Chemical firm making Oconee's largest investment

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WALHALLA — Job creation and the Oconee tax base will receive a jumpstart over the next five years as a result of the largest-ever industrial investment in the county, announced this week by local officials and BASF Catalysts.

Company and economic development officials announced that the Seneca-based firm would spend $60 million on plant expansion and create an estimated 25 jobs after the county follows through with an expected third and final reading of a fee-in-lieu-of-tax agreement next month.

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BASF: 'There has been good news in Oconee County'

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"Oconee County is extremely appreciative of all the industries that call Oconee County home, and we are pleased that BASF has decided to expand its operation in our county," Oconee Administrator Scott Moulder said. "This new investment incentive contributes to our desire to continue being good corporate partners."

Economic Development Director Jim Alexander and BASF plant manager Frank Lamson-Scribner made the announcement that BASF was the firm that had been earlier reported as Project FLS.

BASF is a world leader in the chemical industry. It produces and distributes chemicals and metal catalysts for a wide variety of uses.

It has 110,000 employees working at 385 production sites worldwide, including 350 employees at the Seneca plant located at 554 Engelhard Drive.

Lamson-Scribner told council members this week that this new investment will "change the footprint," of BASF's local operation over the next five years.

He attributed the company's decision to expand in Seneca to the environment and work force in this market.

The announcement comes as music to the ears of development officials, who told Oconee Alliance attendees last week that, before the BASF announcement, Oconee had witnessed over $222 million in new development, producing more than 1,080 jobs since 2007.

Economic Development staffer Russell Johnson said while development has been slowed by the recession — only $33.75 million and 65 jobs in 2010 and 2011 — "There has been good news in Oconee County." Johnson said Oconee continues to market available development properties in an increasingly "cut-throat" worldwide market.

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