



Recommendations for Conducting Volunteer Herring Counts During a Pandemic

2/23/21

Basic recommendations for health and safety:

- Observe social distancing: stay at least 6 feet apart, and more is better, especially for those who are at higher risk for getting sick;
- Wear a properly fitting face mask covering your nose and mouth at all times, including outdoors and while doing counts. While single-layer face coverings including buffs and bandanas may be popular, multiple layer cloth masks or medical grade disposable masks are more effective. Wearing two masks provides more protection;
- Avoid crowds;
- Don't share equipment;
- Before and after going to the count site, wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use hand-sanitizer;
- If you touch any surfaces (e.g., fence rails, water control structures, etc.), do not touch your face. Use hand sanitizer;
- If you begin to feel unwell or unsafe during your count, immediately stop and go home;
- Stay at home if any of the following apply to you:
 - You feel ill;
 - You have recently been in contact with someone who is ill or has tested positive for COVID-19;
 - You are supposed to be quarantining;
 - You are recovering from COVID-19;
 - You are uneasy or feel unsafe about being out in public;
 - You are in a high-risk category;
 - You cannot observe the recommendations above.
- Observe recommendations, guidance, advisories, and requirements of all local Boards of Health, Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Barnstable County, and U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC).
 - CDC: the latest guidance was posted on their website on 2/4/21: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>
 - MA Department of Public Health: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-updates-and-information> .
 - Barnstable County: <https://www.barnstablecountyhealth.org> .

Suggestions for observing the basics:

- Avoid crowded sites. Skip counting or return at an alternative time if the above recommendations for social distancing is not possible;
- Not all herring count sites may be suitable for volunteer counts. Examples:

- The herring run is popular with tourists and visitors and many people are present;
- If the count site is accessible only via a narrow trail in and out; or
- If the town or state closes the site to the public for any reason.
- To access the count site, set up either a one-way loop trail, or, if the site only has one narrow in-and-out trail, set up a waiting area for the next volunteer to wait in until the first volunteer is done and leaves;
- Count alone; don't count in pairs or groups unless you're part of a previously agreed-upon "pod" or family unit.
- Once you have completed your count, leave the site promptly so the next volunteer can do their count. Don't linger and or create an attraction.
- Use your own counting kit (clicker counter, water thermometer, pencil or pen, notepad or data sheet).
 - If you don't have a clicker counter, keep a mental count or use a pen and paper to count fish off as they pass by;
 - If you don't have your own water thermometer, count coordinators are asked to look into getting an instream water thermometer visible to all.
 - If using shared equipment (e.g., thermometers) is the only option, disinfect your hands using sanitizer wipes before and after using the shared equipment.
 - Instead of using a count data form, use your own small notebook and simply note your counts according to location, date, start and end times, herring count, water temperature, air temperature, and weather. (This also saves paper). Cape Cod herring counters can enter your count data via APCC's website for herring counts.
- Don't wash your hands with soap or hand sanitizer in the stream or pond, and don't sneeze, cough or spit into the stream or pond. COVID-19 viruses have been found in wastewater, indicating that they can survive in water for a period of time.
- **Finally, if you can't or don't want to count, don't worry – it is only data – your health and safety come first!**

Note: these recommendations may change if new guidance or recommendations are issued by the CDC, MA Department of Public Health, Barnstable County, or local Boards of Health.