



2020 Jekyll Island Shrimp & Grits Festival Canceled

JEKYLL ISLAND, Ga., June 16, 2020 – Out of an interest for public health and safety in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Jekyll Island Authority (JIA) announced today that the 2020 Shrimp & Grits Festival, slated for November 6-8, would be canceled. The decision was based on many factors, including budgetary concerns and the uncertainty surrounding public events in the future.

"Canceling this year's festival was not an easy decision to make, but ultimately we, the JIA, felt it was in the best interest of both participants and those who work so hard to bring the festival to life," said Jones Hooks, Executive Director of the Jekyll Island Authority. "It's imperative to us that we provide an environment that our visitors feel comfortable and safe in. And right now, even with social distancing, large scale events are not recommended."

"Planning the festival takes many months, almost an entire year, and the reality is that we couldn't wait and see what happens closer to November. We have many sponsors, vendors and artisans who support the festival's success and were in planning phases now, and we couldn't put them at risk of incurring financial losses if the festival had to be canceled later on," Hooks said. "We also spent many weeks discussing options with these partners, and many felt too uneasy about how the fall might look for events and whether they would be able to participate. We value their partnerships and we couldn't confidently move forward given all of the circumstances."

Artists and vendors who applied to participate in the 2020 festival will have their fees refunded or provided the option to transfer applications to the 2021 festival.

The island, a self-sustaining state park, generates its revenues from parking fees as well as island hotels and amenities, many of which were closed from mid-March through early June due to the pandemic. The island experienced a significant decline in this necessary revenue to allow for additional expenditures for festivals and events.

"To ensure island management is properly sustained, we too have to focus our efforts on rebuilding lost revenue and not overspending. We want to ensure the funds we have are not only helping our businesses return to normal, but are also focused on returning our workforce, some of which have been furloughed, to full capacity," said Hooks.

The festival is slated to return November 5-7, 2021, to continue the celebration of shrimp & grits and the dish's longstanding connection to the south.

"We look forward to welcoming our visitors back November of 2021, to the festival everyone knows and loves, and being in a place where we can provide the elevated experience that has set our event apart in the Southeast for so many years," Hooks said.

The Shrimp & Grits Festival, three times voted Best Festival in the Southeast (2012, 2017 & 2019) by the Southeast Festivals & Events Association, brings more than 45 thousand people to Jekyll Island over a three-day weekend. The festival was set to mark its 15th anniversary this year, having been a staple in both the community and the region for its celebration of the classic dish.

More than 200 artisans and Georgia Grown vendors participate each year, alongside numerous sponsors, including Georgia Lottery and The Quaker Oats Company, and restaurant partners throughout the state who showcase their very own version of the southern favorite.