



**Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Forest Service, Southern Region
4931 Broad River Road Columbia, SC 29212**

Contact: Michelle Burnett (803) 561-4091

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Black Bear Encounter Causes Forest Service to Close Long Bottom Ford
Campground in Oconee County**

(Mountain Rest, SC) The US Forest Service today closed the Long Bottom Ford Campground, also known as the Low Water Bridge Campground, located on Low Water Bridge Road off Highway 28 in Oconee County because of a recent black bear encounter.

“According to campers at the site, a black bear ripped open an individual’s tent in search of food,” said Andrew Pickens District Ranger Mike Crane. “Reports also came in of a mother bear and three cubs at the site.”

All campers at the primitive campground have been asked to leave as soon as possible. The campground will remain closed for at least a week while Forest Service personnel continue to monitor the site. According to Skip Still, certified wildlife biologist for the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, once food sources are removed from the campground, the bear and her cubs will likely move on.

“Although some people may be disappointed that we are closing the campground and disrupting their vacation, the safety of our visitors is our absolute number one priority,” said Crane. “When it comes to protecting the public, we always err on the side of caution; it’s definitely better to be safe than sorry.”

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A “Black Bear Alert” remains posted on the Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests’ Web site for the Andrew Pickens Ranger District. If left alone, bears are generally not dangers to people. However, they can become a nuisance if they find food around campsites, garbage cans, picnic areas, in coolers, in tents or in vehicles that are left open.

The Forest Service reminds campers to take the following precautions:

1. **STORE ALL FOOD:** All food and equipment used to cook or store food should be kept sealed in a vehicle or in a camping unit that is constructed of solid, non-pliable material or suspended at least ten feet above the ground and four feet horizontally from a post, tree trunk or other object or stored within a building. If food is left in the passenger area of a car, make sure the windows are rolled up completely. If windows are left partially open, bears can get their toes into the opening and pull on the window until it breaks.
2. **NEVER FEED BEARS:** Bears can become dangerous if they grow accustomed to human foods and lose their fear of people. Bears that lose their fear of people often have to be destroyed! It is also illegal to feed bears in South Carolina.
3. **REMOVE ALL GARBAGE** and place it in a bear-proof trash can or dumpster.
4. **REMOVE ALL ITEMS THAT MIGHT SMELL LIKE FOOD** from sleeping areas in tents or campers. This includes food, toothpaste, mouthwash, deodorants, air fresheners and any other items that might smell like food to a bear.

For more information on the Andrew Pickens Ranger District, visit the Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests’ Web site at: www.fs.fed.us/r8/fms.

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