# *Fishing tourney expected to bring $500K*

**BY LADONNA BEEKER**
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SENECA — About 300 fishermen and $500,000 is expected to make its way into Seneca this weekend for a regional tournament.

Seneca agreed to give $5,000 of its Hospitality Accommodation Tax or HAT funds to the FLW Outdoors Regional Fishing Tournament because it is expected to bring a high economic impact to the city.

Seneca provided funds for a previous fishing tournament, which Finance Officer Joel Seavey said is the reason the city was "so quick to do it again."

Mayor Dan Alexander agreed.

"They'll spend several hundred dollars a day in Seneca," Alexander said. "That's definitely good for the community."

FLW Outdoors Tournament Director Mark McWha said there would be 150 boats on the water today and Friday, which totals about 300 fishermen with two in each boat. Even though the tournament starts today, McWha said some fishermen have been in Oconee County for two weeks to practice fishing in Lake Hartwell.

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The regional tournament includes fishermen who have competed in five tournaments this year and are from a variety of states, such as Florida, North Carolina, West Virginia, Virginia, Alabama and Tennessee. The competitors are part of the grassroots Walmart FLW Bass Fishing League.

McWha said Oconee County was a prime location for this year's regional tournament because it's centrally located between the competitors' states.

"It's a good time of year to be here," McWha said.

Ken Sloan, executive director for Mountain Lakes Convention and Visitors Bureau, said he recruited FLW Outdoors to host its regional tournament in Oconee County after it previously held smaller tournaments in the area. The tournament has packed hotel rooms at Days Inn, Best Western, Jameson Inn and Days Inn of Clemson, Sloan said. Fishermen prefer hotels with external room entrances for their battery-powered equipment to be charged, Sloan said.

As the tournament starts, today and Friday's weigh-ins will be held at the Clemson Beach and Recreation Area. The last weigh-in for the bass tournament will be Saturday at Shaver Recreation Center and will feature the top 12 fishermen from today and Friday.

The first-place winner will get a Chevrolet Silverado and a boat, with a total prize package equaling $70,000. The second place winner will receive a $25,000 boat.

For more information, visit http://wwwflwoutdoors.com/tournaments/ and click on the Walmart FLW Bass Fishing League schedule.

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