Cliffs' properties owe

Premium lots will go to highest bidder at county tax sale Monday

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WALHALLA — The combination of a slumping economy and weak housing market is among the reasons that premium lots will be available at bargain prices at next week's delinquent tax sale in Oconee County.

The Delinquent Tax Office will auction off to the highest bidder 1,192 properties that owe almost $1 million in 2010 taxes.

Many are lakefront properties including lots that sold for $500,000 and more during the peak of the housing market five years ago.

Among the properties on the block are more than 200 prime lots on Lake Keowee owned by the exclusive Cliffs Communities, Inc. and subsidiaries.

The Cliffs' properties alone owe more than $184,000 combined or about 18 percent of all 2010 delinquent taxes due in Oconee.

Bob Hill of Bob Hill Realty in Seneca said Tuesday that people are opting to purchase existing homes instead of lots. He said they are finding great bargains for luxury homes at prices well below what an empty lot would have cost during the peak of the housing market.

"There's some wonderful bargains out there," Hill said. "The economy has been so unsupportive. It has affected everything. People aren't buying lots to build new when they can find existing homes at a great price."

$184,000 in taxes

The sale is scheduled to begin 10 a.m. Monday at the County Council Chambers, 415 S. Pine St. in Walhalla.

Oconee Delinquent Tax Collector Kevin Robinson said that approximately 64 bidders have pre-registered for the tax sale. He said online pre-registration would be available until 5 p.m. Thursday.

For a property owner to avoid the sale, all delinquent taxes, assessments, penalties and costs must be received and processed by the county prior to the opening bid of the tax sale.

The defaulting taxpayer has one year from the date of the sale to still redeem the property.

This year's list of delinquent properties is 31 percent more than last year's total of 907 properties.

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