The Biden administration just issued an edict that will spur endless pointless conflicts for Americans seeking to peacefully enjoy hundreds of national parks. On Groundhog Day, the National Park Service (NPS) mandated wearing face masks on all National Park Service lands “when physical distancing cannot be maintained, including “[narrow or busy trails](https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1207/covid-mask-requirement.htm), overlooks and historic homes.”

Probably 95% of the Park Service’s 800+ million acres is uncrowded 95% of the time. But the new mandate is an entitlement program for anyone who wants to harass anyone on federal land who is not wearing a mask, regardless of social distancing, wide open spaces, or trails wide enough for 18-wheel trucks.

As the [Idaho Statesman](https://www.idahostatesman.com/news/coronavirus/article248670015.html) noted, “It’s unclear how park officials will enforce Biden’s federal mask mandate.” The Outdoor Society hailed the new regulation: “It is straight forward and very simple to follow, helping to keep everyone safe.” That organization insisted that the policy “is not going to be invasive” but told readers: “If you see [violations of the mask](https://outdoor-society.com/what-the-new-nps-mask-requirement-means-for-national-park-visitors/) requirement: Find the closest ranger or volunteer in the area and let them know.”

Captain Sara Newman, NPS director of Office of Public Health declared, “Getting outside and enjoying our public lands is essential to improving mental and physical health, but we all need to work together to recreate responsibly.” But the latest mask rule will empower legions of zealots to accost, harass, and possibly assault people for failing to obey the latest Pandemic Security Theatre mandate.

Mask controversies have already spurred plenty of idiocy in National Parks and other parks:

\*At Acadia National Park in Maine, a family complained that a stranger “who may be from Massachusetts [intentionally coughed on them](https://www.boston25news.com/news/local/maine-family-says-man-intentionally-coughed-them-not-wearing-masks/2D66S3XGENGJ5L2OREEFFRILUU/) for not wearing masks while they were socially distancing during a quaint wedding.”

\* In a state park in Massachusetts, at the Hudson Overlook on the Midstate Trail (Ashburnham?), a man spit at two female hikers who were not wearing masks. Police reported: “He explained to them that it was the ‘law’ [and that they were selfish](https://www.boston25news.com/news/local/maine-family-says-man-intentionally-coughed-them-not-wearing-masks/2D66S3XGENGJ5L2OREEFFRILUU/). He aggressively turned towards them and stated, ‘I have Covid’ and began spitting at the young females.”

I lead hikes most weekends, usually on the C & O Canal Towpath in Maryland. I tell attendees that masks are optional but kvetching about other hikers wearing or not wearing masks is prohibited. The Towpath – formerly used by mules dragging along barges – is at least 10 feet wide in most places.

Since the hikes are in the Washington area, there is no shortage of people outraged when anyone fails to comply with any government recommendation – even though the trail isn’t narrow. Many zealots follow a simple standard for maskless hikers: “If you see them, scream at them.”

Recently as our hiking group neared a wooden bridge, a 50ish guy coming from the other direction suddenly stopped and looked as horrified as a vampire who had spotted a crucifix.

He lifted his shirt up over his face to provide double protection along with his facial covering, and shouted, “YOU’RE NOT WEARING MASKS!”

“We’re outside. It’s sunny. The wind is blowing,” I replied. The dude was perhaps unaware that Covid transmission hinges on “viral load,” which wasn’t happening on that hike.

“You’re violating the rules!” he proclaimed.

We just kept walking past him.

He turned and shouted at me: “So what—is your beard supposed to be your mask!?!”

I kept going.

And then he hollered: “Your beard is ugly!”

Damn! Me and Rodney Dangerfield – no respect. This learned gentleman was apparently unfamiliar with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration guidance warning that [beards make tight masks](https://www.blazersedge.com/2021/2/3/22265071/nba-mask-policy-facial-hair-issues-ineffective-studies-osha-n95) ineffective. Bummed that the dude didn’t offer me a free razor.

Things got worse after Biden issued [an executive order on](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-protecting-the-federal-workforce-and-requiring-mask-wearing/) January 20 that people had to wear masks any time they were on federal property. The edict had an unwritten exemption for Great Leaders – when Biden went to the Lincoln Memorial a few hours after signing the order, he posed by the statue of Abraham Lincoln; neither Lincoln nor Biden were wearing a mask. At a daily press briefing, Biden spokeswoman Jen Psaki scoffed at a reporter’s concern over the apparent crime: “He [was celebrating a historic day](https://twitter.com/DanAndros/status/1352373334181371904) in our country…. We have bigger things to worry about.”

Regardless, Biden’s order is inflaming legions of junior Stasi across the land. Leading a hike ten days later (and shortly before the NPS mandate), we exited the Towpath and crossed under a bridge where two middle-aged women were standing on an embankment 25 feet away. One of them began shouting and waving her arms.

I looked at her but had no idea what she was saying.

She screamed louder and became even more distraught.

“I can’t understand you,” I hollered at her.

She waved her arms up and down.

I shrugged.

She pulled down her mask: “You’re not wearing masks!”

“We’re outside, it’s windy,” I replied.

“It’s the law! You have to wear a mask on federal property!” she proclaimed.

“It’s an executive order, it’s not a law,” I replied. “Biden didn’t obey it himself.”

When she repeated her denunciation, I refrained from pointing out that she was violating the order because she lowered her mask to berate us.

She tried to buttonhole two other hikers who were bringing up the rear.

“Group? What group? We’re not with a group,” a laggard hiker wisely responded.

Maybe the same woman will be ready with multiple surveillance cameras and a couple of drones to capture video from different angles in case she sees our group again.

Maybe it’s too bad policies for hiking trails on federal land aren’t being set by Rachel Levine, Biden’s designee to be Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services and the first [openly transgender federal](https://www.politico.com/news/2021/01/19/biden-rachel-levine-health-secretary-460278) official to be nominated. Levine made waves when the Pennsylvania Department of Health she headed offered “best practices” advice to people who “attend a large gathering where you [might end up having sex](https://iheartintelligence.com/pennsylvania-health-department-issues-preferred-covid-orgy-regulations/).” Unfortunately, the new NPS rules for hikers are much more restrictive than what Levine recommended for Pennsylvania orgies.

The new mask mandate is sanctified with the usual invocations. NPS Deputy Director Shawn Benge declared, “Working with public health officials and following the [latest science and guidance](https://thehill.com/changing-america/well-being/prevention-cures/537011-national-park-service-to-require-mask-wearing-at), we can make national parks safer for employees, visitors and partners.” But NPS has no data on how many hikers have contracted Covid from passing within shouting distance of other people. If Covid was so contagious that momentary exposure from passing individuals could spread the virus, then almost all the nation’s grocery store clerks would have been struck down early in the pandemic.

But the only “evidence” necessary for this mandate is that many Biden supporters are frightened when they see anyone outside not wearing a mask. The new regulation encourages viewing people not wearing masks as physical assailants who pose an immediate deadly peril to anyone within eyesight. One Twitter user responded to my article on [hysterical Covid complaints](https://www.aier.org/article/pandemic-security-theater/) by warning: “If you [approach me without a mask](https://twitter.com/hughw/status/1354834140630290437), I’m free to do whatever I need to do in self defense.” That dude had nothing to fear since I go out of my way to avoid frenzied people.

Where does the mask mania mindset lead? Last month, in Glendale, California, a 38-year-old shirtless jogger was arrested for “[spitting on random people outdoors](https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/california-man-arrested-spitting-maskless-people-75146879), primarily for not wearing a face mask…. Victims of his assaults ranged in age from 13 to 78 years old. In some incidents, the suspect taunted and used racial slurs towards the victims during the assault,” a police statement said. He was charged with “battery, elder abuse and committing a hate crime.”

If Biden has a right to compel everyone to wear a mask in the National Park Service, he would also have the right to dictate that people wear two masks – a [policy endorsed by Covid Czar Anthony Fauci](https://www.zerohedge.com/covid-19/week-after-saying-wear-two-masks-fauci-says-it-wont-make-difference) on Tuesdays and Thursdays but not on other days of the week. And if Biden has the right to mandate multiple masks, then would he also have the right to dictate that no one can enter a national park unless they prove they have received a Covid vaccine?

A more likely policy is that national parks could simply be shut down as part of a future lockdown strategy. Parking lots at the C & O Towpath were blocked early in the pandemic and there is no reason to presume that could not happen again. What if the Biden administration chooses to “go big” with a nationwide dictate modelled after the Los Angeles edict that [banned almost all walking](https://dailycaller.com/2020/12/03/los-angeles-mayor-eric-garcetti-covid-restrictions-ban-walking-traveling/) and bicycling in the city, ordering four million people to “to remain in their homes?” That utterly failed to stop the increase in local Covid cases, but the media still cheers dramatic gestures, sort of like how the Italian press treated Mussolini.

Americans hiking in national parks and elsewhere should strive to be courteous and stay as far away as possible from people tormented by Covid dread. There are unseen perils when federal policy seeks to placate mass fears rather than protect public safety. Plenty of Americans need to heed the warning a British publication gave to its readers: “Is constantly monitoring COVID [rulebreakers wrecking your mental health](https://metro.co.uk/2021/01/19/how-monitoring-covid-rulebreakers-affects-your-mental-health-13894145/)?”

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