

Rum Island Park to close for renovation

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The county promised a workshop for public input regarding the changes to the park, but it was not forthcoming. A variance to build in wetlands was granted by the water management district.

Read the rest of the article here at this link in [the Lake City Reporter](#).

Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.

-A river is like a life: once taken, it cannot be brought back-

Rum Island Park to close for renovation

By TONY BRITT tbritt@lakecityreporter.com

Rum Island Park, a county recreational area, is expected to be closed for the next four months as construction crews update and renovate parts of the park. The park will be closed effective Monday (Sept. 9) and will remain closed until all construction and renovation work is completed. Rum Island Park, located at the southern end of the county, offers free access to the Santa Fe River and accommodates paddling (canoes or kayaks), swimming, picnicking and fishing.

Clint Pittman, Columbia County Landscapes and Parks director, said the project work is expected to last roughly four months. Columbia County was the recipient of two grants that are funding the face lift – one from the Suwannee River Water Management District and the other from the state's 2019 legislative appropriations. Both grants were for \$150,000 each.

The funding from the SRWMD grant will cover the park's riverbank restoration, as well as fund a portion of the drain field and septic tank work associated with adding a permanent restroom facility to the park. The restroom facility construction will be funded by the grant from legislative appropriations.

Although Pittman didn't remember the exact size of the permanent restroom facility specs, he said the building will have separate men's and women's restroom facilities, with two stalls on each side, and the building will have an entry sidewalk for park visitors. "We've had Port-a-lets for years and this will be a

permanent structure that's constructed so that if we do get high water situations, we basically turn everything off and when the flooding is gone, we wash it out and open it back up for business," he said. Pittman said engineers designed the building so that during high water events the water can pass through the building.

"There's no electrical in it that can be affected by the water," he said. "The electrical part that feeds the septic system is mounted and elevated off the ground so that the pumps can pump the septic to an area outside the flood plain," he said.

The bank renovation portion of the project addresses environmental issues at the springs. "The bank restoration, obviously it's a renovation, but over the years with the flooding and stuff we've had and the extended use the park, there's a lot of erosion along the spring area, and that was one reason the Suwannee River Water Management District worked with us on the grant – so that we could clean those shores up and get some of the silt that's washed in out of there and clean the river's edge around the spring," Pittman said.

The improvements will also include new signs, sidewalks and a new entry gate into the park. "It's going to be a lot of standard upgrades just to make it easier for the people to use and to make it aesthetically more pleasing when people use the park," Pittman said. "It will be a good project for everybody and I think it will be a big improvement for the park...."

