



United States Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests

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News Release

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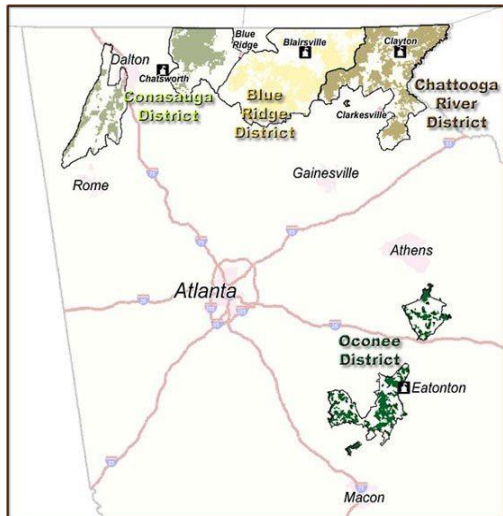
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Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests to indefinitely close camping and group recreation sites

Gainesville, Ga. (March 21, 2020) — Camping and group [recreation](#) sites on the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests have been closed indefinitely for the health and safety of visitors and staff. In response to guidance from State of Georgia health officials and experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), camping and group recreation sites will be closed effective today, March 21, 2020. This will include picnic pavilions and all restrooms, including at recreation sites and trailheads.

“As we work through an unpredictable and rapidly changing situation, health and safety is our number one priority,” said Acting Forest Supervisor Edward Hunter. “We are committed to continuing to support our communities and fulfill our mission as we all work together to minimize the impacts and spread of COVID-19.”

In addition to closing camping and group recreation sites, all Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests offices are operating virtually until further notice. This means most employees are teleworking and are no longer doing any business in person. To protect the health and safety of our employees and customers, we also are not scheduling face-to-face meetings. However, continuing our service to the public during this time is very important. Customers needing [information](#), [permits](#) and [maps](#) are encouraged to visit the [website](#) or call the [nearest office](#) during regular business hours for assistance:



- Chatsworth 706-695-6736
- Blairsville 706-745-6928
- Lakemont 706-754-6221
- Eatonton 706-485-7110
- Gainesville 770-297-3000

Notifications to visitors making reservations through Recreation.gov will be made as soon as possible and refunds will be processed.

Please see a list of facility closures on the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests by visiting (scroll down to Closures): www.fs.usda.gov/alerts/conf/alerts-notice

By closing campsites and group recreation sites, the USDA Forest Service is taking necessary measures to safeguard the health of employees and the public. The health and

safety of employees and the nearby communities is always our top priority at the USDA Forest Service. Please remember to review [current recommendations](#) from the CDC and focus on recreating safely while protecting yourself, Forest Service employees and our volunteers.

Visitors are primarily responsible for their own [safety](#). Keep in mind, trails and roads may be open for use, but please recreate responsibly and follow [public health guidelines](#) regarding social distancing while you recreate in National Forests. Law enforcement and search and rescue operations may be limited due to COVID-19 issues. High risk activities such as rock climbing or motorized activities that increase your chance of injury or distress should be avoided. For the most current and accurate information about COVID-19, contact your local health officials or visit the CDC website at www.cdc.gov. Information from the U.S. Department of Agriculture is available at: www.usda.gov/coronavirus.

Visitors are encouraged to review the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests' website for updates and more information, at: www.fs.usda.gov/CONF.

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About the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests

The Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests provide the finest outdoor recreation opportunities and natural resources in Georgia. Featuring nearly 867,000 acres across 26 counties, thousands of miles of clear-running streams and rivers, approximately 850 miles of recreation trails, and dozens of campgrounds, picnic areas, and other recreation activity opportunities, these lands are rich in natural scenery, history and culture. The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.

To receive instant alerts and updates on forest information, follow @ChattOconeeNF on Twitter and Facebook or visit us on the web at www.fs.usda.gov/conf.

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