

# HOT TOPIC #13: April 7th

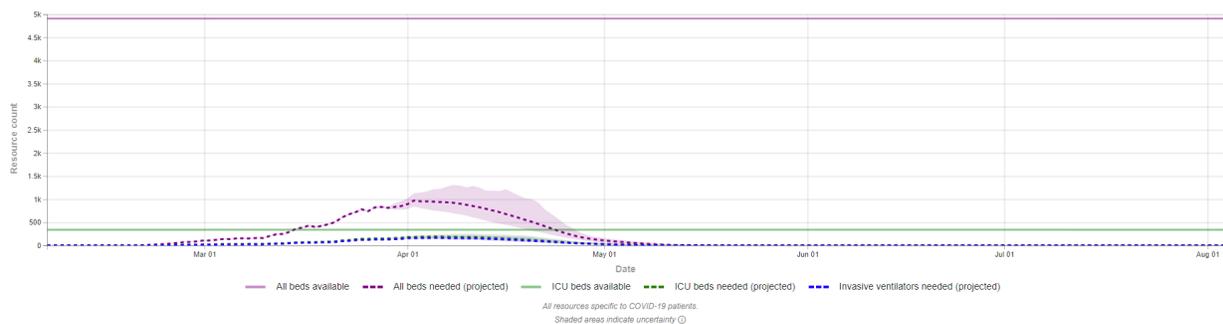
## Checking In On Our Current Situation

*COVID-19 updates from San Juan County around subjects on the minds of islanders*

We want to check in with the islands, share thoughts, and help with general expectation setting. Obviously this has been an incredibly challenging time, and clearly there's more sacrifice to come.

### What is the current situation?

There is some good news. If you take a look at [modeling for Washington](#) and [case numbers reported from across the state](#), it would appear that there is a good chance Washington is nearing the peak of COVID-19's impact and the severity will be less than initially feared. Your commitment to aggressive social distancing has helped to flatten the curve.



*IHME projection for WA State as of 4/7/20*

That's a big relief for the islands since it means that the likelihood of the mainland medical system being overwhelmed is much less than what we feared a month or even two weeks ago. It also means that Washington can begin looking at sharing resources with other parts of the United States that are being hit much harder. Make no mistake, if these trends continue, it will be a major victory for the State of Washington. Also make no mistake, there will still be significant, ongoing impacts. You are doing a great job, but it is not time to pause or take our foot off the gas. Some Washington residents are getting sick, some are dying, and that will continue for months to come.

### A few critical clarifications:

San Juan County has been slower than neighboring Western Washington Counties to see our first cases, and it is likely that we're behind in terms of our progression as well. That means that we'll probably see an ongoing increase in cases over the next couple of weeks. It is absolutely vital that we continue to aggressively social distance, avoid all non-essential contact, and use strong hygiene measures, including wearing a mask in public. We do not want to become a hotspot and we're at the most critical point right now.

The majority of islanders have taken the social distancing requirements to heart, but unfortunately there are some who have chosen to minimize the seriousness of the situation. Please understand that one small gathering around a campfire or one low key potluck with just a few friends can cause a major

ripple of impacts through our communities. There's no group of people that should think of themselves as "safe", no matter how well they're feeling. The disease is here, it is infecting our residents, and it is on all of us to keep it from spreading.

The current encouraging trends could reverse quickly if our attention wavers. A sudden spike of cases on the mainland could take away our advanced healthcare options. A surge of cases here in the islands would quickly overwhelm our healthcare and EMS systems.

So, take comfort in knowing that social distancing is working, but don't relax. Not yet. Please.

### **What will the future bring?**

Nobody knows for sure yet. There are still so many questions. How long until full testing is available? What about antibody tests to measure immunity? What will happen in other parts of the United States and the world?

What we can be fairly sure of is that this situation won't miraculously resolve itself overnight. Our best approach is to stay flexible, patient, and committed to the mission. We shouldn't get too far out in front of ourselves.

Clearly, access to widespread and reliable testing for all is a major foundation of a safe and effective return to normal. Progress is being made nationally and globally, but we're not there yet. Not even close.

For now, the Governor's order extends through May 4<sup>th</sup>. Washington public schools have been closed for the rest of the school year. Nothing else is for certain at this point. The precise details of what the future will bring are unknown, but we need to let science guide our policies. Ensuring that we keep our healthcare providers supported, operational, and able to serve our needs is vital. It won't be easy, but we'll continue to persevere and we will emerge stronger, closer, and more resilient.

Thanks to everyone for your ongoing patience, selflessness, and understanding.