Preparations for hosting rowing teams under way

BY GREG OLIVER
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CLEMSON — Clemson Area Chamber of Commerce Tourism Director Lindsey Newton said she expects 10 university rowing teams from the Northeast and Midwest to make their way to Clemson in March for training and competition.

"As of right now, we have 494 athletes coming here, with 425 set to arrive between March 10 through the 17th," Newton said. "That will be our heaviest week."

Teams already committed to arriving during that week consist of Syracuse, Purdue, Northeastern, Indiana, Sacred Heart, Iowa, Boston and Marist universities. Newton said she has received inquiries from two other universities, but is waiting on a final decision.

University rowing teams have trained in Clemson in recent years and Chamber officials estimate that the economic impact for the Clemson community is $100,000 per rowing team. Last year, some 620 rowing athletes trained in Clemson and one of the highlights involved the arrival of the U.S. Olympic women's national rowing team.

Longtime Northeastern University women's rowing coach Joe Wilhelm said last year that he decided to return to Clemson after more than a decade after trying other sites in Florida and Tennessee.

"I know it's a manmade body of water (Lake Hartwell), but there's only so many places you can find calm water no matter what the winds are doing," Wilhelm said.

Wilhelm also praised the 10-foot by 60-foot prefabricated dock installed a couple of years ago, that includes a 12-foot gangway and anchoring as well as the ability to adjust to fluctuating water conditions. The plastic dock is stationed beside a 60-foot long wooden dock and enables more teams to use them without having to wait to launch.

But Newton said the older of the two docks is "in major disrepair" and ultimately will have to be addressed.

"We're working to estimate and repair it to get through this season and then we will have to make a decision on next year," Newton said.

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