

Keowee Key course renovation to be completed next year

BY JASON EVANS
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SALEM — Keowee Key's golf course is bucking a national trend, according to community manager Kevin McCracken.

More than 200 golf courses closed in 2016, according to a report from the National Golf Foundation.

"One of the things that a lot of people hear about golf right now is it's a struggling business," McCracken told a group at the monthly Oconee Economic Alliance business forum last week. "A lot

of golf courses are closing. No new courses are being built. But at Keowee Key, golf is thriving."

Last year, the community's course hosted more than 31,000 rounds of golf, he said.

"We haven't seen a drop-off in play," McCracken said. "We think it will always be an important part of what we do."

A more than \$5 million renovation of the golf course at Keowee Key is slated to be completed next year, McCracken said.

The project calls for a complete replacement of the course's irrigation system.

"We draw our water out of Lake Keowee to irrigate our golf course," McCracken said. "By replacing our irrigation system, we're going to be able to be much more efficient in how we water our golf course and really be able to pinpoint the areas

we want to water. That's going to have a nice environmental impact."

Officials hope to encourage the next generation of golfers by placing forward tee boxes on all the course's holes.

"It serves to keep people in the game longer because you can play from

a forward tee box," McCracken said. "You don't have to hit it as far. It also helps to bring new people into the game."

The course's turf will be replaced as well.

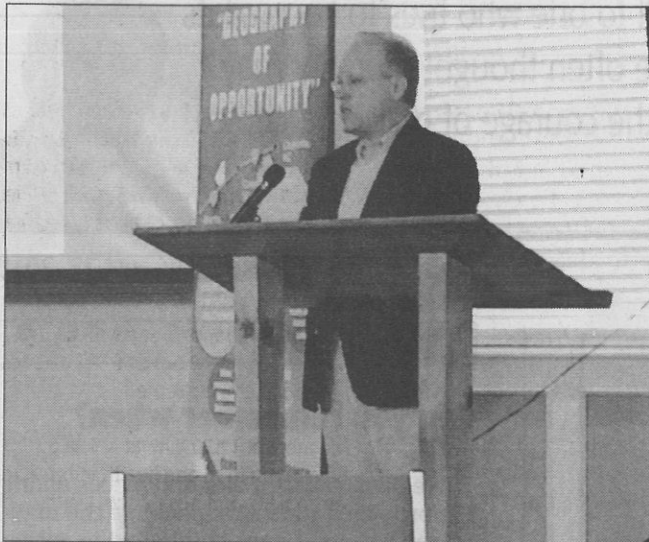
"That, too, will have a positive environmental impact," McCracken said. "We'll be able to manage that turf with fewer chemicals."

Officials had hoped the golf course would be finished by October, but heavy rains have caused the completion date to be pushed back to summer 2019.

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Keowee Key community manager

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Keowee Key community manager Kevin McCracken spoke to Oconee Economic Alliance members last week.