

Paris signs amended target range funding agreement

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Good news, Union County shooting enthusiasts: last week, Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris signed the amended intergovernmental agreement between the county and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources for the Union County Target Range.

This is a procedural step to amend grant funding for the project from 75% to 90%, thereby reducing the local match to 10%, and Paris and the Union County Gun Club, including the latter's unofficial spokesperson Sheriff Mack Mason, are excited to announce

the update.

The new 10% local match amount was secured recently after Sheriff Mason asked State Sen. Steve Gooch to aid the county in going after the full grant amount.

Paris signed and sent the amended intergovernmental agreement to DNR Assistant Chief of Game Management Walter Lane, who is expected to return it to the county this week signed by the DNR commissioner.

Additionally, the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is in the process of finalizing a separate grant amendment to officially increase the federal passthrough

funding to 90%.

And once DNR receives and passes on the amended federal grant award to the county, expected to occur in April, the local bid process can start again, hopefully in time for construction to begin this year, and with a much lower local match than the original grant amount allowed.

"The original grant documents had the estimated construction costs for the gun range to be \$2.4 million, with \$1.8 million grant funds committed and a \$600,000 match from the county," County Purchasing Agent Pam Hawkins said. "Union County had committed \$500,000 from

See *Target Range*, Page 6A

Target Range...from Page 1A

the general fund, with the \$100,000 being 'in-kind' match.

"After only receiving one proposal last year on this project that was well above the \$2.4 million estimate, and knowing how construction costs had escalated in the last year, the architects who designed this project did a new updated construction cost estimate.

"With the new

construction cost estimate being \$3.8 million, the new amended intergovernmental agreement states that the Department of Natural Resources will pay up to and not to exceed \$3.42 million of approved construction costs, and the county's match will be approximately \$380,000 from a combination of direct funding and in-kind services.

"Once the project is re-bid and proposals are in, the

county will have a better idea of what the total project cost will be, but the 90% grant funding will definitely cut down on the county's match requirement."

Key features of the range, to be located on a 14-acre piece of U.S. Forest Service land off SR 180 between mile markers 18 and 19, include independently operated rifle and pistol ranges, sound abatement, full-size bathrooms, climate-controlled meeting and supply rooms, ample parking and more.



The overall site plan for the Union County Shooting Range Complex to be built off Georgia 180.
Photo by Mark Smith