Hartwell project 'moving along'

BY CARLOS GALARZA-VEVE
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SENECA — The ownership group of the Sanctuary Pointe tourist destination project in Oconee County is in the process of recruiting a hotel investor.

Sanctuary Pointe, LLC, spokesman El Henry said Friday that the group's focus a'

SEE PROJECT, PAGE A7

PROJECT: 'It is moving along'

FROM PAGE A1

the moment is the development of a full-service hotel.

"We've had some very interesting concepts presented to us," Henry said. "We're focused now in the private sector."

Henry is hopeful of announcing its investor groups early next year.

Oconee officials are counting on the project to give local tourism and economic development a shot in the arm.

The State Budget and Control Board, headed by Gov. Nikki Haley, gave its approval in January to have Sanctuary Pointe develop 325 acres at Lake Hartwell State Park through a sublease agreement between the ownership group and the S.C. Parks, Recreation and Tourism department. The development site is located near the border with Georgia at Lake Hartwell off Interstate 85 and S.C. Highway 11.

Under the terms of the agreement, the LLC must have the first phase of the project completed or well on the way to being completed by December 2020. The first phase is to include infrastructure, a hotel and conference center, golf course and resort harbor complex.

Henry said an endangered species study has been completed, and two other studies (environmental and archeological) are under way.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which leases the project site to SCPRT, is also monitoring Sanctuary Pointe's progress.

Corps spokesman Russell Wicke of the Savannah District said a study for cultural resources must also be completed before construction could begin.

Henry said the ownership group wants to stay on track with the project.

"We want to move with appropriate speed," Henry said.

SCPRT spokesman Marion Edmonds said Friday that State Parks Director Phil Gaines is constantly on the phone with the Sanctuary Pointe group.

"Although it seems that things are quiet with the project, it is moving along," Edmonds said. "We don't see any problems with this project."

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