

Taxes up \$1.7M



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Oconee County chief deputy treasurer Connie Bellotte, right, goes over property tax figures with treasurer Greg Nowell and deputy treasurer Heather McCutcheon.

Oconee County property tax receipts jump from previous year

BY RILEY MORNINGSTAR
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WALHALLA — Property tax collections in Oconee County are up more than \$1.7 million so far over a year ago, according to information provided by the county treasurer's office.

The deadline to pay property taxes without penalty passed on Jan. 15. Chief deputy treasurer Connie Bellotte said tax payments post-marked by the Jan. 15 deadline can

Year	Dollars paid	Accounts paid	Accounts billed
2015	\$88,212,616.08	59,276	75,848
2016	\$90,267,234.08	59,873	73,702
2017	\$92,868,743.25	61,542	74,871
2018	\$94,580,943.35	61,082	76,315

SOURCE: OCONEE COUNTY TREASURER'S OFFICE

take several days to post and may still be coming in.

The county has received property tax payments totaling

\$94,580,943.35, according to figures provided by the treasurer's office

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TAXES: Lower percentage of bills paid so far this year

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Thursday afternoon. That is up from \$92,868,743.25 paid at the same time last year.

Duke Energy, the county's largest taxpayer, paid its tax bill of \$33,472,064.49, up \$161,739.10 compared to its payment of \$33,310,325.18 a year ago.

"There was a millage increase," Oconee treasurer Greg Nowell said, referring to a county council millage increase in this year's fiscal budget. "We don't know who exactly paid at this time last year, but there should be a slight increase."

Nowell said the tax figures so far do not include vehicle taxes, but do include "real estate, personal, business, property, and it does include boats."

The numbers also do not include taxes paid to the city's five municipalities.

Municipal taxes to the five cities so far this year total \$2,800,386.36, up from \$2,722,651.19 at the same time a year ago.

Total bills paid by Thursday were down slightly for the 2018 tax year. A total of 61,082 of the 76,315 bills sent out for 2018 were paid by Thursday afternoon, or about 80 percent of the total bills.

Figures at the same time a year ago showed that 61,542 of the 74,871 bills sent out were paid, totaling 82.2 percent.

"It all comes down to whether the taxpayer pays it," Nowell said.

With the Jan. 15 deadline passed, Nowell said a 3 percent late fee now applies through the end of January for those who did not make the deadline. That penalty goes up to 10 percent on Feb. 1. On March 15, remaining outstanding tax bills are delinquent and then turned over to the delinquent tax collector, Nowell said.

"When it turns delinquent, another 5 percent is added on, bumping it up to 15 percent," Nowell said.

He said if the bills aren't paid by September, the delinquent tax collector has the choice to take the properties to be sold at an auction in November.

"It very seldom happens," Nowell said of the auction.

Numbers provided to The Journal show that 6,443 bills were paid in 2018 through online payments to the treasurer, up from 5,245 in 2017.