

Pickleball News

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April 24, 2020

Hello Zoo Town Pickleballers!

We hope everyone is safe and well in these challenging times. We look forward to getting back to our regularly scheduled pickleball play and tournaments when public health officials give us the “all-clear.”

In the meantime, some of you are continuing to play at FMRP and courts around town. Courts remain open for now, but public health guidelines require us to maintain 6’ physical distancing at all times and recreate with members of our own household.

Many thanks to those who are practicing physical distancing on the courts. Unfortunately, the Missoula City-County Health Department has received numerous complaints about pickleball players who are not physical distancing, particularly at FMRP. Public health officials have a responsibility to limit activities that endanger public health.

The Health Department has asked us to implement some minor changes to FMRP to facilitate physical distancing for those waiting to play. We are adding pickleball courts to keep up with demand, and we have set up “marshalling areas” in which players can wait for their match to begin. Please see the details below. Your cooperation will help ensure pickleball courts remain open during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, the April 24, 2020 [Order of the Missoula City and County Health Officer](#) limits public gathering to 25 people, with 6’ physical distancing. The Order states:

*“Events and gatherings such as, but not limited to, fairs, festivals, markets including farmers’ markets, concerts, sporting events, races, and private parties outside the home shall be **limited to 25 people** during Phase One and six-foot physical distance between participants shall be maintained. (As per the Governor’s Directive, groups are limited to 10 people if six-foot distance cannot be maintained.)”*

This means, if you arrive at FMRP to play and there are 25 people present, you should come back later when fewer players are present. Alternatively, you might consider scheduling your matches for early morning or evening, when court use is light.

Missoula City-County Health has asked us to remind players: individuals can spread the virus when they are pre-symptomatic or asymptomatic, and healthy, active adults of all ages can and do contract COVID-19.

Again, we are very appreciative that the majority of players are avoiding crowding at the courts and practicing physical distancing. We hope the guidelines below will make it easier for all to comply with the City-County Health Officer’s [April 24 order](#).

Protecting public health

- Parks is implementing these changes in direct consultation with the Missoula City-County Health Department.
- CC Health has received numerous complaints about pickleball players ignoring physical distancing. Public health officials have a responsibility to limit activities that endanger public health.
- Montana continues to see new cases of COVID-19 each week. The state will not be able to resume business as usual until infection rates decline.
- **You can spread the virus when you are pre-symptomatic or asymptomatic.**
- Healthy, active adults of all ages can and do contract COVID-19.
- Being outdoors does not prevent virus transmission.
- It is possible to enjoy your sport without endangering others.
- Your behavior influences how the disease spreads through our community.
- Physical distancing protects not only yourself, but also others, like healthcare professionals and essential front line workers.

Players: Let's Work Together to Keep Pickleball Courts Open

- Wait until the courts have cleared before entering.
- Refrain from gathering in groups after play is over – if you are waiting to play, remain 6' or more from others and in the marshaling areas.
- Come to play – spectators should stay home to reduce crowding.
- Stay home if you are feeling sick.
- Forgo tradition – Do not touch paddles after the game.
- Choose a different time or place to play if the courts are crowded.

Physical Court Changes

- Staging areas between court banks are closed to waiting or gathering.
- Extra nets will be set up on tennis courts as needed, to prevent crowding during the busier hours during non-facilitated play.
- Each court has a marshaling area where players can await games in order to reduce crowding

Marshalling Areas – please see attached map

- Court 1: In the grass next to the exit near the large ponderosa pine.
- Court 2: Near the fire hydrant
- Court 3: In tennis court immediately behind
- Court 4: The patch of grass near the south end of court 5
- Court 5: In tennis court immediately behind
- Court 6: In the grass next to the exit

If additional nets are necessary:

- Court 7: In grass area just outside of exit
- Court 11: In north end of Tennis court 6 (Pickleball court 9)
- Court 14: In grass area just outside of exit