

# COVID-19 Protocols for VTSSS Sampling

*Your health and safety is always the top priority. If at any time you feel uncomfortable and change your mind about participating in VTSSS, please inform your Collection Coordinator.*

Below we have provided brief instructions on safety protocols relating to the VTSSS 2021 stream sampling survey. A more comprehensive Trout Unlimited guidance document, "Safety Protocols for TU Chapter Outdoor Events and Activities during COVID-19", can be found at <https://www.tu.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/TU-Chapter-COVID-19-Fieldwork-Safety-Guidance-5.5.2020.pdf>. This document is referenced hereafter as 'TU guidance document'. The specific document sections, referenced below in bold, are provided on subsequent pages.

Prior to participating in sample collection as well as retrieval/return of sampling materials, please conduct a basic self-health assessment and verify you are negative for any COVID-19 symptoms and have not been exposed to COVID-19. The self-assessment check list items are listed in **section one** of the TU guidance document.

## Use of masks and social distancing

During all activities when more than one person is present, including field sample collection, sampling material exchange between personnel (i.e. picking up and dropping off supplies) and dropping off samples at the UVA laboratory loading dock, you must

- Wear a cloth face mask so that it fully covers both your nose and mouth. See details of **section two** of the TU guidance document.
- Maintain 6-ft of social distance. See details of **section seven** of the TU guidance document.

## Traveling to sampling sites in a vehicle

If you are conducting sampling with another person outside of your family or household

- o If possible, take separate vehicles.
- o If you must share a vehicle, please take the following precautions
  - The passenger should be sitting in a different row/offset from the driver
  - The driver and passenger must wear masks
  - Put windows down periodically to promote air exchange
  - Refrain from eating/drinking in vehicle so that masks remain on

## Use of hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes

We encourage you to keep hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes available to clean your hands and any surfaces you encounter (i.e. gas station).

The sample bottle should never come in contact with cleaning materials as they can cause contamination. You should only touch the bottle with gloved hands unless it is in a sample bag.

*If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your VTSSS Collection Coordinator.*

Referenced sections of the Trout Unlimited guidance document, “Safety Protocols for TU Chapter Outdoor Events and Activities during COVID-19”

## **1. HEALTH ASSESSMENT**

Ask that any attendee of your chapter or council outdoor event or gathering – yourself included – do a self-health assessment before participating to verify that they are negative for any COVID-19 symptoms and have not been exposed to COVID-19. Best practice is to communicate the need for a health assessment along with any health protocols in advance of the event. Follow up with an email within days of the event to remind volunteers to complete the assessment within hours of the event to determine their participation. You might consider asking questions such as:

- a. Are you experiencing any of the following?
  - i. Short of breath at rest
  - ii. Inability to lie down because of difficulty breathing
  - iii. Chronic health conditions that you are having difficulty managing because of your current respiratory illness
- b. Do you have any of the following?
  - i. Temperature greater than 100.4 degrees F
  - ii. Cough
  - iii. Shortness of breath
  - iv. Loss of smell
- c. In the past 14 days have you had close contact with someone who is confirmed or suspected of having COVID-19? A close contact is defined as a person who:
  - i. Provided care for the individual, including healthcare workers, family members or other caregivers, or had similar close physical contact without consistent and appropriate use of personal protective equipment (surgical mask or gloves) OR
  - ii. Who lived with or otherwise had close contact (within 6 feet) with the person while they were infectious OR
  - iii. Had direct contact with infectious bodily fluids of the person.

## **2. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT**

For all outdoor events and activities, it is critical to ensure all attendees can maintain six feet of social distancing and wear personal protective equipment. Communicate well in advance of the event to inform participants of your safety measures and the expectation to follow them. It is particularly important to share the guidelines for personal protective equipment if you are requiring attendees to provide their own gear and your response plan should they not bring adequate equipment. Having a thoughtful plan in place should participants arrive without personal protective equipment or disinterest in maintaining social distance is critical to maintaining safety. For instance, you may decide to have extra personal protective equipment on hand so that you can have a side conversation with the individual to remind the participant that safety is priority and they can either choose to use the provided personal protective equipment or volunteer another time.

Follow the CDC's COVID-19 guidelines for personal protective equipment:

- Cloth face coverings should—
  - o Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face.
  - o Be secured with ties or ear loops.
  - o Include multiple layers of fabric.
  - o Allow for breathing without restriction.
  - o Be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape.
  - o Be treated as single use and washed once it has been removed.
  
- Use work gloves (gardening gloves, or other reusable gloves) and wash after use. Any gloves worn should be treated as single use and should be washed once they are removed or after touching a potentially contaminated object.

## **7. SOCIAL DISTANCING**

The CDC dictates maintaining safe social/physical distance, which is a minimum of six feet. Other scenarios might require increasing this distance and should be addressed on a case-by-case basis in concert with general protocol directives. Augments to the personal distancing directive is at the discretion of the chapter/ council but should never be less than the minimum six feet and should take wind direction into account. If six feet of distance between volunteers/ attendees of your event or activity is not possible, do not host the event or activity.

Minimize exposure by implementing the following protocols and sharing them with your event or activity attendees before they show up:

- Always maintain a minimum personal space of at least six feet.
  - o Example: Chapters hosting casting clinics may mark individual casting locations for participants, a river clean-up might denote six foot spacing in line for the hand wash station and tree planting organizers might notate an individual's tree planting area with pin flags.
- Sneezes and coughs should follow CDC protocol, including:
  - o Cover mouth and nose with tissue when you cough or sneeze.
  - o Put used tissue in a trash receptacle.
  - o If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
- Always dispose of your own trash.
- Field clothes should be washed promptly each day after fieldwork, especially if intended to be used again for another day. This especially includes work gloves. If possible do not shake field clothes prior to laundering to minimize possibility of dispersing the virus through the air.
- Minimize touching of the face and wash/sanitize your hands as often as possible.
- Be aware of touching common surfaces without gloves. If touching a surface without gloves, cleanse your hands with soap and water or sanitizer as soon as possible afterwards and wipe down the exposed surface with a disinfecting wipe or spray.
- Avoid, when possible, lifting materials or equipment that would require more than one person. If unavoidable, create as much distance as possible while still being safe and complete the lift quickly, consistent with OSHA standards.
- Consider selecting one person to be point on social distancing compliance. In some states this is mandated.