



For Immediate Release

April 16, 2020

Media Contact:
Kirk Bengé
kbenge@sanjuancounty.org
801.532.0669

San Juan Public Health Loosens COVID-19 Health Order.

San Juan County, UT – The San Juan Public Health Board of Health met today to discuss the continuance of the Public Health Order of March 27, 2020 that, among other things, placed restrictions on recreation in San Juan County. At that meeting, following the recommendation of the Public Health Director, Kirk Bengé, the Health Board approved the extension of the Public Health Order with significant changes.

The changes include a loosening of restrictions on visitation for essential travelers. The new order loosens restrictions on travel to the county for those who are full time RVers as well as those who can do so without violating a state or local travel restriction in their home jurisdiction. Other changes include the loosening of restrictions for many face to face visits with family and friends. Notably, the new ordinance does not incorporate all of the points issued in Governor Herbert's 'Stay Home Stay Safe' directive, notably it does not limit children from playing on playground equipment and it does not require that masks be worn in public places. All changes are still subject to the State Department of Health Order placing restrictions on social distancing and maximum group size requirements.

Bengé stressed that all of his decisions have been driven by the data that changes almost daily and that he has been very mindful of the economic situation for those living in San Juan County. "Public health has the primary goal to prevent unnecessary deaths, not to keep every individual from getting sick," Bengé stated. He also stressed that the previous order had been placed in an effort to allow the Health Department to assess the situation and gather additional data. Now, having had several weeks to gather additional data, it was agreed that from now until May 1, the order could be relaxed in order to assess the local situation better and then act accordingly moving forward.

Bengé also stated that he had requested that the State Department of Health give additional local control over dining establishments to allow a case by case allowance of some dine-in services. However, that permission had not been granted as of the meeting today. The updated orders are reflective of the State Department of Health orders, as required by state law, and largely reflect the declaration of Governor Herbert. However, based on the local circumstances and data, not all of the specific directives from the Governor were included in

the Health Order today. “It is important that San Juan County Public Health Orders are based on the facts, data, and modeling for San Juan County, not the Wasatch Front or the East Coast,” Benge stated.

During the meeting, the board also discussed the need for counties to have the flexibility to be more or less strict than the State, depending on the local circumstances. Some board members expressed concern that the legislature began a special session to consider modification of existing authority in the midst of a pandemic. However, today’s modifications are based on sound public health principles and not in response to the political process.

San Juan Public Health stressed the importance of following your local health orders as well as continuation of good hygiene, appropriate social distancing, and staying home unless it is for essential travel as stated in the current order.