REMEMBERING **JOHN LEWIS**

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SPORTS | B1

Tom Stokes steps down as South girls' track coach

The Herald-Times

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Loving the outdoors, TOO MUCH

A couple walks the trail Friday at Leonard Springs Nature Park. (Rich Janzaruk / Herald-Times)

Popularity of the outdoors sometimes harms nature

By Carol Kugler
The Herald-Times

Getting away while staying closer to home is the dilemma for many people across Indiana as Hoosiers deal with ruined vacation plans and fewer ways to enjoy the summer during the current pandemic.

Many are discovering escapes in natural areas, from city parks to national forests, that offer boating, camping, hiking and more. But as more people use those areas, the wear and tear on trails and facilities increases. It's led some agencies to erect signs, post information on social media and even close some areas during times of higher use.

While the Hoosier National Forest website gives myriad ways people can enjoy Indiana's only national forest, it also offers suggestions for how people can recreate responsibly, telling people to stay close to home; stay 6 feet apart from others; avoid crowding

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A hiker uses the foot brush Friday at the Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve. Visitors are asked to use the brush before and after visiting the preserve to prevent the spread of invasive plants. (Rich Janzaruk / Herald-Times)

> **"It's cool to see a lot of young people promoting this as a topic. The choices we make today are going to affect us in the future. We owe it to the environment to take care of it."**
>
> **ABBY HENKEL,** communications director for Sycamore Land Trust

A dragonfly is seen in the Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve, one of the more popular Sycamore Land Trust nature preserves. (Rich Janzaruk / Herald-Times)

COVID-19 testing, cases rise in county

Officials urge residents to only get tests if needed

By Emily Ernsberger
The Herald-Times

As cases of COVID-19 increase in Monroe County, the Monroe County Health Department has stressed that individuals should only receive tests if necessary.

Penny Caudill, Monroe County Health Department administrator, has urged people to not get tested for COVID-19 for the sake of being tested. In order to save resources and testing supplies, which health officials have said remain low, Caudill has advised that people only get tested when exposed to coronavirus, the virus that causes the disease COVID-19, or have symptoms.

"Testing may be problematic in that everyone can't just get a test who wants it, and it's not recommended that everyone get a test for the sake of testing," Caudill said Friday. "We are seeing with these hot spots that have come in other states, we've seen a demand on testing supplies."

According to the Indiana State

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Mayor's $2M recovery plan debated by council

By Emily Ernsberger
The Herald-Times

A large recovery initiative proposed by Bloomington's mayor got its first round of public discussion last week.

Wednesday, the Bloomington City Council began debate on the appropriation of nearly $2 million for various initiatives, including nearly $200,000 for a new round of social services grants given by the council each year.

These appropriations are part of Mayor John Hamilton's new Recover Forward initiative. Laid out in a speech given July 16, the current $2 million on the table for appropriation is part of an overall $8 million in spending over the next two years for public health, racial justice, economic initiatives and projects addressing climate change as well as basic city operations. The money is taken from the city's reserves, of which the mayor and city controller Jeff Underwood say the city has four months' worth. The Government Finance Officers Association's advice to municipalities is to have at least two months' worth. Part of the goal is to also end 2022 with three months' worth of reserves.

As Hamilton argued in his speech and to the council Wednesday, reserve funds are to be used in an emergency, something each level of government is finding itself in.

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COVID-19 PANDEMIC

MONROE COUNTY NUMBERS

13,185	575	29
TESTS	CASES	DEATHS

COVID-19 in area counties: Brown (1,147 tests, 62 cases, 1 death), Greene (2,940 tests, 221 cases, 34 deaths), Lawrence (4,051 tests, 293 cases, 27 deaths), Morgan (5,839 tests, 385 cases, 31 deaths), Owen (2,145 tests, 70 cases, 1 death). Last updated noon Saturday from the Indiana State Department of Health. Cases are positive test results listed by county of residence, cumulative since March, not total patients. Probable Indiana deaths (doctor listed COVID-19 as contributing but no test was recorded): 197.

STATEWIDE: 690,274 TESTS 61,520 CASES 2,698 DEATHS

5-DAY WEATHER FORECAST FOR SOUTH-CENTRAL INDIANA

Today
91 73
Mix of sun and clouds. Chance of rain 20%.

Monday
89 67
A few thunderstorms are possible.

Tuesday
84 63
A few morning showers.

Wednesday
86 65
More sun than clouds. Chance of rain 10%.

Thursday
81 64
Showers possible. Chance of rain 50%.

Updates online
The latest National Weather Service forecast, radar and severe weather alerts are at **HoosierTimes.com/weather**, where you can also see an hour-by-hour forecast.

OUTDOORS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

in parking lots, on trails and other areas; to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines; and to pack out trash and human waste.

Besides following those guidelines, Marion Mason, public affairs specialist with the Hoosier National Forest, believes people should plan ahead. She suggests people start by understanding the Leave No Trace principals. Those guidelines can be found online at www.lnt.org, which also tells viewers that nine out of 10 people in the outdoors are uninformed about how their visit can impact the environment and wildlife that live there.

One of the basic tenets of Leave No Trace is to leave the area better than you found it — staying on trails even if they are muddy so you don't harm vegetation and cause erosion, packing out trash and empty water bottles, camping in areas that won't pollute streams or other nearby water, ensuring campfires are cold after use and can't reignite and lessening the number of people in natural areas to ensure people and wildlife are not disturbed.

Once people have incorporated the key messages of Leave No Trace, Mason said it's vital that they research the areas they plan to visit and get a map of the area ahead of time.

"That's probably the No. 1 issue," she said. "People drive around and don't have information about the area."

The Hoosier National Forest and other natural areas have information on websites with maps that can be printed out or be accessed by phone. The forest trailheads also have a sign with a map and people can take photos of that or use the sign's QR code to go to the website and download the map onto their phone. Using GPS systems can help people know where they are within the forest in case they get lost.

Mason said forest officials have seen an uptick in the number of people using the forest for recreation. The Charles C. Deam Wilderness area is one of the locations that's had heavy use and if those areas are full, Mason advised people to have a secondary location in mind to visit instead.

"If the parking lot is full, we don't allow parking along the roads," she said, suggesting people check nearby parking lots or come back at a time when it's not so crowded.

"We also recommend maybe scheduling a visit at a nonpeak time. Weekends are very busy, so try a morning or weekday instead," she said.

One result of larger numbers of people is more litter, Mason said. Again, the Leave No Trace ethic is to be a good steward and pick up not only your trash but any other refuse you find along the trail or in the water or along the shoreline. The Hoosier National Forest has a #Clean the Deam program it's been putting out through social media, encouraging visitors to take photos of the trash they are carrying out with the hashtag on social media to help spread the message.

Cars in the parking lot Friday at Leonard Springs Nature Park leave little room for more visitors. The city park's small parking lot helps limit the number of people who can use the park at one time. (Rich Janzaruk / Herald-Times)

A sign asking visitors to walk clockwise around the walkway at the Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve asks people to wipe their feet before entering. (Rich Janzaruk / Herald-Times)

Another area of heavy use is along Lake Monroe, which has Hoosier National Forest land abutting the lake. People in the national forest can camp along the lake and elsewhere in the forest but must follow certain guidelines, Mason said. The information is on the forest website. The regulations are intended to help lessen the impact of camping and hiking in areas that get used over and over. That can damage vegetation and cause erosion, which can then cause sediment to find its way into Lake Monroe, the water source for many area residents.

Mason said the forest's highest use area is the Hemlock Cliffs in Crawford County. The popular trail takes visitors past waterfalls and unique plants. The need to socially distance has led to some people leaving the trail to allow others to pass. This can hurt some of the area's rare plants.

"We ask people to think about where they are stepping," Mason said. "Try to go when it's not so busy to try and avoid that. ... We have 27 different trail systems. We're glad people are coming out."

But she hopes some people plan ahead and try a new location that might be less popular to help limit the potential impact.

Sycamore Land Trust nature preserves

People's impact while enjoying the Amy Weingartner Branigin Peninsula Preserve has led to Sycamore Land Trust closing the Lake Monroe nature preserve on weekends and holidays. The Bloomington-based land trust has trails open to the public on 16 of its 50 nature preserves across south-central Indiana.

While the peninsula preserve is one of the favorites, so is Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve in northern Monroe County. One of the differences is Beanblossom Bottoms has a boardwalk for most of the trail, which helps lessen the impact of footsteps going into the mostly wetland habitat.

"We definitely have seen an increase at every one of our nature preserves," said Abby Henkel, communications director for Sycamore Land Trust.

Henkel said there are still people discovering the land trust's nature preserves for the first time. They may not be aware that the smaller parking lots are small for a reason — there is less impact on the environment with the smaller size and small lots also naturally limit the number of people who can be at a preserve at the same time.

Sycamore Land Trust has begun a responsible recreation campaign on social media, through emails to its members and on its website. Responsible recreation is a national trend, Henkel explained, and she's been encouraged by posts and promotions of younger people.

"It's cool to see a lot of young people promoting this as a topic," she said, adding that the climate crisis has led many to feel personal pressure to look at the choices they are making. "The choices we make today are going to affect us in the future. We owe it to the environment to take care of it."

The Dilcher-Turner Canyon Forest Nature Preserve became a dedicated state nature preserve in May 2020 and has had more traffic ever since, Henkel said. Many of the first-time visitors didn't understand why the parking lot was small and some parked vehicles along the nearby railroad track, which is not allowed. Signs have been erected to let people know, Henkel said.

Another problem is when people do not leash their dogs, she said. People may not understand that keeping a dog leashed protects not only the environment but also the dog. The dog can harm plants and animals, including ground nesting birds, snakes, turtles and other small mammals. But some snakes and other animals may also bite or spray the dog with a smelly scent.

Another regulation at land trust preserves is requiring people to brush their shoes before and after visiting the preserve. That lessens the spread of invasive plants. Henkel said it is obvious using the shoe brushes help, noting they found invasive Japanese stiltgrass growing next to the shoe brush at Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve.

Bloomington parks

With many sports postponed and certain parts of city parks closed, people have to find other ways to be active near their homes. In Bloomington, that often means a trip to one of the city's many parks. Griffy Lake and Leonard Springs are two of the more natural parks the city operates and they are getting a lot of use, according to Steve Cotter, natural resources manager for the city parks department.

City officials keep track of the number of vehicles at Griffy Lake and have documented an increase in use this year, he said. A few times people have parked along the roadway when the parking lot is full — something that is not allowed. The small parking lot at Leonard Springs was an intentional choice to help limit the number of people using that park. If there's not a parking place, Cotter encourages people to try a different site.

"Unfortunately, there's not a really good answer except finding different recreational sites," he said. "At Griffy, there is a parking lot over at the dam and (Griffy) is closer to town so more people can walk or ride their bikes there."

Cotter said trail use is up across the country, with some agencies saying use is up 79% over last year. "That's what I've seen, too," Cotter said, adding that he commutes to work on the B-Line Trail, which is busier now than last year.

As trail use increases, Cotter and other city officials recommend social distancing, hand washing and use of face coverings. There are signs at trailheads asking people to use those techniques to lessen the spread of COVID-19. Cotter said he's noticed people are not always keeping the 6-foot distance between themselves and others, so face masks are neccessary.

County parks

With most of the county parks sites closed from mid-March to June 6, there hasn't been a lot of use by people, except for the greenways and trails, which were open. But with most trails being paved, their increased use hasn't proved harmful, according to John Robertson, assistant director for Monroe County Parks and Recreation Department.

What parks officials have noticed is the use of shelters at the various parks. Many of the summer rentals of shelter houses have been canceled, but some of those shelters are available now, Robertson said.

He explained that only some shelters are open to give more space for people to get in and out without coming into contact with other people or parties.

For people who want to get out in a natural area, Robertson suggests they try Karst Farm or Flatwoods parks, which are larger and offer more space for people to spread out and walk the trails, look for birds or find some other way to recreate. Jackson Creek and Will Detmer parks are smaller but still can provide areas for people to enjoy nature.

"If people are looking for a place to be outdoors in a park setting, those two (Karst Farm and Flatwoods) offer good, open space," Robertson said.

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CORNER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A6

very important that we all buckle down and do the right things: wearing masks, avoiding superspreader events in bars and social gatherings and being prudent generally. You'll be protecting yourself, your family, your neighbors and setting a good example for the students when they arrive.

Who will be enforcing the state and county mask mandates?

Quite a few folks. Much of the enforcement comes from business, nonprofits and building owners or managers, who should assure their establishments or institutions, and all employees, customers and visitors, are in compliance. All of us as individuals should assure we're complying, and there's nothing wrong with politely pointing out to our friends and neighbors where we see problems. Since our local order went into effect on July 17, I'm seeing a lot more masks now than just a couple weeks ago, which is so important. Problems with compliance can be addressed by several units of government: the health department, law enforcement, excise police, firefighters and other departments, both at city and county levels. We encourage residents to be proactive about ensuring our community's protection, too, by calling a dedicated line at 812-349-3501 if they observe violations. Carrots are probably better than sticks, so let's be encouraging and affirming about how it's about We not Me, and let's help each other out.

In your executive order on Monday, you noted that random checks will be made to establishments and parties not following group limitations. Who will do those checks?

City staffers from multiple departments are coordinating our approach to encouraging compliance with the new health orders, particularly during the 10 days before the county order takes effect. Last Thursday evening, the first night the city's order went into effect, I personally visited a half dozen downtown establishments to see how they were doing with compliance. I was generally impressed with what I saw. Colleagues at fire and police, public works, housing and our community and family resources department may also be checking in periodically to ensure that establishments open to the public are adhering to the protocols we've enacted to protect one another. Private social gatherings are a little harder to "drop in on," so we depend upon voluntary compliance and regular patrols along with reporting from residents or neighbors who see inappropriate behaviors. To report, please call the hotline at 812-349-3501 or the nonemergency police number, at 812-339-4477.

COVID

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

Department of Health coronavirus dashboard, 13,185 tests have been administered to Monroe County residents, with hundreds being sent to the state health department each day for results.

A local record of tests collected was set Monday, with 469 specimen collected, according to the ISDH dashboard. The average number of tests collected has increased from 164 to 243 in the last 30 days.

The majority of Monroe County residents being tested are white women over the age of 29, though people age 20-29 alone make up 24% of tests, and 35.3% of positive cases in Monroe County, as of Saturday afternoon.

Though testing is still limited, the OptumServe location at the National Guard Armory has been testing more than double the program's original capacity. Caudill said at a weekly news conference Friday with county, city, Indiana University and hospital leaders that the OptumServe site is only designed to serve 132 people a day, though they have tested up to 300 in one day. This is also despite early closures due to extreme heat some days.

"They are doing a tremendous amount of testing given the barriers that they have faced," Caudill said.

The health department ordered portable air conditioners to be sent to the OptumSite this week, in hopes to keep temperatures cooler and to stop the site from having to close down early some days.

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