# State parks changing 13-month

**By Joey Holleman**
The State

South Carolina state parks will switch next year from an 11-month to a 13-month lead time for reservations at park cabins and campgrounds, making it easier to plan a year ahead for annual family or group gatherings.

"We're capturing that energy and spontaneity people have when they visit a park and say 'Wow, we had a great time. Let's do this again next year,'"

said Duane Parrish, director of the S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism. "Now they'll be able to make plans immediately for the following year without having to wait a month."

The only potential flaw is if somebody already has beaten them to the punch, since the longer window also means cabins in prime state parks could be booked more than a year ahead. The new system begins Jan. 13.

The last major change in the reservation system was in 2006, when the current process that relies primarily on online reservations as much as 11 months ahead of time was put into place. Prior to that change, reservations for up to 24 months out for all parks were taken at the individual park offices starting the first Monday in January, creating an all-day phone logjam at



# reservation system

the most popular parks.

Many of the cabins at state parks sell out in the first day or two they are available for holiday weekends, according to Phil Gaines, director of state parks.

The campgrounds at beach parks -- especially Hunting Island and Edisto -- also go fast. In recent years, the trend for non-peak periods has gone from full-week rentals to mini-vacations, Gaines said.

The longer reservation period won't increase occupancy at high-use parks, Gaines said, but it should make it more convenient to sign up in advance for the parks that get less use, such as Barnwell and Poinsett.