



SPOTLIGHT ON OCONEE

Oconee County is a vibrant and progressive place to be. In the following pages you, the taxpayer, will get a report on the status of projects that are underway and the accomplishments that have been achieved. If you desire additional details regarding any of these topics, please give me a call at 706-769-5120. Our intention is to keep you as informed as possible on our progress.

Thank you for visiting this site. Your comments will be appreciated.

Chairman Melvin Davis

Water

Recent rains have left everyone here feeling pretty good. It's hard to think about drought when liquid sunshine is pouring down. And this year has been unusual because it has snowed. Nevertheless, the recent rainfall and colder precipitation shouldn't lull us into carelessness. The drought is real and is going to be around for a long while according to predictions. Our conservation measures should become a standard part of our lives, not something we do because we have to. We should remember at all times that water is precious and use it that way. The current drought has forced us to reorder our priorities. Measures should now be taken to ensure that we do not slip back into our wasteful habits.

Bear Creek Reservoir

At the present time, the Bear Creek Reservoir is at full capacity as member counties continue their exceptional water conservation management programs. Recent rains in the drainage basin and increased river flows have helped tremendously, but due to the fact that the drought has been so severe, the Authority will continue to monitor the situation on a daily basis. The State Climatologist is still predicting a rather dry spring and summer, so conservation will continue to be a major focus.

Court Ruling – Lawsuit on Tri-State Water from Lake Lanier

An agreement reached by Georgia and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers in 2003 for the allocation of water from Lake Lanier was invalidated by a federal appellate court in February 2008. The agreement would have given Georgia a 25% share in the capacity of the reservoir. Alabama and Florida have gone to court twice over the allotment. A district court found in favor of Georgia. The appellate court found in favor of Alabama and Florida, concluding that the agreement constituted a major change in operations and was therefore subject to Congressional approval. Georgia must now decide whether to have the Supreme Court rule in the matter.

The reservoir in north Georgia known as Lake Sidney Lanier (or Lake Lanier) was created when the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers finished building Buford Dam in 1956 in Hall County. This project was one of many to be done in the nation

following World War II to provide for hydroelectric power and flood control. The reservoir encompasses 38,000 acres and also provides drinking water to the metro-Atlanta region. The reservoir (Lake Lanier) is filled by the Chattahoochee River, which also drains into the Flint River, then to the Apalachicola River and then to the Gulf of Mexico. Georgia, Alabama and Florida have been trying to reach agreement on the sharing of water from this reservoir for almost two decades. [For more background information, see <http://lanier.sam.usace.army.mil/history.htm>].

The Tennessee River and Georgia – Background information

The Georgia Legislature has passed a bill that will authorize (if Governor Perdue signs it) a study of the location of a boundary line for Georgia in relation to Tennessee because the markers that were placed in 1818 and 1826 were apparently placed in the wrong spots. Primitive equipment used at the time seems to be the source of the errors. A legal description of where the boundary should be indicates that it should be located 1.1 miles north of where it is now, which would have placed it in the Tennessee River when the surveys were done. That location, if validated, would allow for Georgia's access to the water in the Tennessee River. The boundary marker was moved to its present place in 1826. Its original location, marked in 1818, was also wrong. It will be interesting to learn the outcome of this debate. This is not the first time the issue has been discussed. [For more information, click on <http://www.amerisurv.com/content/view/4637/153> or www.legis.ga.gov/legis/2007_08/search/sr822.htm].

Hard Labor Creek Reservoir Progress

The Hard Labor Creek Management Board continues with their efforts toward bringing this much needed source of drinking water closer to fruition. Walton County has completed their bond issuance and the Oconee County issuance is in its final stages. A contract has recently been approved by the Management Board for the design of the dam, and land acquisition is proceeding, as is the necessary wetland and stream back mitigation aspects of the project.

Upgrade on the Land Treatment System on Rocky Branch

HSF Engineering, from Snellville, Georgia has been approved by the Board of Commissioners to proceed with the design of a new wastewater plant at the Rocky Branch Land Application Site (LAS). The plant design will include a tertiary membrane filtration process that will equal or better the quality of the effluent currently being produced by our Calls Creek Plant. The design process is expected to take several months to complete.

As a side note, there was a complaint registered with the State Attorney General concerning the process that the county followed, in that it was alleged that the county violated the State Open Meetings and Open Records acts. In a response to that complaint, the Attorney General's Office dismissed the complaint and cleared the County of any alleged violation. The County saved well over \$70,000 in design fees from the original round of proposals as a result of the RFP that was generated for the project and the process that followed.

The Budget

Every year at this time department heads spend a good deal of time developing their budget requests. These requests are presented to the Board of Commissioners in meetings that are open to the public. A thorough review of each request is then done and the budget is finalized for action at the regular June meeting of the Board of Commissioners. By state law, county budgets must be balanced. A new fiscal year begins every July 1. A schedule for the budget hearings is posted at <http://www.oconeecounty.com/Budget/FY2009Budget.htm> .

Oconee Community Complex

On March 10, 2008, the Oconee County Parks and Recreation Department assumed partial control of the new Oconee Community Complex located on highway 53. The park will initially open the soccer fields, tennis courts, playground,

picnic shelter and a section of walking trails while work continues on the Community Center and Senior Center. The timing is perfect to host the ever growing soccer program as the Parks and Recreation Department prepares for its largest single season enrollment of over 900 players placed on over 100 teams. In addition, the 8 new lighted tennis courts will relieve the crowded and popular courts at Herman C. Michael Park.

The Parks and Recreation Department anticipates full completion of Phase I in August 2008. For more information on parks and recreation programs please click on the department's logo on the county home page www.oconeecounty.com .

Roads and Bridges

A Transportation Improvement and Maintenance (TIM) Plan amendment was passed by the Board of Commissioners at its meeting on March 4, 2008 for road and intersection improvements. Approximately fifteen miles of county roads will be resurfaced or repaired at an estimated cost of \$2,100,000. The list of roads is as follows: Great Oaks Lane (0.32 mi.), Ashland Drive (0.9 mi.), Old Salem Road (2.9 mi.), Hilltop Road (0.2 mi.), Pine Hill Road (0.15 mi.), Robin Hood Road (1.75 mi.), Spring Hill Road (0.15 mi.), Grayson Lane (0.55 mi.), Echo Brook Trail (0.25 mi.), Debi Court (0.05 mi.), DaAndra Drive (0.68 mi.), Oliver Bridge Road (3.5 mi.), Spartan Lane (0.6 mi.), Mason Mill Road (0.6 mi.), Rays Church Road (2.2 mi.).

Intersection improvements at Mars Hill Road and Daniells Bridge Road will also be made at an estimated cost of \$400,000.

SPLOST receipts will fund these projects.