# Tourism grant to have 'ripple effect'

BY GREG OLIVER
THE JOURNAL

PICKENS — A $5,000 grant was recently awarded to a Pickens County coalition for natural and cultural heritage tourism development and neighboring counties such as Oconee could be among those reaping the benefits.

"There will probably be a ripple effect of tourism," past Pickens County Vision 2025 chairman Gerald Sweitzer said. "There are no motels in Pickens, so people are going to have to go to Easley, Clemson or even to Oconee County for a place to sleep.

"However, once they're there, they might say 'Let's go see what else we can do.' The thrust is cultural, and we feel Pickens and the other counties have that in spades."

Representatives of the arts, the city of Pickens, Table Rock State Park and cultural facilities in and near Pickens applied for a grant last summer at the urging of the Appalachian Council on Governments. The proposal was the only one accepted in South Carolina, and the $5,000 grant requires a match from the community.

The grant will fund a two-day planning workshop to assist in developing a comprehensive natural and cultural heritage tourism strategy. The geographic area will be a designated part of Pickens County, including the city of Pickens and north to S.C. Highway 11.

"We have the assets and it's a matter of putting those pieces together for a more viable tourism attraction than we are doing now," Sweitzer said. "The goal is for all three counties to have their own feasibility study and our sister county, Oconee, is just itching to get started."

Rick Murphy, co-chairman of Pickens County Vision 2025 and a member of the Oconee County Business-Education Partnership committee, said he sees no reason why the Golden Corner cannot immediately benefit.

"We've worked with Greenville for the past several years, and they see Pickens as a way to draw people there; Oconee County and Anderson County, I believe, have the same plan," Murphy said.

Kent Dykes, president of the Greater Easley Chamber of Commerce, said a proposal to renovate the old Food Lion building in Clemson into a conference center is another example.

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