

A $4.2 million runway extension project at the Oconee County Regional Airport remains on hold Monday. Sporadic work has been limited to erosion control measures, officials said.

FILE PHOTO

Runway work still limited

BY CARLOS GALARZA
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WALHALLA — Runway construction activity at the Oconee County Regional Airport remains in a holding pattern.

County officials said Monday that while there is some limited work going on, it is confined to maintaining erosion control measures.

County Administrator Scott Moulder said Plateau Excavation, Inc., of Georgia, the company hired to do the $4.2 million runway project, is working on an abbreviated schedule.

Moulder said Plateau wants to see the county approve a change order for the project that includes additional costs above and beyond the original price.

The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control shut down the project in April after it determined that a stormwater permit was never issued for the project.

When Oconee and Plateau signed a contract for the runway extension in August 2009, the target completion date was to have been this month before the start of the Clemson University football season in September.

The project adds 600 feet to the existing 4,400-foot runway. Consultants said the resulting 5,000-foot runway would help increase fuel revenues because of larger aircraft being able to land and take off. Consultants also said the runway extension would boost economic development opportunities because companies seeking to start or relocate a business prefer to have a nearby airport where they can land their corporate jets.

Moulder said its possible the change order to Plateau's original purchase order could go before County Council for approval at the next regular meeting Aug. 17.

DHEC issued a construction stormwater permit July 19, or 15 months after a project engineer incorrectly told county officials he had secured the permit.

DHEC has maintained that its practice is to not discuss specifics of an investigation that may or may not be underway.

Moulder said he was still awaiting a remobilization plan for getting the project completed from airport engineer, Talbert & Bright, Inc.

A DHEC spokesman said Tuesday the recently issued permit contains a number of "best management practices" to be implemented that would minimize any erosion or other runoff problems.

"They would need to notify us that everything is in place and they are beginning work," said DHEC's Thom Berry. "We will do unannounced inspections of their efforts to ensure those best management practices are in place and being used."