



FILE

A road barricade sits outside the entrance of South Cove County Park last month. Although the park's boat ramp has reopened for launching traffic, the park will stay closed until further notice through May as the COVID-19 pandemic continues.

Oconee parks to stay closed

BY RILEY MORNINGSTAR
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — Oconee County will continue to keep its parks closed until further notice through May, refunding all reservations for the month.

Oconee County parks, recreation and tourism director Phil Shirley announced the decision on Friday afternoon as states continue to grapple with the challenge of reopening the economy during the COVID-19 outbreak.

"In Oconee, we're still seeing our case numbers rise, and with (the Seneca tornado on April 13), social distancing has been compromised the last couple weeks," he said. "We're just not comfortable yet to open those back up until we can get through May and determine what effect the tornado might have on the outbreak of the coronavirus."

In late March, parks were shut down through April.

Shirley said the decision to extend

closures was made between himself, Oconee County administrator Amanda Brock and interim Oconee County Fire Chief Scott Krein.

Shirley told The Journal officials will work to see if day use can happen before June 1.

"We know the data had to be on the decline before we started doing that," he said.

The South Cove County Park boat ramp will remain open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. for boat launch traffic only. No other entry will be allowed into the parks. Boat ramps on Lake Hartwell managed by the county will remain open to launch traffic also, but all playgrounds and restrooms will remain closed.

Those with county park buildings and shelter rentals will also receive a full refund through May 31. The Oconee History Museum will remain closed until further notice, Shirley said.