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Parts of the Clemson University campus, including the lights at Clemson Memorial Stadium, are visible from the site of the runway extension project at Oconee County Regional Airport. Heavy haulers, below, were busy Friday transporting mounds of earth needed for the runway extension project.

Oconee airport expands horizon

Runway project allows clear view of Clemson

BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL



SENECA — Local traffic near the Oconee County Regional Airport slowed to a crawl in spots as earth-moving machines and trucks crisscrossed Shiloh Road and Mount Nebo Church Road on Friday to forge ahead with a $4.2 million runway extension project.

Airport Director Kevin Short escorted local media on a close-up tour of a project that is radically changing the airport's landscape and setting the stage for future expansion and renovation.

The clearing of trees and vegetation setting up a 600-foot extension east of the existing 4,400 feet of runway allows for a clear view of the top of Tillman Hall at the Clemson University campus miles away.

Short said that Plateau Excavation Inc. of Austel, Ga., has added additional people to its crews in an effort to complete the project by August as Clemson football season draws near.

Men on heavy machines looked like ants on a hill, where two huge stormwater basins are being carved. Looking at the work site from Airport Road, you can make out three terrains of the four terrains needed to bring the ground up to the level of the runway extension.

Short said 430,000 cubic yards of earth are being dug up from the west end of the airport for the extension east of the runway. At the same time, the leveling of the ground on the west end is helping grade and match the ground for a future 500-foot extension of the runway that would cross Shiloh Road.

The ultimate goal of a 5,500-foot runway would entail the relocation of Shiloh Road, which the Federal Aviation Administration already has stated it would not fund.

In the meantime, Short and airport officials are anxious to get the runway to 5,000 feet first. They say that length will allow for the landing of larger corporate jets, which would help increase revenues.

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