

Oconee grows 5.8 percent

Clemson population up nearly 30 percent in decade

BY LAUREN PIERCE
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — Oconee County's population grew by nearly 6 percent over the past decade, according to new U.S. Census data.

The county's total population as measured by the 2020 census was reported at 78,607 — up 5.8 percent from 74,273 a decade ago. The county, which has approximately 125 people per square mile, had the 16th largest population increase

by percentage of South Carolina's 46 counties over the past decade.



Brock

County administrator Amanda Brock said she was "not surprised" by the data. "We've taken a look at preliminary census data back in the spring, and we had a hunch that our growth rate was going to be as projected."

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she said. "I feel like we are in line with most of the Southeast and that we are experiencing growth that is both manageable and exciting at the same time."

Brock added the county is growing at "an acceptable rate."

"If we grow too fast, we may find ourselves in a situation where we aren't available to provide the services that our citizens and visitors expect of us," she said. "As long as we can keep that growth and our ability to maintain our service and quality of life, I think it's a benefit."

As for neighboring Pickens County, it grew from 119,224 people to 131,404 in the latest census. Clemson grew by 27.1 percent, up from 13,905 residents in 2010 to 17,681 in 2020.

AWAITING MUNICIPALITY RESULTS

Census data shows Seneca remaining the most heavily populated city in Oconee, with a population of 8,850 people — up 748 from 2010.

While the specific results have yet to be rolled out for cities and towns with populations less than 5,000, preliminary

estimates in 2019 show an increase in all municipalities in the county apart from Salem, which showed a slight decrease. That information is expected to be released later this month.

Walhalla increased to 4,370, Westminster rose to 2,536 and West Union grew to 335, while Salem decreased by three to 132, according to 2019 population estimates.

Based on initial estimates, Brock said growth is "pretty steady" across the county based on "available infrastructure."

"There may be some areas in the county where water and sewer are not readily available, and those growth areas obviously would be decreased as the rest of the county, because if there's no water and sewer, then there's no availability for housing," she said. "There are certain census tracts in and around the municipalities that have indications of growth, and we definitely look forward to seeing those numbers come out once they're finalized."

Riley Morningstar contributed to this report.

POPULATION CHANGES

Clemson

2020 pop: 17,681
2010 pop: 13,905

Pickens County

2020 pop: 131,404
2010 pop: 119,224

Oconee County

2020 pop: 78,607
2010 pop: 74,273

Seneca

2020 pop: 8,850
2010 pop: 8,102

Walhalla

2019 pop estimate: 4,370
2010 pop: 4,263

Westminster

2019 pop estimate: 2,536
2010 pop: 2,418

Salem

2019 pop estimate: 132
2010 pop: 135

West Union

2019 pop estimate: 335
2010 pop: 291