

Oconee, Pickens population growth sputters

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SENECA — The high double-digit population growth seen in Oconee and Pickens County two decades ago is dwindling.

Oconee's once torrid 15.16 percent spurt in the 1990s is down more than half to 6.48 percent according to U.S. Census estimates compiled from 2005-2009.

The set of five-year American Community Survey estimates released this week ahead of the new 2010 Census numbers to be released in the coming days places Oconee's total population at 70,507. That is an increase of less than 7 percent from the 2000 Census count of 66,215.

The spiraling population trend is even more dramatic in Pickens County.

According to ACS

estimates, Pickens total population of 116,092 reflects an increase of 4.81 percent from the 2000 count of 110,757.

From 1990 to 2000, the rate of population growth in Pickens County was smoking at almost 18 percent.

The dip is attributed in large measure to the U.S. economic meltdown that began in late 2007 and intensified during the next year and a half.

As unemployment climbed and the housing market tumbled, people were stuck. Unable to sell their homes or find work, many have put off moving as an option, which was fueling growth in Oconee and Pickens.

The new 2005-2009 ACS estimates are not related to the 2010 Census population counts to be released Tuesday.

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