



450 Williams Way, P.O. Box 998, Moab, Utah 84532 · 435.719.3500 · mrhmoab.org

March 26, 2020

Re: In Support of Closure of Arches and Canyonlands National Parks

Dear Superintendent Cook and Department of Interior Secretary Bernhardt,

On behalf of Moab Regional Hospital, we respectfully request closure of Canyonlands and Arches National Parks until the end of April. We have been modeling the numbers of the projected surge of patients in our service area, and the only possibility the healthcare system locally and regionally will be able to meet the needs of patients presenting with COVID-19 is if we practice social distancing even more stringently than we are now.

We know that 80-85% of COVID-19 cases are asymptomatic or mild, yet continue to present a risk of further viral transmission and spread. Approximately 15% of patients will require hospitalization, with an estimated 3-5% requiring intensive care and ventilation. We are a 17-bed Critical Access Hospital. Moab Regional Hospital does not have an ICU, and we typically transfer patients to a larger facility who need intensive care or ventilation. Based on initial modeling using a publicly available Penn Medicine epidemiology tool, in a service area of 10,000 people (not accounting for additional volume from tourism,) with 25% effectiveness of social distancing, our service area will see a peak volume in 115 days with an estimated daily need for 200 hospital beds, 50 ICU beds, and 25 patients on mechanical ventilation. Our regional and state hospitals are rushing to increase capacity, as is Moab Regional Hospital; however, we cannot wave a magic wand and conjure ventilators, hospital beds, respiratory therapists, nurses, and doctors out of thin air.

Although Southeast Utah Health Department has closed lodging and dine-in restaurant services, the National Parks remain open and continue to draw people from all over to the area. Tourists from areas with community spread of COVID-19 are using our grocery stores, interacting with the local community while picking up to-go food from restaurants, and staying illegally in nightly rental lodging in spite of the health department's mandate. The rate of spread increases when the number of sources of infection increase, as will happen with continued tourism.

Unfortunately, we have many examples across the globe of communities in which the healthcare capacity has been overwhelmed by the rapid surge of COVID-19 patients requiring critical care. In order to avoid that same fate in Southeast Utah, we need to do more now to slow the introduction and spread of the virus in this community. Healthcare shortage threatens not only those at greatest risk of severe disease from COVID-19, but also jeopardizes people's lives unnecessarily, by creating lack of access to essential medical services. We ask you to help the people of our community by closing the National Parks now.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Sadoff
Chief Executive Officer

Dylan Cole, DO
Chief Medical Officer