



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 22, 2020 – 3:00 p.m.

SANDPOINT — The City of Sandpoint and our healthcare partners participating in the Bonner County Multi-agency COVID-19 Task Force, would like to commend the responsible, proactive but difficult decision owners of our area restaurants, bars and entertainment venues have made this past week to immediately end indoor service.

Sandpoint city officials and healthcare representatives have been reaching out to area businesses to strongly encourage and support this effort. We have partnered with the Bonner County Economic Development Corporation and Greater Sandpoint Chamber of Commerce to answer questions about unemployment benefits and how to take proactive steps in preparation for much anticipated stimulus packages. We are very close to reaching our goal of no indoor service at any restaurant, bar or entertainment venue by the end of the day today.

Over the past several days, we have seen these closure decisions extend to our service businesses, including retail and personal care services such as salons, massage therapists and retail stores other than pharmacies, grocery stores and gas stations. We applaud these decisions and encourage continued action.

We invite you to join us in celebrating and supporting these businesses in their drastic efforts to keep our community safe and protect our health care workers, facilities and supplies by flattening the curve. These efforts speak to our strong sense of community, collective selflessness and resiliency. As we look across the country, business closures have not occurred on a large scale until after there have been confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the community. In nearly all communities, this has not occurred until there have been closure orders from the mayors or governors.

Our businesses and gathering places must continue to act swiftly and proactively to protect our community. Our community members must continue to follow the most up-to-date public health guidelines as issued by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Panhandle Health District. These include staying home as much as possible and practicing social distancing when you go out. Please limit yourself to shopping for essential services only in-person, taking advantage only of takeout or delivery food service and purchasing gift certificates and merchandise online from local businesses.

We are an area known for our outstanding quality of life, especially our abundance of trails and open spaces. We encourage you to take advantage of these resources but practice appropriate social distancing as you do so.

The City of Sandpoint will be launching an online notification form on Monday, March 23rd for businesses who have closed their doors. Our police officers will be focusing their efforts on increased security checks and they need to know who is authorized to be on the premises.

As of Noon, Sunday, March 23rd, there have been no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Bonner County. Panhandle Health District is currently monitoring five people and Bonner General Health has received back fourteen test results – all negative. Bonner General has initiated limited entry points and visitor restrictions. Effective yesterday, they began screening everyone accessing the hospital – employees, providers, patients and the limited permissible visitors. Anyone entering the hospital must come through the main entrance on Third Avenue. Alder Street in front of the hospital emergency room has been closed to provide for patients in their cars waiting for testing.

The Bonner County Multi-agency COVID-19 Task Force continues to meet on an ongoing basis to stay up-to-date on the spread of COVID-19. It is a matter of time before we have a confirmed case in Bonner County. We continue to plan coordinate proactive and reactive phased efforts across our agencies. Members of the task force include Bonner County Emergency Management and EMS, Panhandle Health District, Bonner General Health, the Cities of Sandpoint, Ponderay, Kootenai, Priest River and Dover, Lake Pend Oreille School District and Sandpoint Community Resource Center.

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