

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 23, 2020 – 12:10 P.M.**

## **Southern Ute Indian Tribe Continues Safety Measures and Reaffirms ‘Stay at Home’ Order**

Southern Ute Indian Reservation – On Wednesday, March 25, 2020, the Southern Ute Indian Tribal Council issued a “Stay at Home Order”. To slow and/or stop the spread of COVID-19, it is crucial the Tribe continues to adhere to the order requiring tribal members to stay home unless it is for essential activities. The continuation of the order is based on Tribal Council’s continuous assessment of the rapidly-changing and serious public health emergency.

The Southern Ute leadership is very aware that over the last few days the State of Colorado has announced a relaxation of some social distancing standards under the banner of a “Safer at Home” program. Having reviewed the basis of the State’s decision, and more importantly, considered the special needs concerns and vulnerabilities of the Southern Ute people, it has been determined that any relaxation of social distancing standards or practices is premature. It is our belief that this premature relaxation of standards poses a threat to the Tribe that is unwarranted given local circumstances and the near total lack of evidence regarding the degree to which the disease has entered this community. In exercise of its sovereignty, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe has chosen to maintain all current social distancing orders, particularly, the Stay at Home order of March 25, 2020 until further notice.

The Southern Ute Indian Tribe’s Permanent Fund, Growth Fund, Shared Services and the Sky Ute Casino and Resort, will continue to telework and modify programs and services to ensure the protection and safety of tribal members, tribal employees, and our community. Identified operations have been modified in accordance with the recommendations made by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) which includes guidelines for social distancing and restrictions on congregated groups no larger than 5 people, and at least 6 feet apart. Social distancing guidelines also include limitations for person-to-person contact, group meetings, and other social activities.

The non-essential functions have been identified and a comprehensive list of modified services and hours of operations continue to be updated through the established Southern Ute COVID-19 Call Center, KSUT Tribal Radio, Southern Ute DRUM E-Edition, social media, and tribal websites.

As initially recommended by the CDC, the tribe recommends the use of face coverings when leaving your home for essential activities such as trips to the grocery store, visits to the doctor’s office or work as an essential employee. The coronavirus is spread by droplets in the air and individual contraction of COVID-19 by direct contact with someone who has tested positive or may have been exposed to the virus.

The Southern Ute Indian Tribal Council has also directed the Southern Ute Incident Management Team (IMT) to distribute face masks to Southern Ute Tribal Elders and the disabled/at-risk population of tribal members who reside on the Southern Ute Indian Reservation. On Tuesday, April 14, 2020, the Southern Ute Community Health Representatives staff, caregivers (Visiting Angels and Comfort Keepers), and the Southern Ute Elders Services began distributing face masks to Southern Ute tribal elders and high risk elders who reside on the reservation. Please contact the Southern Ute Tribal Health CHR Division at (970) 563-0154 or (970) 563-2348 or the Southern Ute Elders Services Division at (970) 563-2323. The remaining masks will be held in reserve to ensure adequate supplies remain on hand for health care professionals and first responders if the situation deteriorates and Personnel Protective Equipment (PPE) is required.

Tribal parks remain closed to gatherings of more than 5 people, but exercising is still encouraged while practicing social distancing.

We would like to applaud the Southern Ute Indian tribal membership for adhering to the Stay at Home Order, promoting social distancing, unity within our tribal community, supporting one another, sharing information and taking opportunities to create solutions that benefit the safety and wellness of the Southern Ute people and community. As this health pandemic continues to evolve, we will continue to provide information in a timely and consistent manner.

The Southern Ute Indian Tribal Council urges all tribal members to listen for radio announcements, continue to check the Tribe's official social media and website or call the COVID-19 Call Center. The Tribe will continue to make every effort to keep the membership informed.

The Southern Ute Indian Tribe's COVID-19 Call Center will remain live through the duration of the modified government services being provided. In addition to fielding calls, the call center will be making proactive calls to all Southern Ute tribal members who have current addresses and phone numbers on file at TIS, Finance, Southern Ute Education and the Southern Ute Health Center. For enrolled Southern Ute tribal members who have not received communication from a tribal department, they are encouraged to contact the Southern Ute COVID-19 Call Center at (970) 563-0214, Monday through Friday, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. to establish a communication stream going forward. The Tribe would like to account for each tribal member's safety and wellness through this pandemic. Beginning Monday, May 4, 2020, the Southern Ute COVID-19 Call Center will operate Monday thru Friday from 8:00 am until 5:00 pm.

As stated previously, if you are a tribal member and are concerned about your health or any symptoms you may be experiencing, please contact your primary care provider or call the Southern Ute Health Center at (970) 563-4581 to speak with a health care professional.