

**Burke County  
North Carolina**

**Proclamation  
State of Emergency  
Amendment No. 1**

**WHEREAS**, COVID-19 is a serious communicable disease that can result in serious illness or death and is a new strain of coronavirus previously unidentified in humans which can spread from person to person; and

**WHEREAS**, the World Health Organization ("WHO") declared COVID-19 as a Public Health Pandemic of International Concern on March 11, 2020. The United States Centers for Disease Control ("CDC") has reported the high public health threat posed by COVID-19, both globally and to the United States and has deemed it necessary to prohibit or restrict travel to areas designated by the CDC; and

**WHEREAS**, on January 31, 2020, the United States Department of Health and Human Services Secretary declared a public health emergency in the United States for COVID-19 under Section 319 of the Public Health Service Act; and

**WHEREAS**, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services ("NCDHHS") has confirmed numerous cases of COVID-19 in this state; and

**WHEREAS**, the North Carolina Division of Emergency Management has activated the NC Emergency Operations Center to manage the health impacts of COVID-19; and

**WHEREAS**, the Governor of the State of North Carolina, in consultation with the Secretary of the NCDHHS, has declared a State of Emergency for the State of North Carolina based on the public health emergency posed by COVID-19 and has banned mass gatherings involving more than one hundred persons and has further ordered and limited the sale of food and beverages to Carry-Out, Drive-Through, and Delivery only; and

**WHEREAS**, on March 23, 2020 the Governor of the State of North Carolina, by executive order, ordered tighter limits on gatherings to 50 persons, extended school closures statewide to May 15, 2020 and closed businesses that require close social interaction and limited visitors to long-term care centers; and

**WHEREAS**, the Chairman of the Burke County Board of Commissioners declared a State of Emergency in Burke County, including the municipalities of the City of Morganton

and the Towns of Valdese, Drexel, Rutherford College, Connelly Springs, Hildebran and Glen Alpine, within the corporate limits of those municipalities, and those portions of Rhodhiss and Long View that are situated in Burke County on March 20, 2020 and activated the County's Emergency Operations Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, to date, two (2) people have tested positive that were travel related for the COVID-19 virus within the geographical boundaries of Burke County; and

**WHEREAS**, due to COVID-19 restrictions/limitations, whether government imposed or self-imposed in combination with beautiful spring weather, citizens have been spending more time outdoors. In fact, local, state and federal forest lands have experienced record high attendance; and

**WHEREAS**, the Pisgah and Nantahala National Forests are two (2) of the most heavily visited National Forests in the country, attracting over 7.2 million visitors annually; and

**WHEREAS**, human travel promotes the spread of this disease and the presence of visitors in Burke County has the potential to exacerbate the spread of the virus and the anticipated strain on our limited healthcare facilities caused by it; and

**WHEREAS**, Burke County has almost 49,000 acres of land that is administered by the United States Forest Service, including the Pisgah National Forest, as well as two (2) State parks and numerous local parks; and

**WHEREAS**, a portion of Burke County, particularly the Linville Gorge Wilderness Area located in the Pisgah National Forest, is extremely remote with zero-to-limited services (trail markers, restroom facilities, potable water), has extremely challenging terrain for emergency personnel, and can be very hazardous for even the most experienced outdoor enthusiasts; and

**WHEREAS**, there are hundreds of miles of trails and open forest roads in Burke County, and the limited services provided at the federal trailheads and campgrounds have already been closed; and

**WHEREAS**, there are a limited number of hospital personnel, emergency medical personnel and first responders who are already extremely busy caring for sick or injured people in addition to dealing with unprecedented COVID-19 issues; and

**WHEREAS**, a wilderness rescue or wilderness medical event can last for as little as a few hours or up to several days depending upon the exact location and circumstances, and it can exhaust a multitude of emergency services personnel and resources that are vital to combat the COVID-19 virus; and

**NOW, THEREFORE**, pursuant to the authority contained in Article 1A of Chapter 166A of the North Carolina General Statutes and Article 36A of North Carolina Statutes Chapter 14 and Chapter 20 of the Burke County Code of Ordinances, I, Johnnie Carswell, Chairman of the Burke County Board of Commissioners, do hereby proclaim that a **STATE OF EMERGENCY (AMENDMENT NO. 1)** exists with the County of Burke and by request of the mayors or their representatives of the City of Morganton and the Towns of Valdese, Drexel, Rutherford College, Connelly Springs, Hildebran, Glen Alpine, within the corporate limits of those municipalities, and those portions of Rhodhiss and Long View that are situated in Burke County.

I hereby proclaim that all provisions set forth in the State of Emergency proclaimed on March 20, 2020 are still in full force and effect.

In addition, I hereby direct all persons within the geographical boundaries of Burke County, North Carolina to help combat COVID-19 by:

- avoiding all outdoor activities considered to be high risk (rock climbing, rappelling, swift water boating or rafting, zip lining) within Burke County and the Pisgah National Forest or the Linville Gorge Wilderness Area,
- not camping overnight in the Pisgah National Forest or the Linville Gorge Wilderness Area, and
- avoiding hiking or backpacking in unfamiliar territory.

Further, I hereby direct all persons within the geographical boundaries of Burke County, North Carolina to help combat COVID-19 by:

- continuing to practice all COVID-19 preventative measures and social distancing,
- limiting visits to the Pisgah National Forest to day trips only,
- walking, hiking or backpacking only on trails that are low risk and personally known, and
- taking extra provisions when walking, hiking or backpacking and being prepared to stay longer than anticipated in the event of an emergency.

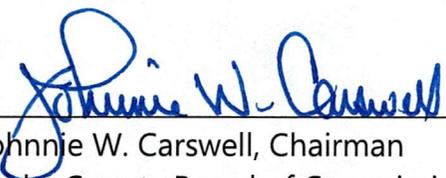
Further, I hereby direct that rentals of all lodging facilities, including Airbnb rentals, bed and breakfasts rentals, VRBO vacation rentals by owners, campgrounds, timeshare units,

condos, and other rental programs or places where leases or rentals are for less than one (1) month in duration, be suspended until further notice to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus due to human travel. Hotels and motels are excluded from this directive and exemptions are allowed for work related stays, emergency facilities and homeless shelters.

I direct that copies of this Amended Proclamation be disseminated to the mass communications media for publication and broadcast, and that a copy of the Proclamation be posted at the Burke County Courthouse and other public buildings as appropriate.

This Amended Proclamation shall become effective immediately upon endorsement and shall continue until rescinded pursuant to North Carolina General Statute 166A-19.22(c).

**PROCLAIMED** this the 27<sup>th</sup> day of March 2020.

  
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Johnnie W. Carswell, Chairman  
Burke County Board of Commissioners