

State parks set to reopen next week

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SENECA — South Carolina's state parks are set to reopen at the beginning of May — with some restrictions — as officials prepare to launch a tourism recovery campaign.

Group facilities such as community buildings and picnic shelters at parks will remain closed. South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism director Duane Parrish said.

"Parks also will lower their carrying capacity levels, limiting the number of people who can be on the park property at one time," he said in a newsletter.

There are four state parks located in Oconee County — Devils Fork, Lake Hartwell, Oconee and Oconee Station.

On March 28, it was announced state parks would be closed through the end of April because of the coronavirus. On Wednesday, Oconee County parks, recreation and tourism director Phil Shirley said the county's focus was still on tornado relief efforts after the EF3 tornado that ripped through Seneca on April 13. He said officials will discuss a plan this week.

Parrish also announced the state will be launching a tourism recovery campaign on May 1 to "maintain its presence in the consumer marketplace and position itself for growth when travel returns to normal."

The campaign has two phases and will be targeted within 350 miles of South Carolina and in Ohio. The first phase is called, "Dream Now, Discover Later," and will challenge the audience to consider planning a vacation. The second phase, which will begin in June because of "indicators" suggesting it will be safer to travel, the newsletter said, is called "Dream South Carolina. Discover South Carolina."

"Using iconic beauty shots like the verdant expanse of a tidal marsh and sunrise horizons over an oceanfront golf course, the campaign will invite consumers to keep South Carolina in their consideration sets until they're ready to plan a vacation," Parrish said. "The recovery strategy responds to research demonstrating that, during a crisis, brands that pause their marketing have a tougher time regaining momentum and footing. South Carolina's recovery campaign will maintain the state's brand presence in the consumer marketplace."

The campaigns will target ages 25 to 54 and run through primarily digital marketing, the release said.

The tourism industry employs one in every 10 South Carolinians and generates an estimated \$1.8 billion in state and local taxes, according to Parrish.

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