

# Officials say be prepared before hiking, swimming

BY CAITLIN HERRINGTON  
AND NORM CANNADA  
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — With most area residents enjoying a longer week-end through Labor Day on Monday, some will likely take advantage of the trails and water in Oconee County. Local officials en-

SEE PREPARED, PAGE A6

## SCDNR boating tips

### Before you leave

- Download DNR Float plan fill it out and make sure you leave the plans with a responsible individual.
- Check the weather.
- Let someone know where you are going.
- Gather all lifesaving devices. Make sure they are in good serviceable condition and are the correct size for all passengers — especially children.
- Check the fuel and the battery charge.
- Make sure lights are in good working condition on the boat and trailer.
- Make sure fire extinguisher is readily accessible and in good serviceable condition.
- Put the plug in.
- Connect trailer safety chains to tow vehicle.
- Carry a cellphone if possible.

### On the water

- Know the aids to navigation and buoy system in your areas.
- Don't operate a boat under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- When operating sailboats, be aware of overhead power lines and wires.
- If someone falls overboard, throw something that will float (a personal floating device, raft or cooler).
- All boats approaching from the right have the right of way.
- Always anchor from the bow of the boat and pull the anchor before leaving.
- If a boat capsizes, stay with the boat.
- If caught in a storm, head into the wind, put on PFDs and keep passengers low in the boat.
- Cold water boaters such as duck hunters, fishermen and sailors beware! Cold water kills.
- Call Operation Game Thief (1-800-922-5431) to report boating, fishing or hunting violations.

FROM PAGE A1

courage hikers, swimmers, rafters, tubers and others to be prepared to help make the trip easier and safer.

### IN THE WOODS

Oconee County Emergency Management director Scott Krein said planning is a key to a successful hike on trails in Oconee.

"The biggest thing is, I like to tell people, know the trail you're going on," Krein said. "Do a little research, pay attention to signage and how difficult it is. It's easy to get in over your head, and that's when accidents tend to happen."

Walhalla Fire Chief Brandon Burton said taking a few supplies is also helpful.

"Take plenty of water, take some snacks, throw a few things in a small backpack," he said. "A one-hour hike, if you get hurt, could turn into a five-hour ordeal. A first-aid kit, if you have it, is good. You might get stung or scraped, something like that. Blisters on your foot

can turn an hour-long walk into misery."

Appropriate footwear is also important.

"On a trail, you certainly don't want to wear flip-flops,"



Burton

Burton said. "If you're going for a hike, you want to wear something that supports your feet and protects your feet and supports your ankles. Some

people who are experienced wear sandals and they get away with it, but just a novice out in flip-flops, that could end in a tumble."

Burton said cellphones work in many areas and should be taken along, adding people can even text 911 if the signal is not strong enough for a call.

"It might not be very strong service, but a cellphone is very useful now," he said.

He added that dehydration and falls resulting in leg injuries are the most common issues he sees in hikers.

### ON THE WATER

Krein said swimmers on lakes and other areas should "know your ability."

"Use your life vest if you're a non-swimmer — they save lives every year," he said. "Pay attention to the area you're in and be alert for other swimmers, boats and water hazards. You can't always see rocks and debris under the water."

"Know your limits and surroundings," Krein added. "It just takes a little bit of water to ruin someone's day."

On the rivers, Burton said people should have a plan and let someone know when the trip begins and how long it is expected to take, but keep in mind some trips make take longer depending on water levels.

"If you're going to start at 1 or 2 o'clock and then expect to be at Earl's Ford by dark, you're going to be way late," Burton said of those on the Chattooga River. "It's a longer trip than people think. Respect the rapids, respect the rivers."