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Hotel study gets a big response in Oconee

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WALHALLA — More than a dozen firms are lining up to have a shot at conducting Oconee County's first-ever hotel and conference center feasibility study.

A panel chosen to select the winning proposal for undertaking the study will open all the bids that have been submitted by today's 2 p.m. deadline.

Oconee's Mountain Lakes Convention and Visitor's Bureau issued a formal Request for Proposals (RFP) on Dec. 11. The CVB, which was formed in November 2008, received $20,000 each from Oconee County Council and Oconee Alliance to fund the feasibility study.

CVB Director Ken Sloan said that as of Tuesday about 14 firms had submitted bids.

Sloan said the study would help answer such questions as: Where would the best location in Oconee County to establish a hotel/conference center be? Is there more than one spot? What hotel brands would make a good fit?

Sloan said he is encouraged with the progress being made between the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism and a Seneca firm looking to create a tourist attraction on more than 300 acres of Lake Hartwell property in Oconee County near Interstate 85.

The developer, Sanctuary Pointe LLC, has indicated the first phase of the project would be the establishment of a golf course and a hotel-conference center. Future de-

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