SATURDAY, MAY 15, 2010 THE GREENVILLE NEWS

DNR lends a hand to save ancient carvings

Agency will help chisel away at fundraising goal for center

By Terry Cregar
STAFF WRITER
tcregar@greenvillenews.com

PICKENS — The state Department of Natural Resources is hoping to raise around $300,000 to build a structure designed to help preserve 1,000-year-old rock carvings near Pickens.

The agency is expected to announce the fundraising effort next week, with the money used to build the South Carolina Rock Art Center on the grounds of Hagood Mill Historic Site and Folklife Center.

The center is off U.S. 178 north of Pickens.

Last fall, the Pickens County Cultural Commission launched a capital campaign toward raising money for the rock art center called "Preserving a Place of Ancient Voices."

So far, that effort has brought in around $90,000, according to Allen Coleman, executive director of the Pickens County Museum and the Pickens County Cultural Commission.

A successful DNR campaign, which is part of that local effort, would give the center the money needed to complete the project, Coleman said.

The more than 40 carvings, including 17 rare human figures, were discovered in 2003 in a large rock outcropping toward the rear of the Hagood Mill property.

According to DNR, petroglyphs carved by prehistoric American Indians are found at more that 300 sites in the state, most of them in Pickens, Greenville and Oconee counties.

Many are at high elevations and difficult to reach for the general public.

Some of the high-elevation petroglyphs are on the Jim Timmerman Natural Resources Area at Jocassee Gorges in northern Pickens County.

Coleman said the commission is revising the original plan for the rock art center to make the structure "blend" with the rest of the buildings at the Hagood Mill property.

"We want to make it look more like the site, make it less slick-looking," he said.

YOU CAN HELP

To make a tax-deductible donation to the South Carolina Rock Art Center, send a check payable to The Pickens County Museum, 307 Johnson St., Pickens, SC 29671. For more information, call the museum at 864-898-5963 or email picmus@co.pickens.sc.us.