

Tourism bureau aligns with county's

The Mountain Lakes Convention and Visitors Bureau has the new name Visit Oconee SC and a new logo to align with the "rustic elegance" theme adopted by Oconee County, Destination Oconee and the cities of Seneca, Walhalla and Westminster.

SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL



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WALHALLA — The Mountain Lakes Convention and Visitors Bureau in Walhalla has been re-branded with a new name and logo to align with the "rustic elegance" brand of Oconee County.

The bureau is now known as Visit Oconee SC, according to a news release. Visit Oconee SC

has the same logo style as Oconee County, tourism marketing group Destination Oconee and the cities of Seneca, Walhalla and Westminster.



Sloan

Ken Sloan is the president and CEO of Visit Oconee SC.

'rustic elegance' theme

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"It makes sense to partner with the county, the cities and Destination Oconee to broaden our collective marketing reaching, not just locally or regionally, but globally as well," Sloan said in the news release.

As a marketing organization, the focus of Visit Oconee SC is to bring visitors to the county to spend money

in hotels, restaurants, retail stores and tourism areas. The "rustic elegance" theme is part of the Destination Oconee tourism plan.

Oconee County Council and the Seneca, Walhalla and Westminster city councils have all adopted the Destination Oconee plan to spur economic

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development through tourism.

The Mountain Lakes Convention and Visitors Bureau, its name and logo were established in 2008 through a "significant community effort," according to the release.

Sloan said the bureau started as Oconee CVB before officials realized there was an Oconee CVB in Georgia.

"Plus, the Mountain Lakes brand had already been established here by a couple of organizations, so through a committee of about 20 people, all local, and over the course of a few months, we decided that the Mountain Lakes (Convention and Visitors Bureau) name was a good fit," Sloan said.

Oconee County Parks, Recreation and Tourism director Phil Shirley said the new name and logo achieve the goal of consistency in the county from a branding aspect. As vice chair of the Visit Oconee SC board of directors, Shirley has been involved

in the process for six months.

"(The new name) helps to describe who

we are and where we are," Shirley said. "Sometimes you had to tell people where (the visitors bureau)



Shirley

was at. ... It's been nice to get (the new name) rolled out, and we look forward to a good re-branding."

Annual tourism expenditures in the county have increased by almost \$15 million since the organization was created in 2008, according to the release, and the economic impact of tourism in the county in 2017 was more than \$62 million.

"Whenever I give presentations about tourism in Oconee, one of my favorite numbers to quote is that tourism reduces the financial tax burden of Oconee County property owners by an average of \$172 per year," Sloan said.