

MT. VERNON AIRPORT

Airport receives funding

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MT. VERNON — The Mt. Vernon Airport will receive \$125,000 in federal funding for its long-incubating runway environmental assessment project.

Airport Manager Chris Collins said at an Airport Authority meeting Tuesday that the grant will help transform the airport's Federal Aviation Administration-mandated assessment from a locally-funded burden to an obligation both required and paid for by the federal government.

"[\$125,000] is what it's going to cost to do the environmental assessment," Collins said. "So far we've paid out \$33,868.87, and we'll be getting that back and the rest paid for minus our local share, which will be \$3,257."

The assessment became necessary when the FAA mandated the Mt. Vernon Airport must maintain 1,000 feet of empty space on each end of its runway. As the current runway stands less than

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1,000 feet away from Illinois Highway 15, special permission was granted to pave 775 feet of extra space on the opposite end of the runway instead. Before that land is cleared, however, an assessment of the environmental effect expected must be performed.

"FEMA, IEMA, Fish & Wildlife - all of those entities

have to come in and work together to say in concert, "This is an acceptable place for what you're going to do," Collins said.

Collins said he expected to receive federal funding for the project but was relieved to finally see it come through. He added that he

hopes to have the assessment completed very soon—possibly as soon as September.

"I'd be lying if I told you I didn't expect it—I'd heard rumors the money was going to be there—but it's good to see it come to fruition," he said. "We had agreed to fund this locally a year to a year-

and-a-half ago, so the process is 90 to 95 percent done. The big invoices are just about to come in, so this is a very timely thing." 8/20/11