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New infrastructure along SC 130 provides development opportunities

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By Andrew Moore (Contact / Staff Bio)
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Sewer lines may not be the most glamorous topic for discussion, but they're plenty important to the city of Seneca and Duke Energy.

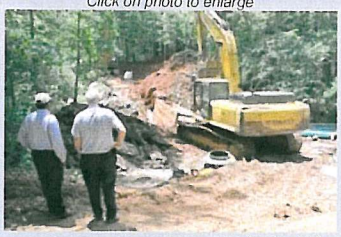
"Since we've been operating in Oconee County, we've been treating our own sewer water," Duke spokesperson Sandra Magee said. "We were approaching a time where we had to decide to replace the system or do something else."

Duke and the city of Seneca have teamed up to get Duke out of the sewer business by implementing a three-division project that will ultimately allow Seneca Light and Water to treat Duke's wastewater for them.

The city began taking contact bids for the project in 2007 and has currently knocked out a third of the undertaking, Seneca Utilities Director Bob Faires said.

Photo

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Jessica Nelms

Seneca Light and Water workers labor through the Perkins Creek area in the second division of a three-part project that will enable Duke Energy to send its wastewater to Seneca for treatment.

The first, and perhaps most crucial, aspect of the project was completed in the spring of 2009. A main sewer line was constructed to link the Duke Energy's wastewater to the Newry lift station. That line runs along SC Highway 130. Seneca officials and Duke Energy believe developing infrastructure along 130 could bolster both commercial and residential development in the area.

"What that will do is open up a line down there, and there's a hope that it could create a commercial corridor," Magee said.

The second division of the project is a gravity line that will vein through the Perkins Creek area. That portion of the project is roughly 25 percent complete, Faires said. The final step of the undertaking is still in its formative design stage, and will provide a gravity line that also travels down 130 from Old Clemson Highway to Highway 123.

"There's certainly the capacity there for any kind of development," Faires said of the project's chances to create growth. "It's not unlimited, but there is the opportunity for residential and commercial or any kind of development along the line."

Magee said Duke is expecting to pay between $4 million and $5 million on the project. Oconee County is committing to $1 million of that at a $100,000-per-year clip. Some of those costs are expected to be recouped by the county through impact fees from any development tapping the new sewer line.

Once all divisions of the Duke Sewer Project are complete, Seneca would own the system, which also means it would have to pay for its operation and maintenance. Once Seneca is capable of accepting Duke's wastewater, they will begin treating it and billing the local energy giant for the service.

"We've been on schedule with the project and working closely with Duke," Faires said. "It's been a great working relationship."

Magee said the project was positive for two reasons: First, the sewer line will allow Duke Energy to focus on its sole purpose of providing its customers with reliable energy; and second, it could serve as a catalyst for growth along the eastern side of Lake Keowee.

"We've made the decision that it's our business to make electricity and not process sewer," Magee said. "We're happy to be able to work out this project with the city and, at the same time, hopefully spur some additional development for the area."

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