



## Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

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### STATE, LOCAL POLICE DEPARTMENTS ANNOUNCE COORDINATED EFFORT TO MANAGE TRAFFIC, ENFORCE PARKING ORDINANCES IN BEACH COMMUNITIES THIS WEEKEND

*With parking reduced by 75% at Misquamicut and Scarborough state beaches and a heat wave in the forecast, state and local law enforcement agencies are bracing for a busy weekend. Packed beaches since the start of summer have worsened traffic and illegal parking in Narragansett, South Kingstown, Charlestown, and Westerly.*

PROVIDENCE – Despite parking restrictions meant to limit crowds and allow for adequate physical distancing on the sand, Rhode Island’s eight state beaches experienced a 79% increase in visitors in June 2020 (340,000 visitors) over June 2019 (190,000 visitors).

Among other consequences, this has caused many beachgoers to park illegally in nearby neighborhoods in Narragansett, South Kingstown, Charlestown, and Westerly. With Governor Gina M. Raimondo having announced a further reduction in parking capacity at the state’s two busiest state beaches,



Misquamicut State Beach, Westerly, RI, at high tide 3:30 PM Sunday, July 12.

Misquamicut and Scarborough, to try to minimize the risk of the coronavirus, the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) and the Rhode Island State Police (RISP) are coordinating with local police departments to manage traffic and enforce parking ordinances this weekend. With a heat wave in the forecast, it is expected to be very busy.

“DEM stands ready to support Governor Raimondo’s goal of fighting COVID-19 by restricting parking capacity at state beaches,” said Dean Hoxsie, Chief of DEM’s Division of Law Enforcement (DLE). “As we’ve

seen on recent weekends, crowds at the beaches have been too large and tightly packed, especially at high tide. At the same time, we recognize that fighting COVID by limiting parking strains the resources of the local beach communities that are our partners.”

This weekend, Environmental Police Officers from DLE will be stationed at the entry booths of state beaches. They will coordinate, communicate lot capacity with RISP Troopers and municipal police, and facilitate closing the entrances when lots are full. RISP Troopers will be positioned at the roadway entrances to the parking chutes to prevent roadway parking once the beach lots are full.

Restricting parking by 75% means that there will be only 675 available spaces out of a total of 2,700 at Misquamicut and 611 available spots out of 2,445 in all at the combined Scarborough North and South lots. DEM strongly encourages anyone who is thinking about coming to a state beach this weekend to check [www.riparks.com](http://www.riparks.com) for the parking capacity status of each beach lot before getting into the car. Lots will fill up fast and there is not likely to be turnover on such hot, humid days.

Also, beachside municipalities throughout Washington County will be stepping up ticketing and towing this weekend with tickets for illegal parking topping out at \$150.

- In **Westerly**, the entire beach area has been posted as a tow zone and the current fine is \$75 for any violations.
- By an order of the Town Manager, all “no parking zones” in **Narragansett** have been designated as “tow away zones,” effective immediately. The fine for “tow away zones” is \$75. As well, parking is prohibited on the north side only of Ocean Road from Pilgrim Avenue to Rose Nulman Park.
- **South Kingstown** enacted an emergency measure yesterday increasing the fine for parking in a prohibited beach area to \$150. The executive order includes locations along the entire length of Succotash Road; Jerusalem, the State Pier; and all roadways adjacent to those mentioned.

Nearly half – 47% – of visitors to RI beaches are out-of-staters, [according to an economic impact study conducted by the University of Rhode Island in 2016](#) (page 8). Misquamicut attracts more out-of-state visitors – 77%, most of whom are from Connecticut – than any state beach.

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