Homeowners complain about road work

BY NORMAN CANNADA
THE JOURNAL

A small county road near Lake Keowee is causing some controversy as county officials are removing dozens of pine trees and neighbors have called the work unnecessary and inconvenient.

Work began last week to remove trees and resurface Lake Point East Drive off Keowee School Road, according to Mike Kelly, county engineer. The $30,000 project is expected to be completed in mid-October.

Kelly said the trees that are being removed are the cause of the problem on the road.

"Those pine trees are causing severe damage to the road," Kelly said. "The roots of these trees are getting underneath the road."

Like all potential road projects, the work on Lake Point East Drive went through the county transportation board and then was presented to the Oconee County Council for a full vote. The council gave final approval for the project July 17.

In addition to damaging the road, Kelly said the trees are also intertwined with the utilities, which could cause future problems.

"We are doing it now before a thunderstorm comes in and causes a big mess," he said.

He added that efforts are being made to cause as few problems as possible to local residents. But, the removal of the trees have caused temporary power outages.

"We're trying to do it in a way that will cause as little inconvenience as possible," Kelly said.

Brian English, who lives in one of the eight houses on the street that connects with Keowee School Road on one end and has a cul-de-sac at the other end, said the work has already caused inconveniences for the residents. He said traffic has been blocked along the street when trees are being taken down and some utilities have been interrupted because of the work.

"It's ridiculous," said English. "It's enough to make you want to pull out your hair and throw your hands in the air."

English said he has not noticed any problems with the road and was unaware, until contacted by The Journal of problems with the trees and the power lines. He added that he has seen owls and eagles in those trees and is concerned that eliminating so many trees could have an impact on wildlife in the neighborhood.

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Oconee County workers remove trees from Lake Point East Drive near Lake Keowee on Wednesday. Dozens of trees that line the small street of eight homes are being removed because county officials say the trees are causing problems with power lines and the roots are getting under the street and causing damage. Residents have expressed concerns about losing the trees and say the work is causing problems for the them, and may not be necessary.