



MEDIA RELEASE

San Juan County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 22, 2020

San Juan County to Apply for Variance to Move to Phase 2

At the request of San Juan County Health Officer Dr. Frank James ([link to recommendation letter](#)), and with the support of both the San Juan County Board of Health and the County Council, public health staff are preparing a variance request that, if approved by the Secretary of Health, would allow the County to move into Phase 2 of WA State's phased reopening plan.

Governor Inslee recently announced [new criteria](#) that allow additional counties to apply for variances to move into Phase 2 of his four-phased [Safe Start Washington plan](#). San Juan County was one of 10 counties the Governor identified as eligible to apply.

San Juan County Council Chair Rick Hughes highlights the Council's support for the move, "We're looking at this as very much a soft-reopening. The Governor's non-essential travel ban is in place until Phase 3, and the goal is to carefully start to reopen, but our intent is for this to be a way for residents to directly support these businesses and services that have been closed for so long. We agree with Dr. James that the systems are in place to do this safely and responsibly."

The Washington State Department of Health has outlined a series of requirements for variance approval. The public health team is actively preparing an application for full implementation of Phase 2 that will document how San Juan County is meeting those requirements. This variance request will be submitted as quickly as possible.

Health and Community Services Director Mark Tompkins echoes Chair Hughes' assessment, "Our public health team has been working hard to make sure we have the testing, contact tracing, PPE, and outreach plans in place to support the islands going forward. I'm hopeful that our application will be approved and confident that we're taking the right steps as we move ahead."

Please note that San Juan County is not yet approved for Phase 2. San Juan County remains in Phase 1. Residents and businesses should continue to follow the [guidance](#) outlined by the Governor until a determination is made on the variance request. That [same link](#) also provides guidance to business that will be allowed to open in Phase 2. Preparing to meet those requirements ahead of any possible move to Phase 2 would be wise.

If the move to Phase 2 is approved, please note that:

As per San Juan County Health Officer order 2020-4, [face coverings will be required in all public businesses](#) in San Juan County.

As per San Juan County Health Officer order [2020-1](#) and [2020-5](#), the ban on transient lodging for

non-essential travel remains in place until the Governor moves San Juan County until Phase 3. The ban on camping and transient moorage remains in place as well, though camping will be allowed on the non-ferry served islands.

Please remember that in both Phases 2 and 3, high risk populations are strongly encouraged to stay home to the full extent possible. [More information on high risk populations](#) is available from the CDC.

In addition, while [more detailed information is available on the Governor's website](#), some of the changes we'll see if the move to Phase 2 is approved are below (links to specific guidance are underlined).

- [Retail businesses](#) open, with capacity and safety precautions in place
- [Restaurants](#) open at no more than 50% capacity and safety precautions in place
- [Barbers, hair stylists, and other personal services](#) open with limitations and precautions in place
- [Indoor fitness studios](#) open at very limited capacity and will safety precautions in place
- [Pet grooming](#) open, with safety precautions in place
- [Real estate businesses](#) open, with safety precautions in place
- [Professional services](#) (accountants, lawyers, architects, etc.) open, with safety precautions in place

For more information about COVID-19 and the ongoing San Juan County response, visit www.sjccovid.com