



# BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

## ALLEGHENY HIGHLANDS COUNCIL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### ALLEGHENY HIGHLANDS COUNCIL, BSA SUSPENDS IN-PERSON SUMMER CAMPS FOR 2020

FALCONER, N.Y., April 29, 2020 – The Allegheny Highlands Council, BSA, which serves Scouts in a five-county region on the New York - Pennsylvania border, voted last night to suspend Council-sponsored in-person events and activities at its two camps for most of the 2020 summer season, out of concern for the health and safety of both Scouts and adult leaders in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Scout Council operates Elk Lick Scout Reserve in Smethport, PA, primarily for Cub Scouts, and Camp Merz, on Chautauqua Lake, for Scouts BSA.

“Ensuring the health and safety of our youth is paramount in this decision,” said Nathaniel Thornton, Allegheny Highlands Council Scout Executive. “We could not determine with absolute certainty that social distancing guidelines and ongoing health department regulations could be met adequately this summer and are not willing to risk the health of Scouts and their families amid this uncertainty.”

In arriving at its decision, the Council Board reviewed reports from the organization’s Enterprise Risk Management, Camping, and Finance Committees, and noted that the decision does not affect the International Calumet Camporee, which continues to be scheduled for August 14 -16, 2020.

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“Summer camping traditionally is a highlight of the Scouting experience, so the board’s decision was a particularly difficult one,” said Michael Kelley, Allegheny Highlands Council Board President. “Our commitment now is to engage our Scouts and Scout families in as many virtual camporees and home-based Scout activities as possible during May, June and July, in order to maintain the Scout spirit typically fostered in the summer camp environment.”

A Council-wide virtual camporee is being planned for late May, and Scouts are being encouraged to participate in the Boy Scouts of America National Camp-In, scheduled for this Saturday.

The board resolution further called for the development of a Super-Camporee, encompassing both Cub Scouts and Scouts BSA, in October 2020, if the Covid-19 crisis allows large scale gatherings at that time.

Deposits already paid by campers and their families for the 2020 season at both Elk Lick and Camp Merz will be fully refunded, unless the campers wish otherwise, Thornton said.

Scout camps in both Pennsylvania and New York remain closed, per state mandates, and it is unknown when they will be allowed to open. Once camps can reopen, individual unit requests to utilize the camps will be considered on a case by case basis, the Scout Executive said.

The Boy Scouts of America is one of the nation’s largest and most prominent values-based youth development organizations, providing programs that build character for young people.

Additional information is available at [www.alleghenyhighlands.org](http://www.alleghenyhighlands.org) or by contacting the Council office at 716-665-2697.