

National Hunting and Fishing Day Coming to South Cove Park



A mother and her daughters paddle board together at South Cove County Park.

FILE PHOTOS

SENECA — South Carolina's only National Hunting and Fishing Day celebration event will take place Saturday right in the heart of an Oconee County park.

The free celebration runs from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. at South Cove County Park and will be packed with free events — archery, air rifles, camouflage games, fly tying and casting, kayaking, fishing and other educational displays.

"The main goal of this is to make people aware of hunting and fishing in the outdoors," park superintendent Stephen Schutt said. "In this day and age of kids stuck behind the computer or cellphone all the time, we're trying to get them exposed to the outdoors."

It marks the second year in a row the event will be hosted at the park, and staff have prepared for visitors by the thousands.

Officials were expecting the event to attract around 1,600 people to last year's event.

Almost 2,000 showed up, according to Oconee County parks, recreation and tourism director Phil Shirley.

"I think it's going to grow a little bit each year," Shirley said. "There will be a few more vendors and folks here. I hope we're able to get some folks out and we're targeting youth for awareness because that's kind of the goal."



WANT TO GO?

What: National Hunting and Fishing Day celebration
When: Saturday, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
Where: South Cove County Park
Cost: Free

Shirley said he was grateful for event sponsors such as Clemson University, the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, South Carolina 4-H Shooting Sports, Duke Energy and the S.C. Wildlife Federation.

Schutt added that a hunting retailer will be raffling off a shotgun on Saturday, giving locals an extra incentive to attend the day focused on awareness and safety.

Gear for each event will also be provided.

"National Hunting and Fishing Day remains the most effective grassroots efforts ever undertaken to promote outdoor sports and conservation," event chairwoman Angela Viney said. "We look forward to this event every year. It is a great opportunity for the community to come and enjoy the great outdoors in a safe, educational environment with family and friends."

Creating that safe, educational learning environment is always a priority for Schutt.

He said Saturday's celebration gives him the chance to do so on a larger scale.



A kayaker paddles across Lake Keowee at South Cove County Park.

"This is my life goal," Schutt said of educating others on outdoor safety. "When I came in as a superintendent, one of the goals was to add educational programs here. I think we've done that tenfold. The more education we get out there, the better for our environment and our youth that don't get to get outside."

The first proclamation of National Hunting and Fishing Day came on May 7, 1972, from President Richard Nixon.

Jump forward more than 45 years, and Shirley said the day is another chance to showcase Oconee County's plethora of natural resources to those unfamiliar with the area.

"When you think about what we do for a living, we're here to promote the outdoors and natural resources of Oconee County," he said. "This brings awareness to do that in a safe manner in all the different platforms that can be accomplished. It's a big deal for us."

"We spend a decent amount of time on it as a staff, trying to make it the best it can be, because we do want to make our youth aware and see if we can draw folks in from the other parts of the state to recognize the resources here in Oconee. We want to, first, offer things to our citizens because that's who we serve. We want to also showcase who we are and the resources we have for the betterment of the county."