

Oconee County park campsites fully booked for Memorial Day weekend

BY LAUREN PIERCE
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — All three Oconee County parks are seeing a large influx of people this weekend, with every single campsite completely booked.

County parks, recreation and tourism director Phil Shirley said he “isn’t surprised” there are no spaces available of the 25 sites at Chau Ram, 78 sites at South Cove and 88 at High Falls Park.

“Our holidays have been filling up for a number of years,” he said. “As people were able to get outside after some of the (COVID-19) restrictions were lifted — even before they were lifted — we’ve seen a huge increase in camping since last June when we reopened, and that trend has continued.

People are still choosing outdoor recreation over other opportunities more often than not.”

Shirley said filling up on weekends has “become the norm.”

“I’m glad we are able to provide such great assets from the county and I think everyone enjoys their camping, especially for holidays,” he said.

Shirley said a “good number of families” are expected this weekend.

“They’ll hang around the camper and do stuff as a family with camp-



PHOTOS BY JERRY BEARD | THE JOURNAL

Cynthia Brewer, left, and Kari Summers of Anderson play Mahjong on a table near their camper while their dog, Baby Girl, rests, at South Cove County Park in Seneca on Thursday.

fires or enjoy the lake and the park amenities,” he said. “You also have families who will come in and ask for visitor’s guides and brochures with places to go and things to see. We’ve got a good mix of those who are both recreating onsite or coming in and looking for things to do during the day and then coming back to their campsite.”

CAMPERS

Camping at South Cove for the first time, Jamie Gore and his girlfriend, Jessica, set up camp for the long holiday weekend on Wednesday.

“What I like the most is, we’re right here on the water,” Gore said. “Usually, if I go camping, it’s in the mountains with no lakes or I’m on the coast, but still not on the water.”

They said they were lucky they got a campsite.

“On the website, this was the only campsite that was available for (the weekend),” she said. “Everything was grabbed and booked up.”

Easley residents Teresa and Russell Garrett camp often at South Cove.

“It’s a beautiful park right here on the lake,” Teresa said. “It’s become very popular, so this is where all our friends and family come. All the things to do here and

around here makes this the best park to come to.

“Our birthdays are in June, so we come around our birthdays,” she added. “We try to come year-round whenever there’s an availability, but good luck with an availability right now.”

Teresa said she enjoys bird watching, and Russell enjoys fishing.

“I love to walk on the nature trail, and there’s a bird-watching area,” she said. “There’s lots of bird species here, and I’m a bird watcher. My husband is a big fisherman, so he goes out on the boat. The only plans besides that for the weekend is to avoid the crowds as much as possible and try to stay cool.”

HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS

Shirley said visitors need to camp safely and plan ahead, especially around a holiday.

“If you’re on the water, make sure you’ve got enough lifejackets for everyone on board and operate in a safe manner,” he said. “If you go hiking, you need to make sure you’re going in the proper attire and stay hydrated. It’s going to be hot all weekend long.

“We want everyone to enjoy the lake and be able to return home,” Shirley added.



An American flag flies from a camper at South Cove County Park on Thursday ahead of the Memorial Day weekend.