



April 20, 2020

Governor Phil Scott  
109 State Street, Pavilion  
Montpelier, VT 05609

Dear Governor Scott,

Thank you for your leadership during this difficult time. Your efforts to keep Vermont residents healthy and safe during the COVID-19 pandemic are greatly appreciated. We join you in your concern for the wellbeing of both the physical and mental health of our state's residents.

On behalf of our allied Golf Associations and in keeping in line with other national and state-level restrictions that are in place, we propose the following Park, Play, and Go Home policy to allow golf to be safely and responsibly played in Vermont this spring.

Regarding your Executive Order to suspend all non-essential activities, we ask that you consider adding golf to the list of outdoor activities currently being permitted such as hiking, bicycling and jogging. All are outdoor activities that can continue to be safely enjoyed by our citizens while keeping a safe distance from each other.

Golf Courses throughout Vermont provide an important outlet for healthy behavior for thousands of people. They can provide a great opportunity for outdoor recreation during these difficult times. Health experts and epidemiologists have spoken recently about the need for such activity and how golf can be played safely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Golf is unique among outdoor activities for the natural "social distancing" that occurs, as small groups of at most four individuals per group are spread across wide areas of play that in total, typically comprise between 100 and 200 acres. Golf is not a contact sport and one can easily play without ever getting within six feet of another person.

The undersigned associations have come together to create best practices for golf courses in the wake of this pandemic. See the attached document for a thorough list of action items to make golf safe. Our associations in Maine and New Hampshire have begun dialogues with Governors Mills and Sununu and we would hope that together, our states can coordinate a regional approach to golf course operations in the coming weeks.

Golf is unlike other sports and most other activities. A single individual can go out and play 9 holes at sunrise or sunset and never see another person. Golf is a wonderful family activity – parents and their children, as well as husbands and wives play together. In the desperate atmosphere of the current pandemic, golf offers a respite, a much needed and safe refuge for thousands of Vermont's citizens. It is an important opportunity to reduce stress and aid people's mental and physical wellbeing.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. We welcome your thoughts on the attached proposal.



Matt Schmidt  
Executive Director



John Goodchild  
Executive Director



Bryan Bickford  
Executive Director

## **The VGA proposes the following COVID-19 Rules of Conduct for golf courses in Vermont**

Presently, 37 states (including Connecticut and Rhode Island) permit golf courses to operate, most of them under strict regimens to ensure proper physical distancing.

VGA proposes a regimen for Vermont that includes restrictions and requirements that significantly exceed those that are typical in other states. They include the following:

### **Pre-Round**

- ALL tee times reservations and greens fee and cart payments must be made online or over the phone – PRO SHOP AND CLUBHOUSE AREAS SHALL BE CLOSED WITH THE EXCEPTION OF TAKE OUT FOOD SERVICE
- Customers and members must stay in their car until ten (10) minutes before their tee time. Players should go directly to the first tee
- Practice putting green, driving range, and chipping areas must be closed
- Golf course staff will monitor the teeing area to disallow congregating around the 1st tee
- Strict social distancing shall be in effect. Golf course staff shall verbally explain social distancing and other procedures to players and/or post signage explaining social distancing and other procedures
- Tee time intervals must be at least 15 minutes between groups

### **During the Round**

- Groups are restricted to no more than four (4) players at a time • Golf cart usage is limited to one player per cart. Players are encouraged to walk
- All golfers must use their own clubs; no sharing or renting of clubs is allowed
- Flagsticks must remain in the hole. It is recommended that hole liners be raised or pool noodles be attached to the flagstick so that players do not have to pick the ball up out of the hole
- Bunker rakes, ball washers, trash cans, penalty area stakes, sand containers, water coolers, scorecards, pencils, and all other touch points on the course shall be removed
- Any in-round food service is limited to take out only. Orders can only be made over the phone and paid for with a credit card or member account
- Players should eliminate handshakes, high fives, and other physical touching during the round. Common social distancing practices must be observed

### **Post-Round**

- Players utilizing a cart shall drive it to a designated area and remove all of their trash from the cart
- All players shall go directly from the 18th green to their cars
- Golf course staff shall monitor parking lot areas to ensure no post-round congregating or tailgating
- Golf course staff shall disinfect golf cart interiors and touch points after the golfer completes their round
- We would support golf ONLY under these strict guidelines and clubs or individual golfers who do not follow these rules should be subject to penalty

## **Executive Summary of the White Paper on Health Benefits of Golf**

William L. Healy, MD : Lahey Health

Professor of Orthopedic Surgery, Boston University School of Medicine; Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Medicine, Harvard University

*Medical and non-medical publications demonstrate that golf offers physical, mental, and public health benefits to golfers and to the Commonwealth.*

### **Physical Health Benefits of Golf**

#### **Improved Cardiac Health and Aerobic Performance**

- Golf provides moderate intensity aerobic physical activity.
- An eighteen hole round of golf is associated with maintaining a heart rate of 100 beats per minute for two to five hours.
- An eighteen hole round of golf is associated with 10,000-12,000 steps, walking 7000-8000 yards, and burning 1500-2500 calories.

#### **Improved Cardiac Risk Factors**

- Walking the golf course is associated with decreased Total Cholesterol, increased High Density Lipoprotein (HDL), and an increased ratio of HDL to Total Cholesterol, and these results are favorable for cardiac health.

#### **Reduction of Blood Glucose**

- During an eighteen hole round of golf, Blood Glucose decreased 20% for young golfers, 10% for middle aged golfers, and 30% for elderly golfers.

#### **Weight Control**

- Walking the golf course is associated with decreased Weight and Body Mass Index for golfers as compared to non-golfers.
- Walking the golf course is associated with weight reduction, decreased waist circumference, and less abdominal skin fold thickness.

#### **Sleep Enhancement**

- Golf exercise is associated with ease of falling asleep and deeper, more profound sleep.

### **Mental Health Benefits of Golf**

#### **Reduced Anxiety and Stress**

- Golf provides exercise and social interaction in a pleasant environment, which can reduce anxiety and lower stress.

#### **Reduced Impact of Depression**

- Exercise, including golf, decreases the impact of depression for women golfers, who have a depression condition.

#### **Inter-Generational Connection**

- Golf offers opportunities for inter-generational connection.

#### **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

- Golf is used as a treatment for military veterans suffering from PTSD.

#### **Treatment for Degenerative Brain Condition**

- Golf training improves immediate logical memory, delayed logical memory, and composite logical memory in older adults.

## Public Health Benefits of Golf

### Recreation

- 70% of golf facilities in Massachusetts are non-private.
- Golf allows men and women golfers of all ages to exercise and enjoy the outdoors.
- Junior Golf programs foster positive development on and off the golf course.
- Recreational and competitive golf provides an outlet for personal and professional stress.

### Preservation of Open Space & Protection for the Environment

- Playing golf provides golfers a connection to nature and the environment.
- 91% of golf course acreage is green space, which provides habitat, migration corridors, and food for wildlife in the surrounding environment.
- Trees on golf courses protect land from erosion, remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and add oxygen to the air.

Sustainable agronomic practices at golf courses protect water resources.

### Park, Play & Go Home.

The Vermont Golf Association will add an additional step to the Park and Play policies that other states have adapted during the COVID-19 crisis. To ensure that no congregating takes place, courses will enforce the “Go Home” policy, and will communicate this policy clearly to all members and players.

**PARK, PLAY & GO HOME**  
**A Safe and Sensible Way to Play Golf**

- 1** Reserve your tee time ahead of time, then arrive at the golf course 10 minutes ahead of time and ready to play. 
- 2** Tee off and enjoy your round of golf employing social distancing at all times. 
- 3** Leave the golf course immediately after you're done playing to eliminate congestion at the club. 