciate the suggestions that we received from partner organizations and foresters to inform protocols that enable a resumption of field visits. The following protocols were developed using that feedback and we welcome additional comments as we continue to navigate these challenging circumstances.

Each engagement should begin with a phone or video call between the landowner and forestry professional to discuss goals, confirm field visit conditions, and agree on physical distancing measures. No field visits should occur if a participant exhibits signs of fever or other symptoms associated with COVID19 identified by the CDC. Self-quarantine directions given to any participant by health authorities always precludes participation in field visits. In addition, site visits should only take place if both the forester and landowner mutually agree to the forester visiting the property.

If conditions enable property visits, participants should select from one of the following protocols:

### **Option 1: Solo Forestry Professional Assessment with Landowner Follow-up**

- Forestry professional completes field visit on their own with appropriate arrangements to enable property access ahead of time.
- Because the forestry professional and landowner will not meet in person, photos or videos should be collected during the field work to support follow-up discussion.
- All participants in the field visit who are not part of the same household must travel to the property in separate vehicles. This includes any access that requires all-terrain vehicles, side-by-sides, tractors, etc.
- The forestry professional should schedule a call or video conference with the landowner shortly after fieldwork to discuss findings prior to making recommendations or delivering a field visit report. Without in-person contact, more conversation will likely be required to establish trust and shared understanding of management options.
- The forestry professional is encouraged to have an appropriate face mask or covering to wear should travel to the field visit require a stop in a public setting such as a gas station or grocery store.

### **Option 2: Solo Forestry Professional Assessment with Live Video or Phone Connection**

- Forestry professional completes field visit on their own with appropriate arrangements to enable property access ahead of time.
- Timing is coordinated with the landowner to enable a live video “walk and talk” or phone call during the field visit. This option will only work where cell coverage and data plans are suitable.

- All participants in the field visit who are not part of the same household must travel to the property in separate vehicles. This includes any access that requires all-terrain vehicles, side-by-sides, tractors, etc...
- Because the forestry professional and landowner will not meet in person, photos or videos should still be collected/recorded during the field work to support follow-up discussion.
- Field reports may then be prepared and discussed with the landowner upon completion of field work. Again, plan for more conversation to establish trust and shared understanding of management options.
- The forestry professional is encouraged to have an appropriate face mask or covering to wear should travel to the field visit require a stop in a public setting such as a gas station or grocery store.

### **Option 3: In-person Engagement and Assessment with Physical Distancing**

- Forestry professional and landowner arrange an in-person meeting and agree beforehand to physical distancing measures, including agreeing to the interpersonal distance to be maintained during the engagement – should not be less than a minimum distance of 6 feet apart per CDC guidance.
- All participants in the field visit who are not part of the same household must travel to the property in separate vehicles. This includes any access that requires all-terrain vehicles, side-by-sides, tractors, etc.
- All parts of the field visit must occur outside and at no point should the forestry professional enter a personal residence of the landowner
- The forestry professional must carry disinfectant spray or wipes and clean their own hands upon arrival in addition to cleaning any documents, maps, photos, or other materials being passed between the landowner and forestry professional. Cases, plastic covers, or plastic bags that can be disinfected easily should be used for the exchange of materials
- Forestry professionals should wear an appropriate face mask or covering at all times during the in-person engagement to communicate a high degree of care and protection for the wellbeing of the other participants.
- Water bottles, coffee cups, and food should not be shared
- All participants are encouraged to have an appropriate face mask or covering to wear should travel to the field visit require a stop in a public setting such as a gas station or grocery store.
- If a participant in a field visit has a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 at any time within 14 days following the engagement, we ask that the relevant AFF program representative be notified so we can facilitate contact tracing and encourage all

participants in field visits during that period to consult appropriate medical professionals.