Outdoor adventure center planned for Sanctuary Pointe

THE JOURNAL STAFF

SENECA — The developer of the long-awaited Sanctuary Pointe on Lake Hartwell released early plans Thursday for an Outdoor Life Center at its planned resort property.

The Outdoor Life Center complex will include an adventure center with zip lines, a ropes course, bike rentals, a lakeside center for flat-water recreation, indoor and outdoor archery ranges, an amphitheater, walking and hiking trails, a café, classrooms and meeting spaces.

"The Outdoor Life Center provides an amenity at Sanctuary Pointe that will deliver a host of activities for the entire family as well as a unique corporate meeting venue," Kris Miller, president of Atlanta-based Ackerman & Company, part of the Sanctuary Pointe LLC ownership team, said in a news release.

The proposed $100 million tourist destination — to be anchored by a waterfront resort, conference center, marina and outdoor recreation center — is planned on a 300-acre peninsula on Lake Hartwell behind the Interstate 85 Welcome Center in Oconee County that is owned by the U.S. Corps of Engineers and leased to SCPRT.

Officials said they expect construction to start at the beginning of 2017, according to multiple reports. They expect the center to open in the late spring or early summer of 2018.

The project is the brainchild of Lake Keowee residents Robert Daffin, a resort development expert, and his partner with Sanctuary Pointe LLC, Elmon Henry. The partners convinced state officials they would have investors in place to make the I-85 tourist attraction a reality.

The Outdoor Life Center is slated to be a cooperative effort with Sanctuary Point LLC taking the lead, Henry said.



Sanctuary Pointe LLC is moving ahead with forming a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation comprised of strategic private sector partners, public entities and community leaders to spearhead the Outdoor Life Center.

A board of directors and its executive director will oversee the center's design and development, as well as the ongoing operations of the center.

The resort received approval earlier this year from the Corps of Engineers and the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism for a revised master plan that incorporates an Outdoor Life Center component.

Jack Wise of Wildwater Ltd, which operates outdoor adventure facilities throughout the Upstate and the Carolinas, is enthusiastically supportive of the Outdoor Life Center, with plans for significant participation, according to the news release.

Wildwater's plans include both the adventure park and the lakeside center. The 30-to-50-element aerial park will include easy, moderate and difficult challenges. It will also operate the lakeside center, including instruction and rental services for canoes, kayaks, sailboats and standup paddleboards, as well as offsite excursions for whitewater rafting.

Ginger Hopwood, a USA Archery Association national coach, in consultation with the Archery Shooter Association and the Easton Foundation, is providing planning services for the design, development and program activities for an archery center at the Outdoor Life Center.

"Given the existing tourism demand for outdoor recreation and soft adventure experiences in the Upstate region, we believe that the Outdoor Center complex will provide a significant positive element to phase one of the development," said Duane Parrish, director of the SC Parks, Recreation and Tourism Department. "This will enhance the visitor experience at Sanctuary Pointe and drive greater business to the property."

Parrish told The Journal last month an 18-hole golf course is still part of the project, although it's been eliminated from the first phase.

Working with Greenville Health System, Clemson University and Upstate Warrior Solution, Sanctuary Pointe has also focused a segment of its wellness and fitness programs specifically on veterans' wellness and fitness.

"Sanctuary Pointe can provide a new and distinct opportunity for outdoor recreation for veterans, as well as civilians and their families in the area surrounding Lake Hartwell and the region," said Brent L. Hawkins, professor in recreational therapy at Clemson University. "Research literature on veterans highlights the positive impact outdoor recreation can have on the health and wellbeing of veterans, their supporters and families."