Airport lands DHEC permit

Officials ready to make up for lost time

BY CARLOS GALARZA
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SENECA — The $4.2 million runway extension project at the Oconee County Regional Airport is about to crank up again after being stalled for months.

Oconee County Administrator Scott Moulder said state regulators notified him Friday that a stormwater permit had been approved.



Moulder

The Department of Health and Environmental Control shut down the project in April after it determined that a stormwater permit was never issued.

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Moulder said he was relieved by the news from DHEC.

"I'd like to see this behind us and get the project completed," he said.

Moulder said he would meet Monday with Jay Talbert of the Talbert & Bright engineering consultant firm that is overseeing the project. He said the two would go over a remobilization plan to begin work at the site.

DHEC discovered the runway project did not have a stormwater permit while investigating reports in February that sediment from the airport project site was emptying into a nearby section of Lake Hartwell.

The permit issue has been a public relations nightmare for Oconee County and Talbert & Bright because the consulting firm's project manager had told county officials that a stormwater

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permit was in place in accordance with state and federal laws. The project manager even presented a copy of the permit or the actual permit to county officials.

The project manager's actions raised questions about the possibility that documents were falsified.

Additionally, Oconee County and Talbert & Bright have to sort out who'll pay $500,000 that the project's contractor, Plateau Excavation of Georgia, wants to be paid to make up for losses incurred while the project was shut down.

Plateau began work on the runway extension in October and was to have the project completed by Aug. 7, before the start of Clemson University football in September.

Airport Director Kevin Short also expressed relief at getting the permit from DHEC.

"Maybe now we can get a meeting together and talk about how to get the project restarted," Short said.

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