

# Keep out!



CARLOS GALARZA | THE JOURNAL

**Andy Van Surdam, owner of Van Surdam Vintage Aircraft, tests an engine at the Oconee County Regional Airport on Thursday. In the foreground is the newly extended runway abutting a Wildlife Management Area to the north. The county plans to install a 9,400-foot fence to keep deer off the airfield.**

## Oconee airport fence would shield newly extended runway from wildlife

**BY CARLOS GALARZA**  
THE JOURNAL

**SENECA** — Now that the Oconee County Regional Airport has completed extending its runway to 5,000 feet, it is ready to get started on a new project.

Next on the airport's capital improvement schedule is the installation of an 8-foot fence to protect the runway from prancing wildlife.

Two protected Wildlife Management Areas bordering the airport expose the airfield to dashing deer that officials say is a significant hazard to aircraft taking off and landing during darkness.

Airport Director Kevin Short said the fence would run north and east around the newly extended runway to completely enclose the airfield.

The total cost of putting up 9,400 linear feet of fencing is \$350,385, with the Federal Aviation Administration paying 95 percent.

Oconee County and the South Carolina Aeronautics Commission will split the remaining 5 percent cost of \$17,518.

The Oconee County Council this week voted unanimously to accept the grant money from the FAA and from the state to move forward with the project.

"We are finally getting action toward alleviating our wild-

life issues, or at least having a significant deterrent to this," Short told council this week.

In accepting federal and state funds for the project, council also approved a Memorandum of Agreement with the Division of Aeronautics, which will undertake the administration of the project. A Division of Aeronautics engineer will design the project.

Short said the county's participation would include advertising and taking bids on the project.

Short toured the project site with Division of Aeronautics staff on Thursday.

Once the project gets under way in the fall, Short said it

would take about 90 to 120 days to complete.

In the meantime, the airport is putting the word out on websites frequently used by pilots to let them know that Oconee's extended 5,000-foot runway is completed.

The longer runway, extended at a cost of about \$4.8 million, allows for larger aircraft to use the strip, and is expected to help generate additional revenues.

The airport also is in the process of building eight new hangars. When completed, the county is expected to lease the new hangars for \$250 a month.