

County parks set to close until further notice

BY RILEY MORNINGSTAR
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — Oconee County parks will shut down until further notice beginning at noon today. County parks, recreation and tourism

director Phil Shirley announced the decision, which will force the cancellation of 308 camping reservations through April 30. South Cove Park

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SAVANNAH BLAKE | THE JOURNAL

A road barricade sits outside the entrance of South Cove County Park in Seneca on Tuesday afternoon. The park is set to close until further notice beginning at noon today.

PARKS. Closing is 'the right thing to do'

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superintendent Stephen Schutt told The Journal the cancellations will be fully refunded. South Cove had 223 reservations, High Falls had 71 and Chau Ram had 14.

Schutt said he had spent hours Tuesday morning contacting campers to inform them of the county's decision.

"You just have to take time to keep up with the changes, one day at a time," Schutt said. "Everybody is very understanding. We surely have appreciated our guests, because they have been wonderful."

Boat ramp access points on Lake Keowee and Lake Hartwell managed by Oconee County will stay open for "boat launching

only," Schutt said. "You can't just come in to use the area, it's for their German shepherd and corgi, would be heading to Oconee State Park today to begin another camping reservation. Rainwater said he and his family travel between Wisconsin and Columbia and are waiting for their West Union property to be completed in the meantime. "We've been following this quite a bit — a lot of it is just gibberish," he said. "This will be our eighth night (Tuesday night) and we tried to add more nights to it to modify our reservation and they said 'no.' "When I called and made reservations at the state

Duke Energy corporate spokesman Ryan Mosier said restrooms at boating ramp areas have been closed in the Carolinas due to the ongoing spread of the virus. The Oconee History Museum has also been closed until further notice.

COUPLE RETREATS TO STATE PARK

Phil Rainwater said he and his wife, along with

FOR MORE
While Oconee County parks are closing down until further notice, Clemson is encouraging residents to head to parks as a way of coping with COVID-19. To read more, turn to page D1.

campground, I wanted them to assure me that they weren't going to close the campground when I got there, because any private campgrounds would probably be full and I'd have no place to go. They said they had no plans to close the state campground."

'THE RIGHT THING TO DO'
Even though the decision to close parks comes at a "devastating" time with spring beginning to blossom, Schutt said officials made the right decision to close parks. "We do have to do it, and it's the right thing to do," he said. "With our bathrooms and playgrounds out here, we've been sanitizing them twice a day with hard-surface sanitizer, plus the cleaning

on top of the cleaning, but people are just not heeding the social distancing. This is the right thing to do. "If a kid goes out and touches the playground and some kid goes behind him, well, we can't sanitize that playground for every kid touching it. This thing is living on surfaces, so you cannot have people touching stuff and then somebody else is touching it — that stops the social distancing." Schutt said parkgoers can stay updated with virtual programming and announcements about county parks on each of the three parks Facebook pages.