# Rock art center closer to reality

**By Julie Howle**
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Efforts to preserve petroglyphs discovered in a large rock outcropping at Hagood Mill have reached a milestone and are part of plans to further develop tourism in Pickens County.

Construction started last week on a South Carolina Rock Art Center designed to protect and display the petroglyphs, said Allen Coleman, executive director of the Pickens County Cultural Commission, which runs the Pickens County Museum and Hagood Mill.

"It's a place to preserve something very special while bringing people into our county to help boost our local tourism industry and economy," Coleman first told GreenvilleOnline.com.

Pickens County will hold a groundbreaking ceremony for the rock art center at 4 p.m. May 12 at the Hagood Mill site, said Carla Whitlock, special projects coordinator for Pickens County.

The groundbreaking is open to the public.

"This will be another major exhibit that we will have to offer at our Hagood Mill site," county Administrator Chappell Hurst said. "Our intentions are to further develop the Hagood Mill site as we go forward, and this becomes a centerpiece for that development."

Ed Bolt, site manager for the Hagood Mill Historic Site, said more than 40 petroglyphs, including 17 human stick figures, were discovered in a large rock outcropping at the site in 2003.

Bolt said it is believed the carvings date back more than 1,000 years and were likely created by prehistoric American Indians.

Coleman said the estimated cost of the construction phase for the rock art center is about $250,000.

He said about $200,000 came from fundraising, including private donations and grants, and a little more than $40,000 is from Pickens County from local accommodations tax money.

Coleman said the center will be a destination for people ranging from tourists and school groups who want to learn more about the American Indian culture and history of the area to scholars intent on research.

He said construction is expected to be completed in August followed by work to set up displays and interior presentations.

The South Carolina Rock Art Center will likely open to the public the beginning of 2012, Coleman said.

"We're going to make it totally accessible," he said.

**YOU CAN GO**

**What:** Rock art center groundbreaking
**When:** 4 p.m. May 12
**Where:** Hagood Mill Historic Site & Folk Life Center, 138 Hagood Mill Road, Pickens.