



To the NOLS community,

Thank you for your understanding and support during these times of uncertainty. Over the past few weeks the school has been working diligently to take care of its impacted employee community and to better understand how COVID-19 will impact future operations.

As of May 11, NOLS will be cancelling some summer expedition courses scheduled for July and August. We will also be suspending summer field operations at four campuses: Northeast, Pacific Northwest, River Base, and Teton Valley. Course cancellations include Adventure expeditions (for ages 14 and 15), as well as whitewater and rock climbing courses.

These changes are in addition to the previously announced suspensions of programming at NOLS Scandinavia and NOLS Yukon and cancellation of all courses with start dates before July 1, 2020.

The school will assess our ability to conduct classroom-based courses for Wilderness Medicine, Risk Services and Custom Education starting after July 1 on a rolling basis 30-45 days prior to the scheduled start date.

The school did not make these decisions lightly. We assembled a task force with members representing risk management, field and classroom programs, admissions, and field staffing. The team networked with the wider NOLS community and external advisors to address the following goals:

1. Draft decision-making criteria to govern resumption of field and classroom courses during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.
2. Identify and develop program and risk management practices for operating during the pandemic.
3. Actively monitor COVID-19 responses by federal, state and local authorities in our operating areas, as well as education and industry partners, the greater community of outdoor education and wilderness medicine providers, and related adventure travel organizations.

The preliminary work of the task force identified that narrowing program offerings for this upcoming summer season would provide the school an opportunity to better navigate travel and quarantine restrictions/concerns and implement realistic risk mitigation strategies. Accommodating COVID-19 preventative measures and physical distancing on both field and classroom courses will demand attention to detail, diligence, and a strong culture of compliance.

The decision-making variables and overall landscape in this pandemic are fluid and changing rapidly. As a learning institution, NOLS is prepared to adapt to new ways of operating in the field and in classrooms, and is developing online offerings to augment our existing programs. The school anticipates that our risk management protocols, procedures, and recommendations will continue to evolve and refine as programs resume and our faculty and staff gain experience.

The task force will continue to provide recommendations to school leadership on decision-making for re-opening of courses and best practices and protocols for our classrooms.

I thank you for your commitment to our school. The support, patience and understanding exhibited so strongly in this community has been inspiring. Our school is committed to learning to operate during a pandemic so that we can continue to serve our mission and students.

Be safe and well,
Terri