Tourism director says rowing teams' visit again successful

BY GREG OLIVER
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CLEMSON — Last month's visit of college and university rowing teams from the northeast and midwest to the university beach for training was another economic success for Clemson, with more rowers from more rowing teams attending.

Lindsey Newton, tourism director for the Clemson Area Chamber of Commerce, told Clemson City Council last week that a total of 853 rowers representing 20 teams from 16 different colleges and universities visited the city last month. That marked a 42-percent increase over the 587 rowers that represented 14 teams a year ago.

"This is due in large part to Robbie Tenenbaum, rowing coach at Clemson University, for the hospitality he shows to the rowing teams and coaches," Newton said.

This year also saw several teams make their inaugural visit to Clemson, including the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, Merrimack, West Point and a high school team from Saratoga, N.Y.

Clemson and Clemson University have welcomed rowing teams every year but one since 1994. That one year was in 2008, when severe drought conditions forced cancellation.

Newton has estimated that all the teams combined will have an economic impact of $1.3 million, particularly through hotels, gas and a rental fee to store equipment. The teams used the services of Clemson University for their meals.

While the overall experience was a positive one, Newton said there are some challenges the city faces in order to continue offering rowing teams the training experience they desire. Those include bathroom facilities and addressing the oldest of the wooden docks.

"That dock's not going to make it to next year," Newton said. "We will be looking to replace it and would like to purchase a new dock."

Newton said she plans to sit down with Dave Frock, executive director of campus recreation at Clemson University.

"We want to make sure that the property is still going to be available for use for rowing in the spring before a major investment is made," she said.

Newton added she is also encouraging visitors to eat and shop downtown and that 15 businesses are currently participating in a coupon program. The goal is to eventually provide a booklet of coupons that can be redeemed at various businesses throughout the downtown area.