



April 3, 2020

(sent VIA USPS and email)

Southwest Utah Board of Health
620 South 400 East
St. George, UT 84770

Dear Board Members,

We are writing during this difficult time of the COVID-19 pandemic to ask for your support in requesting a temporary closure of Zion National Park. As a local gateway community, we are extremely concerned about the health risks the pandemic poses to our residents, park employees, law enforcement and emergency personnel.

Governor Gary Herbert has asked all Utah residents, except for emergency personnel and those working in "essential" businesses, to stay home. It therefore seems appropriate to request that prospective tourists, vacationers and visitors to Washington County stay home until we have assurances the pandemic has receded. Zion National Park is reportedly the top tourist attraction in Utah. By reducing the number of visitors who come to Southern Utah through a temporary closure of Zion National Park, the important work of your employees will be less hindered to support the health and welfare of all our residents.

This past weekend Zion National Park received approximately 9,000 visitors, 70% of whom were from out-of-state. Undoubtedly, some of these visitors were infected with COVID-19, perhaps asymptotically so, thereby vectoring the disease to the local community. The SWUPHD recommends that all out-of-state visitors quarantine for 14 days. This is not happening. Both Springdale business and Zion National Park employees in contact with visitors are at risk of contracting COVID-19.

The Town of Springdale has responded to the pandemic by closing its offices and directing its employees to telework where possible. The Town has also closed facilities such as the community center, park restrooms, and tennis, pickle ball and volleyball courts to protect residents. The majority of Town residents are over 60 years of age and a significant number are at an even higher risk due to underlying health issues.

The following excerpt is from the *Utah Leads Together Plan*, dated March 24, 2020:

UTAH is at a tipping point. Modeling and experience from other states suggest that if Utah neglects to implement more aggressive containment strategies as

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outlined in this plan, ICU hospitalizations will exceed capacity, transmissions will grow exponentially, and an estimated 100,000 to 150,000 Utahns could be out of work by June. These economic and public health impacts will only compound for every week enhanced strategies are delayed.

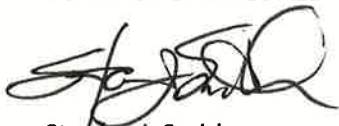
The last three days have averaged a 30% increase in COVID-19 positive cases for the area encompassed by SWUPHD whereas the State has averaged a 12% increase. This is alarming and suggests the existing containment and mitigation strategies of "Stay Safe, Stay Home" are insufficient to slow the transmission of the disease.

The health of our local community's residents, Zion National Park employees, concessionaires, and contract and volunteer staff is critical to being able to provide services to visitors once the pandemic diminishes. Proactive steps taken now will protect local residents and enable them to rapidly improve economic conditions by ensuring a ready and healthy workforce in Zion National Park and Springdale.

We ask that you support us in recommending the closure of Zion National Park until such time that the COVID-19 virus has diminished as a nationwide threat. All of the major national parks in the West (Yosemite, Rocky Mountain, Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, Grand Teton, Arches and Canyonlands) are now closed. For the most recent national park closure, the National Park Service (NPS) received a letter from the Health and Human Services Director and Chief Health Officer for Coconino County, Arizona, recommending the full closure of Grand Canyon National Park. Upon receiving this request from the local health department, acting Superintendent Mary Risser, with the support of the NPS Deputy Director, Operations, David Vela, and Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt, made the decision to immediately close Grand Canyon National Park until further notice.

We genuinely appreciate the relationship we have with the Southwest Utah Public Health Department. The work you are doing at this difficult time is important.

Respectfully,
TOWN OF SPRINGDALE



Stanley J. Smith
Mayor



Suzanne Elger
Councilmember



Lisa Zumpft
Councilmember



Randy Aton
Councilmember



Adrian Player
Councilmember

Cc: Governor Gary Herbert, State of Utah
Superintendent Jeffrey Bradybaugh, Zion National Park
Secretary David Bernhardt, United States Department of Interior
Senator Mitt Romney
Senator Mike Lee
Representative Chris Stewart
Washington County Commissioners Victor Iverson, Dean Cox, Gil Almquist