Area tourism dollars spiked in 2008

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WALHALLA — The Tri-County area of Anderson, Oconee and Pickens generated a combined $258.6 million in domestic travel revenue in 2008, according to a recently released state report.

Statistics shows that combined revenues for the neighboring counties increased by 2.9 percent in 2008 compared to the $251.4 million brought in the previous year.

The increase, although modest, is significant given last year's deep recession in which the U.S. economy came perilously close to collapsing.

Given that South Carolina and the Upstate are prominently pushing tourism as a leading economic driver, the figures contained in the report — "Domestic Travel Impact on South Carolina" — is encouraging.

Anderson paced the three counties with $133.4 million in tourism-related revenue flowing in, or 2.5 percent more than the $130 million generated in 2007.

Visitors to Pickens County spent just over $77 million last year, or 3.7 percent more than the $74.3 million in 2007.

Oconee County, which created its own Convention and Visitors Bureau last year to focus on tourism, also saw its efforts pay off.

Visitors who shopped, dined and stayed in local lodgings spent $48.2 million in Oconee, or 2.6 percent more than the $46.9 generated in 2007.

.The study was prepared by the U.S. Travel Association in Washington D.C. for South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism.

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