Oconee hopes to bring in more visitors

Head of Convention and Visitors Bureau says hotel/ conference center is needed

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WALHALLA — The head of Oconee County's Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) told the Oconee County Council this week that his organization is unable to book corporate gatherings or conferences for lack of a facility for such activities.

In reporting to the County Council for the first time on the progress made by the year-old organization, CVB Director Ken Sloan said he's had to take out the convention part of CVB and instead concentrate on events to draw visitors to the county.

"Due to lodging restraints, our focus is on events," Sloan said at Tuesday night's County Council meeting.

Sloan urged the council to take a lead role in trying to get a hotel/conference center facility so he could start booking large meetings. He said groups tend to go to an area that has such a facility where they can do everything in one place without having to travel.


Sloan

Sloan said Pickens County already is moving toward having such a facility.

In the meantime, Sloan said the CVB is focused on promoting events with the potential of drawing large number of visitors. Upcoming events include a trilathon competition in Jocassee, a Lake Keowee charity walk and Vet Fest in Seneca and Walhalla.

Aside from the sprinkling of motels in the area, Sloan said there are some 200-vacation homes in the county that also are used for lodging visitors.

Sloan also urged council to attend a meeting next week in Seneca with state tourism officials for the unveiling of the Upstate Product Development Plan.

Sloan said state studies show that the Upstate area, and specifically Oconee and Pickens counties, will play key roles in drawing visitors because of the area's natural resources.