# Martins Creek project now accepting

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SENECA — First it was the down economy and then it was the upside of a new development that kept Oconee County from expanding its Martins Creek sewer facility.

However, the Oconee Joint Regional Sewer Authority has decided it has waited long enough.

Members of the Sewer Authority board voted this week to seek bids and apply for a loan to make $5.4 million in improvements to the Martins Creek plant.

With a construction permit issued by the Dept. of Environmental Control (DHEC) in hand, the Authority expects to be able to move ahead with construction this summer. The group said it would put the expansion out for bids as soon as Authority Director Bob Winchester updates local developer Neal Workman on the project.

It was Workman's and his partner, Tom Winkopp's, Highpointe of Clemson housing development on the former WestPoint Stevens property that put the local sewer project on hold temporarily. Winchester said the Martins Creek project would not have been necessary if DHEC approved increasing discharge levels from the existing sewer plant on the Highpointe property. That approval was recently denied.

Winchester said DHEC would not consider approving higher discharge levels into Lake Hartwell unless the Authority paid for an expensive "lake modeling." He said that in addition to the cost, meeting that requirement would likely delay Martins Creek construction past the July 23, 2010 deadline DHEC has approved.

Currently, Highpointe has a three-phase discharge permit that will cap discharges into



# bids, officials say

the lake at under one million gallons per day.

Winchester said the Martins Creek project will include a new pump station, a three million gallon holding tank and a number of parallel lines to serve subdivisions being developed in the southeast part of Oconee County. Once construction bids have been received, Winchester said a rate analysis will be required to determine what fees will have to be charged to repay the state's revolving loan fund.

Authority board members approved applying for project funding from the state's Budget and Control Board.

Recently, the Authority paid off the balance of a loan that financed expansion of the central Coneross treatment facility several years ago. A $612,000 debt service reserve that was being held in escrow against that loan was recently returned to the Authority and reinvested in a short-term Treasury note.