FAA funding pain not felt in Oconee

BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — Construction of eight new T-hangars at the Oconee County Regional Airport continued Wednesday despite the Federal Aviation Administration's funding woes that have paralyzed dozens of airport projects across the country.

The FAA furloughed 4,000 employees and grounded airport projects from coast to coast after Congress went on summer recess this week without passing a funding-extension bill for the agency.

Congress allowed the FAA's last extension to expire on July 22, leaving the agency with no choice but to halt projects and furlough workers.

However, the pain was not being felt at the local airport where contractors labored on the foundation for eight new hangars.

Trehel Corp. was awarded a $380,000 contract in March to do the job.

Airport Director Kevin Short said work on the project began July 15.

SEE FAA, PAGE A5

FAA: T-hanger project goes uninterrupted

FROM PAGE A1

Short said he thinks that only FAA projects are being impacted by Congress' failure to approve a funding extension.

"No one has called me from the FAA," he said. "No news is good news."

The FAA funds 95 percent of local airport projects, while the county and state split the other 5 percent of the costs.

Pickens County Airport Director Skeets Cooper said he does not have any projects going on at the moment. He was unsure what the impact would be if the funding impasse is prolonged.

"We do not know yet at this time what effect it'll have," he said.

Short said he is waiting to receive final dimensions from the South Carolina Aeronautics Division on a proposed perimeter fence that would help prevent wildlife from running across the airport's newly extended 5,000-foot runway and taxiway. Once the county knows what the dimensions are, Short said a request for bids could be advertised.



CARLOS GALARZA | THE JOURNAL

Construction workers erect structure bolts on the foundation for eight new T-hangars at the Oconee County Joint Regional Airport on Wednesday. A local airport official said Congress' failure to approve an appropriations bill extension for the Federal Aviation Administration is not interrupting the local project.

Also on Wednesday, a crew from Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative and a subcontractor were adding power capacity at the airport to supply the additional lighting required by the extended runway.

Without a reauthorization from Congress, the FAA is unable to get roughly $2.5 billion out the door for airport projects in all 50 states.

carlos@dailyjm.com | (864) 973-6685