

Report: SC tourism

Oconee, Pickens report more COVID-19 cases

COLUMBIA — More cases of COVID-19 were reported in Oconee and Pickens counties over the weekend.

Two cases were reported in both Oconee and Pickens counties on Saturday. On Sunday, an additional case was reported in Pickens County, according to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control.

There are now 17 cases in Oconee County and 39 in Pickens County. Oconee has the lowest population-adjusted rate in South Carolina, and Pickens County has the fifth-lowest rate.

Across South Carolina, DHEC has reported 4,439 positive cases and 124 deaths, including 64 new cases and four additional deaths reported Monday. Officials announced no new local cases Monday.

— *The Journal staff*

dealt massive blow from virus

Decision expected this week on Oconee parks

TOURISM.

Revenue figures down big statewide

BY RILEY MORNINGSTAR
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — A tourism website has projected that visitor spending revenue in South Carolina has dropped \$1 billion since the first week of March — compared to the same time last year — due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tourism Economics and the U.S. Travel Asso-

ciation issued estimates that, for the week ending April 11, visitor spending was down a whopping \$268 million across South Carolina.

Oconee County parks, recreation and tourism director Phil Shirley said he would have more detailed numbers on the local impact when he compiles accommodations tax numbers over the next month. Accommoda-

tions taxes are charged when someone stays in a hotel or campground or rents a lake house, with a percentage going back to Oconee County and state law requiring the money to be used to enhance tourism in the area.

"It's second nature to everybody's safety, to be honest with you," Shirley said. "We'll bounce back, and we're making plans on what it's going to look

like whenever we open back up, but we want everyone to stay safe right now, and we'll get through it. I do push our locals to keep supporting our small businesses and tourism-type businesses, because they are hurting."

The state parks, recreation and tourism department said about 40

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percent of hotels in the state remain closed due to travel restrictions and canceled bookings. It estimated there was an occupancy rate between 15-20 percent during Holy Week and spring break for the week ending April 11.

While numerous boat ramps in the county will have a rolling reopening, parks remain closed through the end of the month.

Shirley said officials will be determining if the closure should be extended this week