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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Wednesday March 25, 2020

Magee Marsh Wildlife Area in Ottawa County is the first outdoor park area to be closed by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

ODNR took the step reluctantly, and all other natural areas remain open, although bathrooms serving parks have been closed according to ODNR spokeswoman Meredith Gilbert.

Magee Marsh was closed at sundown Monday. The order to close includes the boardwalk, walking trails, parking lot and roads.

Going outside to walk is considered safe so long as a proper 6-foot distance is kept from other people, but Magee Marsh is considered a special case. It's a nationally-recognized birding area, and ODNR is trying to avoid the large crowds of birders that normally gather to witness the spring migration.

Magee Marsh is the only closure (for a natural area) we have at this point according to ODNR spokeswoman Meredith Gilbert.

It's hard to practice social distancing in a group of birders and on a boardwalk 3 feet wide, she said.

People can still go to other outdoor areas under state control.

"You are absolutely encouraged to go to those places," Gilbert said.

On Monday, ODNR announced it is closing campgrounds, cabins, golf courses, restrooms, shower houses, playgrounds, and state park marinas at all ODNR properties, effective Tuesday.

Most public outdoor areas remain open, including state parks, wildlife areas, forests and nature preserves and facilities such as trails, dog parks, and non-marina docks.

For additional information on the Ottawa County response to COVID-19, please contact Fred Petersen, Ottawa County EMA, at 419-734-6900.

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