

# Upstate Advocate

2021 | SPRING/SUMMER



## ForeverGreen | 2021 AWARDS

CELEBRATING THE FOLKS WHO MAKE THE UPSTATE A CLEANER, GREENER PLACE

THIS YEAR'S HONOREES: DR. DAVID HARGETT | JUDY CROMWELL | DR. J. DREW LANHAM  
SUSTAINING WAY | GINNY STROUD | THE SOUTHERN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CENTER



## ON (& OFF) THE CLOCK:

Upstate Forever staff at work and play



UF team members "smile" for a photo before a masked hike to Brasstown Falls in Oconee County at a recent Staff Fun Day.



Tiffany James



Chris Richardson

Panelist Tiffany James speaks with moderator Chris Richardson during UF's virtual panel *Erasing The Redline: How Communities of Color are Disproportionately Exposed to Pollution*. View the recording and learn more at [upstateforever.org/erasing-the-redline](http://upstateforever.org/erasing-the-redline).



Congrats to UF's Katie Hottel, her husband David, and their son Lewis on welcoming baby brother Bodie Mackay Hottel in January!



Protecting Land & Water | Advocacy | Balanced Growth

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[www.upstateforever.org](http://www.upstateforever.org)



### Mission

Upstate Forever is a conservation organization that protects critical lands, waters, and the unique character of the Upstate of South Carolina.

### Vision

To conserve our land and water resources, resulting in an environmentally healthy and economically prosperous region, with a high quality of life now and for future generations.

### Board of Directors

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Andrea Cooper <i>Executive Director</i>	Katie Hottel <i>GIS Coordinator</i>	Shelley Robbins <i>Energy &amp; State Policy Director</i>	

### Advisory Council

Paul Agnew	Allen Creighton	Russell Harris	Patrick McMillan	Joan Peters
Amanda Bauknight	Dianne Culbertson	Gina Hartness	Marshall Meadors	Sue Priester
Bob Becker	Mike Daniel	Brice Hipp	Mary Miller	Dick Riley
Jean Blair	Bob Erwin	Wes Hulsey	Scott Montgomery	Susan Riordan
Juan Brown	John Frampton	John Knott	Betty Montgomery	Ted Shehan
Dan Burden	Vince Graham	John Lane	Nell Newman	David Shi
Signe Cann	Jimmy Grantham	Drew Lanham	Mike Nicklas	Gus Speth
Dick Carr	John Hagins	Patti McAbee	Carlton Owen	Brad Wyche
Wes Cooler	Dave Hargett	Don McClure	Leon Patterson	Kris Yon

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

# The good news keeps coming.

In the past year or so, I've become particularly attuned to good news. With all the challenges and uncertainty of the pandemic, I've really treasured every piece of hopeful, joyful, or laughworthy news (Google "Lawyer Cat" and thank me later) that has offered a respite.

Thanks to your support, Upstate Forever continues to be a source of good news for our community. You can find some of our recent success stories by turning the page, but I'll mention a few specific ones here:

After a banner year of protecting 2,176 acres in 2020, the UF Land Trust has 6,000 acres slated for protection this year, including additions to public parks, working farms, headwater streams, and scenic views. [Read about some recent conservation projects on pages 6-7.](#)

UF also partnered with a broad coalition of businesses, nonprofits, and other stakeholders to support an ordinance creating the Greenville County Historic and Natural Resources Trust. With a unanimous vote, the ordinance was passed by County Council late last year. That's a huge step towards conserving more land for public recreation, local food, and drinking water protection in a fast-growing county.

Our lawsuit against Kinder Morgan was settled, resulting in a \$1.5 million fund to enhance water quality in Anderson County. [Read details at right.](#)

There's also plenty of good news in this issue of the *Upstate Advocate*, which honors the 2021 ForeverGreen Award recipients. While we chose not to host our annual ForeverGreen Luncheon this February due to COVID-19, we want to celebrate these incredible local people who have dedicated their lives to making their communities greener, cleaner, and more just. I also want to thank the 2021 ForeverGreen Award sponsors, who are listed on the back cover. We appreciate their support!

Finally, the best news of all: we have people like you working alongside us for a better future in the Upstate. We could not do what we do without your support, and we are deeply grateful. Thank you again, and here's to making more good news in the Upstate in the months ahead!



**Andrea Cooper**, Executive Director



**Make a gift by mail or at [upstateforever.org/donate](https://upstateforever.org/donate)**

Give \$35 or more by May 30, 2021 and receive your choice of a limited edition Be the Upstate water bottle or T-shirt. While supplies last.

## KINDER MORGAN

# \$1.5M settlement from fuel spill will be used to promote water quality

A \$1.5 million settlement from a Clean Water Act lawsuit against Kinder Morgan over a 2014 fuel pipeline spill in Belton will be used to enhance water quality for residents in Anderson County.

The suit was filed in 2016 by the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) on behalf of UF and the Savannah Riverkeeper to hold Kinder Morgan accountable for cleaning up the site of the spill of 364,000 gallons of diesel and jet fuel near Brown's Creek.

*SELC is this year's Clean Water Champion. See page 13 for more about their work.*

The settlement fund is housed at the Foothills Community Foundation in Anderson and will be used to support projects that protect or restore water quality, as well as for efforts that increase citizen awareness of and participation in water quality issues throughout Anderson County.

UF and partners will solicit input from the local community in selecting projects. [Learn more at upstateforever.org/belton-spill.](https://upstateforever.org/belton-spill)

**Sign up for our email lists to get the latest UF news & updates:**

- » Land Protection
- » The Upstate Update (Monthly Newsletter)
- » Legislative Updates (Weekly during session)
- » Greenville County Land Planning & Policy Issues
- » Planning & Growth Spartanburg
- » The Water Log
- » Greenville County Historic & Natural Resources Trust Updates

Join at [upstateforever.org/email](https://upstateforever.org/email)





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**1,024 DONORS  
GAVE MORE THAN  
\$550,000**

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## UF highlights & success stories from 2020

### Thousands of acres protected forever

In 2020, the Land Conservation team permanently protected 2,000+ new acres of land (including more than 1,000 acres in Union County and an expansion of the spectacular Grant Meadow property at the base of Table Rock) for an all-time total of more than 25,800 acres. In addition, partner projects, where UF was integral to the effort's success, added another 713 acres. *For more details on some recently protected properties, see pages 6-7.*

### National Accreditation renewed

Following a rigorous application process, UF's land trust renewed its accreditation through the national Land Trust Alliance. This process includes a comprehensive review to ensure UF upholds strong standards and demonstrates sound finances, ethical conduct, responsible governance, and lasting stewardship. Fewer than 1/3 of land trusts attain this distinction.

### Safeguarding one of the world's rarest plants

Alongside residents and partners like SELC, SCLP, and the Native Plant Society, UF opposed developments that would have threatened populations of the ultra-rare Bunched Arrowhead plant in northern Greenville County. Travelers Rest is under significant development pressure right now, so it's critical to protect the sensitive habitats that support this plant and impact water quality for residents who live downstream.

### Addressing sediment pollution in Pickens

UF joined Naturaland Trust and South Carolina Trout Unlimited to take legal action against the owners and operators of Arabella Farms, a Pickens County event venue, over violations of the Clean Water Act. Since 2017, numerous unlawful discharges of sediment-laden stormwater have blanketed and choked important water resources in this sensitive natural area, including waterways on a nearby conservation easement. SCLP is representing us in this matter.

### Reducing pollution in our lakes & rivers

The Clean Water team is working on reducing bacteria, sediment, and nutrient pollution in the Tyger River, Lake Greenwood, and 3&20 Creek watersheds. We also were instrumental in securing more than \$90K in federal funding to implement a septic repair and replacement program in watersheds in the Lake Keowee area.

### Lawsuit settlement from massive fuel spill

A \$1.5 million settlement from a Clean Water Act lawsuit against Kinder Morgan over a 2014 fuel pipeline spill in Belton will be used to enhance water quality for residents in Anderson County and beyond. The suit was brought by the Southern Environmental Law Center on behalf of UF and the Savannah Riverkeeper. *Read more on page 3.*

### Precedent-setting rooftop solar proposal

UF worked with many partners on a landmark deal with Duke Energy that, if approved by the SC Public Service Commission, will restructure how rooftop solar power is valued when it is combined with smart meters and smart thermostats. The proposal has attracted attention from jurisdictions across the country.

### Opposing an unnecessary pipeline in TR

We joined with local residents to put pressure on Piedmont Natural Gas to halt a proposed pipeline project in northern Greenville County that would have likely had a negative impact on Bunched Arrowhead, one of the world's rarest plants, and threatened the area's water quality. *Read more at [bit.ly/2WVBHHA](https://bit.ly/2WVBHHA).*

### Launched Impact Greenville with local partners

We partnered with local stakeholders to launch Impact Greenville — a diverse coalition that hosts forums and educational events, provides technical support, and convenes advocates to shape public policy at the intersection of housing, transportation, and land use. *Learn more at [impactgreenville.org](https://impactgreenville.org).*

## Advocacy for more progressive and equitable land use plans and policies

The Land Policy Team advocated in seven Upstate jurisdictions for land use policies that expand housing choices, mobility options, and green spaces, and reduce sprawl into forests and farmlands. We also partnered with stakeholders, residents, government staff, and community leaders to advance progressive and equitable comprehensive plans in Greenville County and the cities of Greenville, Spartanburg, and Greer. In addition, we supported efforts to strengthen tree preservation and protection for all City of Greenville residents and pushed for improved land development regulations in line with Greenville County's unanimously adopted comprehensive plan. *Action Alert for Greenville County residents on page 23.*

## A new conservation trust to protect special places in Greenville County

We partnered with a broad coalition of businesses, corporations, nonprofit organizations, and residents to encourage Greenville County Council to establish a Historic and Natural Resources Trust. Council voted unanimously to establish the Trust in December 2020, which is a huge step forward in efforts to protect more public recreation areas, farms, trails, and other special places that enhance quality of life for Greenville residents. *More at [upstateforever.org/HNRT](https://upstateforever.org/HNRT).*

## Exploring the value of water, a basic human right

Our Clean Water team debuted the Water Log, an email newsletter dedicated to water quality news and issues. We also released a special issue of the *Upstate Advocate* to highlight the ways water — a basic human right — impacts every aspect of our lives, and why we must safeguard it in light of rapid development. *Learn more at [upstateforever.org/value-of-water](https://upstateforever.org/value-of-water).*

## Educating and mobilizing residents in Greenville and Spartanburg

We mobilized community members through calls to action via social media and e-lists dedicated to land policy issues in Greenville and Spartanburg. We also engaged 60 residents in Citizens Planning Academies to build awareness of how land use shapes our community and how residents can influence community planning and land policy decisions in Greenville.

## Federal partnership to protect vanishing farmland

The Land Conservation team received a \$3.9 million grant from USDA's Regional Conservation Partnership Program to protect priority farmland in the Upstate. Local farms can strengthen our food supply chains and are an important part of combating food insecurity. UF is currently the only land trust in the state enrolled in this partnership, and we expect it to be a great tool to incentivize protection of our region's vanishing prime farmland.

## Progress at the State House, despite COVID

While COVID-19 halted much in the Statehouse this year, we advocated for several great bills that were passed, including the Black Market Wildlife Trading Bill and Energy Market Reform Study Committee Bill. *To keep up with the SC Legislature when it's in session, sign up to receive weekly Legislative Update emails at [upstateforever.org/email](https://upstateforever.org/email).* 🌿

Upstate Forever's programs are:



LAND CONSERVATION



CLEAN WATER



LAND PLANNING & POLICY



ENERGY



STATE POLICY

## PROGRESS ON FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC GOALS\*

**GOAL:** PROTECT 15,000 MORE ACRES OF CRITICAL LANDS

5,698 / 15,000

~6,000 acres in progress, slated for 2021 closings

**GOAL:** 10 POLICIES THAT SUPPORT ALTERNATIVES TO SPRAWL

5 / 10

**GOAL:** DOUBLE UPSTATE FOREVER'S BASE OF SUPPORT

47% INCREASE

## HOW TO HELP

**Support our work:** Make a tax-deductible gift at [upstateforever.org/donate](https://upstateforever.org/donate) or by mailing a check to our Greenville office.

**Consider a planned gift:** Find more info at [upstateforever.org/giftlegacy.com](https://upstateforever.org/giftlegacy.com).

**Stay informed:** For the latest updates and action alerts from UF, sign up for our email lists at [upstateforever.org/email](https://upstateforever.org/email) and follow us on social media.



\*As of Dec. 31, 2020. From UF's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan





*Paw Paw Farm*



*Morris Property*



*Red Fox Farm*



*Gregorys Creek*

## UF LAND CONSERVATION

### Now protected by UF: mature forestland, rural farms, and important wetlands

Upstate Forever protects land in partnership with landowners through conservation easements — voluntary contracts that allow the landowner to legally restrict certain land uses from occurring on their property (such as the development of residential subdivisions, commercial, or industrial operations) while allowing traditional rural land uses like farming, grazing, hunting, and timbering to continue. This agreement is permanent and remains with the land even after it has been sold or willed to heirs.

We are immensely proud of the successes our Land Conservation team accomplished in 2020 despite significant challenges the ongoing pandemic created. Our Land Trust now protects more than 25,800 acres across the Upstate through voluntary conservation easements.

Some of the properties recently protected include:

**Paw Paw Farm** in Laurens County, a 241-acre farm that includes the protection of a rural scenic view along Milam Road and natural habitat of fish and wildlife.

**Morris Property** in Oconee County, a 25-acre property boasting significant environmental features including a mature hardwood forest, dense wetlands, and native plant habitat.

**Red Fox Farm** in Spartanburg County, 120 acres of forestland that protect significant natural areas and scenic views from Highway 417.

**Gregorys Creek** in Union County, a 532-acre mitigation site that will safeguard water quality and better protect Gregorys Creek as it flows into the Broad River.

Also protected were 81 acres in Pickens County that are part of a nearly 800-acre property purchased by Naturaland Trust with the support of the South Carolina Conservation Bank and the USDA Community Forest Program.

Read more at [upstateforever.org/protected-in-2020](https://upstateforever.org/protected-in-2020).

#### CONSERVATION PROPERTIES ON THE MARKET

*Interested in owning a property that is protected by a conservation easement with Upstate Forever? When the properties we steward go on the market, we post them on our website at [upstateforever.org/listings](https://upstateforever.org/listings) as a service to easement holders.*

*If you are selling a UF-protected property and would like us to add it to the listings page, contact Christina Sprecher, Land Stewardship Manager, at [csprecher@upstateforever.org](mailto:csprecher@upstateforever.org).*



*Located just steps from the Prisma Health Swamp Rabbit Trail in the heart of downtown Travelers Rest, the grounds adjacent to the Spring Park Inn will someday be transformed into a park and gathering place.*

## UF LAND CONSERVATION

# Historic property in Travelers Rest to one day become a park

Nell Anderson Gibson grew up on Main Street in Travelers Rest. Each day as a teenager she walked from her home along the Swamp Rabbit Railroad track, Paris Mountain towering behind her, to school at Travelers Rest High. Her grandfather and father were born in the home, which operated for nearly 100 years as an inn for weary travelers.



*Nell Anderson Gibson*

Before her passing in November of 2020, Nell generously donated the Spring Park Inn and its adjacent 20 acres to the Travelers Rest Historical Society and worked with Upstate Forever to protect the property through a conservation easement, which will prevent residential and commercial development on the grounds in perpetuity.

Nell's hope was to preserve and protect the property for the community's enjoyment. The Travelers Rest Historical Society is working to make that vision a reality — they plan to restore the former inn and home as a museum and educational space for the public to enjoy. Just steps from the Prisma Health Swamp Rabbit Trail, the inn's grounds will someday be transformed into a park and gathering place.

The preservation of the Spring Park Inn was made possible by a grant from the South Carolina Conservation Bank, a state funding source with a mission to improve the quality of life in South Carolina through the conservation

**“The Spring Park Inn is one of those properties that truly anchor a community’s sense of place. Saving places like this helps South Carolina maintain its unique identity while simultaneously securing public amenities that add to our quality of life.”**

**RALEIGH WEST**, Executive Director, SC Conservation Bank

of significant natural resource lands, wetlands, historical properties, archeological sites, and urban parks.

Built in 1820, the Spring Park Inn was placed on the Greenville County Historic Register and both South Carolina and National Registers of Historic Places in 2019. The Inn housed travelers on the Swamp Rabbit Railroad from 1852 until 1941, and is in part responsible for the name of the town of Travelers Rest.

In addition to its rich history, the property holds environmental significance. A headwater of the Reedy River originates here, including tributaries that feed into the Reedy and make their way to the City of Greenville and beyond. Protecting these headwaters from future development contributes to the protection of our region’s water. Upstate Forever is proud to hold the conservation easement on this remarkable property. 🌱



# ForeverGreen

## ANNUAL AWARDS

Since 2002, Upstate Forever's ForeverGreen Awards have honored individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions in fields related to conservation and sustainable growth in the Upstate.

You can send words of gratitude and congratulations to this year's ForeverGreen honorees by visiting [upstateforever.org/congrats](http://upstateforever.org/congrats). The 2021 award winners will also be recognized at the 2022 ForeverGreen Awards luncheon. This year's honorees are:

### MARJORIE E. SCHMIDT STEWARDSHIP AWARD

**Judy Cromwell**, for her quiet, lifelong dedication to the protection of the Upstate's greenspaces

### TOMMY WYCHE LAND CONSERVATION CHAMPION AWARD

**Dr. Drew Lanham**, Alumni Distinguished Professor of Wildlife Ecology at Clemson University, for decades of teaching, research, and writing that have made the field of conservation more accessible and inclusive

### CLEAN WATER CHAMPION AWARD

The **Southern Environmental Law Center**, for their work to defend the Clean Water Act, mitigate the effects of coal ash pollution, and hold Kinder Morgan accountable for a huge gasoline spill in Anderson County

### LAND PLANNING & POLICY CHAMPION AWARD

**Ginny Stroud**, former Community Development Administrator with the City of Greenville, for her dedication to neighborhood revitalization, improvement, and affordable housing in Greenville

### ENVIRONMENTAL EQUITY & JUSTICE AWARD

**Sustaining Way**, for their work to cultivate a thriving, sustainable, and equitable environment in Greenville's Nicholtown and surrounding communities

### BRAD WYCHE EXTRAORDINARY ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

**Dr. David L. Hargett**, for his visionary 10-year tenure as Executive Director of Lake Conestee Nature Preserve

## MARJORIE E. SCHMIDT STEWARDSHIP AWARD

# Judy Cromwell

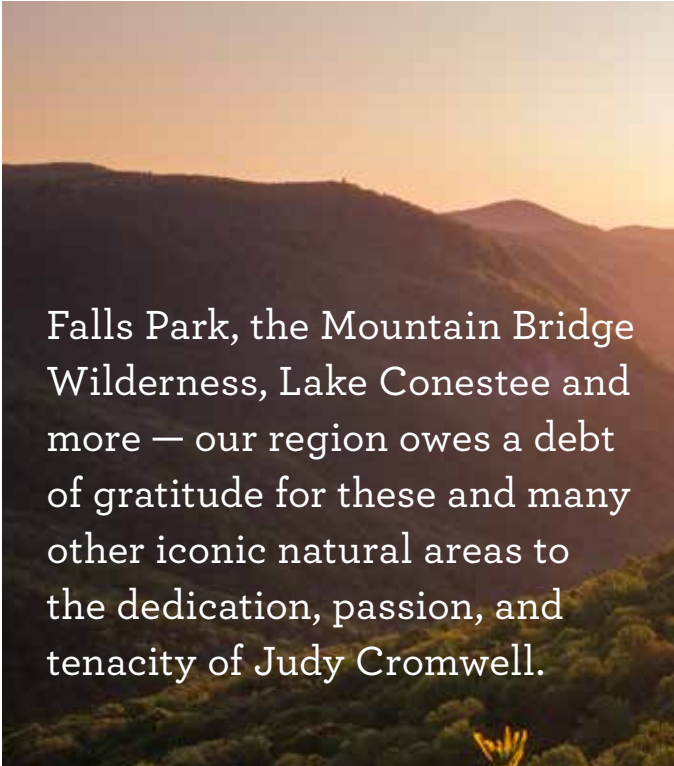
*For her quiet, lifelong dedication to the protection of the Upstate's greenspaces, Judy Cromwell is the recipient of the 2021 Marjorie E. Schmidt Stewardship Award.*

Judy Iselin Cromwell's life has been shaped by nature.

She grew up on 20 expansive acres off Augusta Road in Greenville. There, Judy and her four siblings tended to their vegetable gardens and took care of horses, hogs, and cows. Unless it was raining, the children were expected to be outside, splashing in Brushy Creek or riding horses out to what is now Verdae Boulevard. Each Sunday, the family would pack a picnic and head for the mountains, relishing the quiet beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains near Bald Rock and Caesars Head.

"I was constantly outside," Judy says. "At that age, you're not thinking about nature. You're too young to think about it."

But those meaningful memories would shape Judy's path in life. After spending summers in the heat of the coast and harsh winters in New



Falls Park, the Mountain Bridge Wilderness, Lake Conestee and more — our region owes a debt of gratitude for these and many other iconic natural areas to the dedication, passion, and tenacity of Judy Cromwell.



England during college, she returned home to Greenville with a renewed sense of appreciation for the Upstate’s natural splendors — and has dedicated much of her life to protecting and preserving our region’s special places since.

Judy met with the president of Furman University about the opportunity to donate six acres on the Reedy River to eventually establish Falls Park. From its inception in 1973, she worked with Naturaland Trust and founder Tommy Wyche to protect thousands of acres along the Blue Ridge Escarpment, and even blazed many of the trails in the Mountain Bridge Wilderness Area.

She was on the Board of Friends of the Reedy River when a 1996 oil spill devastated the Reedy, and banded together with the Conestee Foundation shortly thereafter to compile the lands that are now the beloved Lake Conestee Nature Preserve. Judy also worked with Upstate Forever to protect the historic home and 20 acres she grew up on off of Augusta Road, the 19th century estate of Vardry McBee, known as the “father of Greenville.”

Falls Park, the Mountain Bridge Wilderness, Lake Conestee and more — our region owes a debt of gratitude for these and many other iconic natural areas to the dedication, passion, and tenacity of Judy Cromwell.

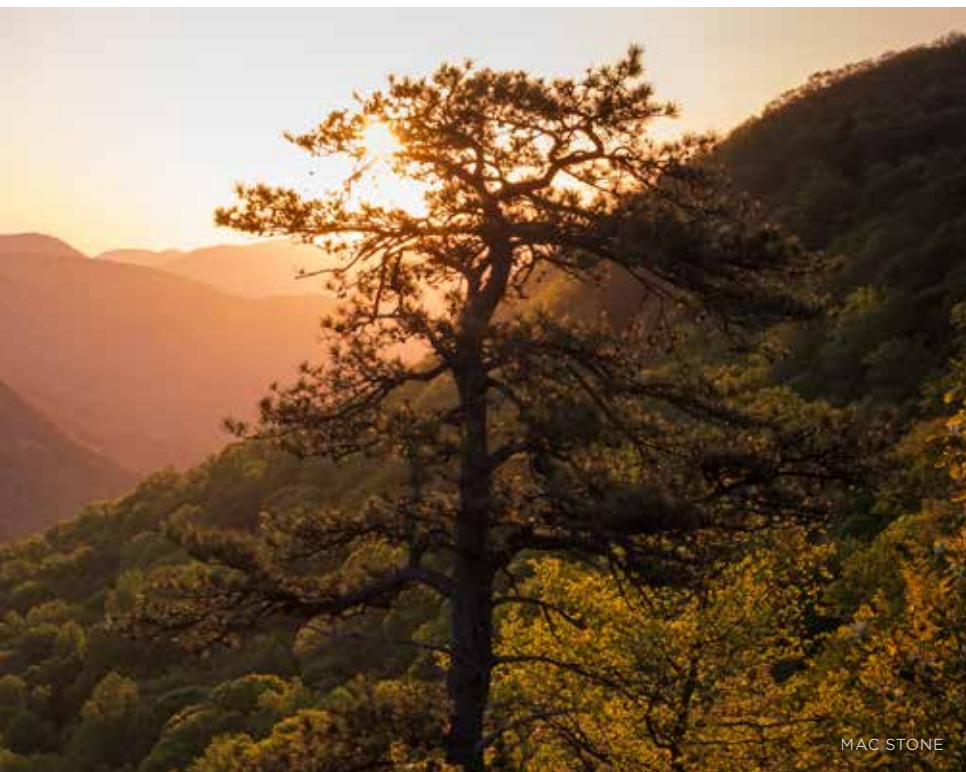
*The Marjorie E. Schmidt Award recognizes an individual who has supported Upstate Forever or has supported local conservation efforts consistently and quietly for ten years or longer without expectation of recognition or reward. The award is named after Marjorie E. Schmidt, a longtime Greenville resident with a heart for nature and a humble, giving spirit. 🌿*



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## TOMMY WYCHE LAND CONSERVATION CHAMPION AWARD

## Dr. Drew Lanham

*For his decades of teaching, research, and writing that have made the field of conservation more accessible and inclusive, Alumni Distinguished Professor of Wildlife Ecology at Clemson University Dr. Drew Lanham is the recipient of the 2021 Tommy Wyche Land Conservation Champion Award.*

Dr. J. Drew Lanham is a native of Edgefield and Aiken, South Carolina. In his teaching, research, and outreach roles, Drew seeks to translate conservation science to make it relevant to others in ways that are evocative and understandable. As a Black American he's intrigued with how culture and ethnic prisms can bend perceptions of nature and its care. His "connecting the conservation dots" and "coloring the conservation conversation" messages have been delivered internationally.

Drew strongly believes that conservation must be

a blending of head and heart; rigorous science and evocative art. He is active on a number of conservation boards including the SC Wildlife Federation, South Carolina Audubon, Aldo Leopold Foundation, BirdNote and the American Birding Association. He is an inaugural Fellow of the Audubon-Toyota Together Green initiative and is a member of the advisory board for the North American Association of Environmental Education. Drew is a Fellow of the Clemson University Institute for Parks and was a 2016 Brandwein Fellow for his work in Environmental Education.

Dr. Lanham is a widely published author and award-nominated poet, writing about his experiences as a birder, hunter and wild, wandering soul. His works *The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature* and *Sparrow Envy: Field Guide to Birds and Lesser Beasts* are available now. 🌿

# Blue Wall High

AN ESSAY BY DR J. DREW LANHAM

When I want a certain kind of high, I head to Caesars Head. I'm almost on top of the known world up here — at least as far as South Carolinians are concerned. At 3,215 feet, I'm a bird-watching god, lording over everything sprawled out in the valley below and Piedmont beyond. Escaping work or some other responsibility, I'm finally here!

Quickly unstrapping my seat belt, strapping on binoculars and camera, I step out of the truck and reset the gyroscope in my head after having wound up and around hairpin curves and switchbacks climbing from the Oolenoy Valley floor from Highway 11. My cell phone is in my pocket but it's for photos I'll post on social media later. Maybe I'll use it to jot a poem on as I consider my place in it all. I switch on airplane mode; I don't want to be in touch with anyone but myself up here. There are bars showing contact might be possible, but I am decisively introverted. I want to be left alone to be with other beings with no agenda other than being.

The meeting up here will be a zoom of a different sort far away from lower elevation reality. Here, or in other spaces with wildness close at hand and heart, I am not virtually apparent, I'm fully me.

The short walk from the parking lot puts me quickly on a stage that has few equals in the Palmetto State. A turkey vulture floats by on upswept "veed" wings. It is a bald-headed welcoming party of one, cruising by as if dangled from a cloud. It banks — rocks and rolls — riding the warm updrafts of thermals rising from the valley floor. The solo greeting grows in short order by several others, as birds I called "buzzards" as a child and tried to entice by playing dead to eye-pecking proximity, rise to my occasion.

Along with the carrion eaters, a red-tailed hawk appears. Its rusty tail, not always seen from the lower elevations of mortal living, is a signpost I can make out from above. Soon a half dozen birds are soaring round about in a loose circling flock — a kettle. It simmers in sunlight; wind stirs the pot. My head is on a swivel for the arrow-shot form of a peregrine falcon. They breed here and are like meteors when they appear. In summer, the persistent songs of red-eyed vireos and a chorus of other songbirds — tanagers, warblers, thrushes — rise up to ring sweetly in my ears and rub the bellies of the soarers.

I stand on bare rock, feet firmly planted and gravity bound, but I feel as though I am about to ascend with the buteos in the midst of it all. It is dizzying in a not-so dangerous way to be on the edge of so much that broadens one's soul beyond human being, to think highly of wildness and what nature means to us all — not just the lofty winged and feathered, but furry-clawed, swimming-finned, slimy hidden-under-log,

*(Continued on page 12)*

## Past ForeverGreen Awards

### 2020

Tom Kester

MARJORIE E. SCHMIDT STEWARDSHIP AWARD

Norman Pulliam

TOMMY WYCHE LAND CONSERVATION CHAMPION

Rep. Bill Sandifer

PUBLIC SERVANT OF THE YEAR

### 2019

Dick Carr

MARJORIE E. SCHMIDT STEWARDSHIP AWARD

Doug Harper

TOMMY WYCHE LAND CONSERVATION CHAMPION

Nikki Grumbine

CLEAN WATER CHAMPION

The Northside Initiative

LAND PLANNING & POLICY CHAMPION

Phil Gaines

PUBLIC SERVANT OF THE YEAR

Dennis Chastain

EXTRAORDINARY ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

### 2018

Spartanburg School District 6:  
Farm to School Initiative

TOMMY WYCHE LAND CONSERVATION CHAMPION

Catherine Heigel

CLEAN WATER CHAMPION

Dean Hybl

LAND PLANNING & POLICY CHAMPION

Representative Gary Clary

PUBLIC SERVANT OF THE YEAR

Luther Lyle

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Swamp Rabbit Cafe and Grocery

INNOVATION IN SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

*(Continued on page 14)*



Mary Walsh (L) and Jac Oliver (R) of the Swamp Rabbit Cafe and Grocery



*("Blue Wall High" continued from page 11)*

coiled tongue-flicking things — and two-legged thin-skinned interlopers come to find breathing room, like me.

Caesars Head is to a Midlands-born, Edgefield Piedmont rolling hills man, a promontory from which to stand on top of the Upstate South Carolina world and see whatever gods there are, evolution and humanity has both wrought — and wrecked.

On a clear day, there are vistas to take in that though not oxygen-starved by height, can yet steal a breath or two. The timber-stiff-haired hogbacks and bare faces of other mountains; the glassy calm of human-created lakes fed by wild creeks that once knew the flash of brook trout. The creases and folds of cove and slope, hollers and hills, lie beneath view. There are grassy pastures lain to hay. There are the blacksnake ribbons of road cutting through it all; the glint of sun off of asphalt shingles on houses — more big now, than small. "Infrastructure" to make life for people easier spoils what was.

But yet, so much of my eyes fall upon the trees still outnumbering what any form of "progress" by development has brought. From bare-boned winter seasons looking down upon the skeletons of hardwoods, clotted with spots and veins of evergreen pines and the sickly hemlocks that remain, to spring's new greening and emergence of verdant hues through summer's hot humid jungle flush to autumn's senescent coloring, brushing maples to red, oaks to russet; gilding hickory yellow and leaving beech brown to hang on, I look out upon the backs of soaring redbtail hawks and croaking ravens floating over what's been made better by considering nature as essential enough to fight for.



The Upstate Piedmont and sliver of mountain escarpment the first people called the "Blue Wall," is as much nurturing home place to me now as my Midland Clay country was in raising me. I'm happiest to be in it. Proud to fight for its wildness.

— DR. J. DREW LANHAM

I often design these trips for my infusion of wild during the times I know others might not be able to get away. I am selfish sometimes in wanting what we all own in the ways of public land for myself. Even those critical cogs of private land that link state, federal or county patchwork properties together, become my heart-deeded possessions as I stand in awe looking outward, wondering what the Cherokee thought and saw standing where I do.

Then my mind comes forward to those following the First Nations, poor settlers looking for livable land; then curious naturalists seeking to

find what western science had not described. Who were the people not native or white who first climbed up here to have freedom inspired? I think lots now about the folks with more money to burn than I'll ever make and disposable time to sidled up next to fat bank accounts, hard after buying up pieces of paradise to call their own — then lock the gates behind them.

And now there's me, a Black bird-loving man, with red clay hills and plowed up furrows as childhood mountains, now lit on a Southern Appalachian high. These connections to this place are constantly on my mind.

I watch the circling birds drift on and wonder too, what thoughts they have. A raven croaks and I take it as good omen — one Black being to another. I whistle in poor imitation of a wood thrush who slings a song from somewhere far below. My high is a buzz of bees humming. Sourwood is blooming. A coral honeysuckle is a nectar dripping string of jewels.

I breathe deep. Hold it all in, close my eyes and see more from up here than I can see from almost anywhere else. I exhale and am fully present in this place. The Upcountry — Upstate Piedmont and sliver of mountain escarpment the first people called the "Blue Wall," is as much nurturing home place to me now as my Midland Clay country was in raising me. I'm happiest to be in it. Proud to fight for its wildness.

What was once foreboding "Dark Corner," I hope to enlighten by conservation and inclusive culture, to more enlightened and loving place. I am wanting more like me, to be selfish enough heartwise, to want others to care enough to do the same so we can share it, for those yet to come. 🌱

**SEND YOUR THANKS:** *You can offer words of gratitude and congratulations to this year's ForeverGreen honorees by visiting [upstateforever.org/congrats](http://upstateforever.org/congrats).*

CLEAN WATER CHAMPION AWARD

# The Southern Environmental Law Center

*For their work to defend the Clean Water Act, mitigate the effects of toxic coal ash pollution, and hold Kinder Morgan accountable for a massive gasoline spill in Anderson County, we are proud to recognize the Southern Environmental Law Center with the Clean Water Champion Award.*

The Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) is a fierce defender of the Southeast’s waterways and communities. SELC helps Upstate Forever and other conservation organizations carry out their missions by providing legal skills and expertise at no cost to the groups they represent.

SELC has led the fight against attempts to weaken the Clean Water Act, perhaps the nation’s most successful environmental law. Beginning in 2017, the EPA rewrote the Clean Water Rule to exclude from the Act’s protections important lakes, including Lake Keowee; headwater streams, like those that feed our trout waters; and wetlands that protect against flooding. SELC quickly mobilized to garner support from citizens and organizations across the Southeast, and submitted comments on behalf of 80 conservation organizations to the EPA and US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). When the agencies went forward despite public opposition, SELC filed suit in federal court on behalf of conservation groups to challenge the new rule and to protect water quality throughout the Southeast.

When the Trump administration also reversed 40 years of national Clean Water Act policy by restricting the ability of states and communities to review federally-permitted projects on waterways and by cutting back on the ability of states to limit or stop projects that harm local water resources, SELC submitted comments to EPA on behalf of over 40 organizations opposing this rollback. When EPA went forward nevertheless, SELC again filed suit in federal court in South Carolina to stop this attack on the rights of local communities and states to protect their clean water.



**By Frank Holleman**

*Senior Attorney at SELC, former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education, and president of Naturaland Trust Board*

SELC has represented Upstate Forever and other regional conservation organizations in legal efforts to protect our region’s waters. In 2015, SELC successfully negotiated a settlement with Duke Energy to excavate unlined coal ash ponds directly on the banks of the Saluda River in Williamston, which had been polluting the river for decades and threatened discharge of toxic coal ash into the river.

SELC held Kinder Morgan accountable for a massive petroleum pipeline spill in Belton. That effort resulted in increased requirements from DHEC for the cleanup and a \$1.5 million settlement fund for the watershed, one of the largest Clean Water Act settlements in the state’s history. The case established a federal court precedent that the Clean Water Act protects waterways from pollution that travels through groundwater to reach streams, rivers, and lakes. *Read more about the Belton spill on page 3.*

The SELC has also worked tirelessly to protect important and globally unique wetlands just north of Travelers Rest. Together with the local community, SELC has on four occasions blocked harmful proposed developments that would have adversely impacted these water resources and helped convince Piedmont Natural Gas to abandon a proposed pipeline that would have harmed the community and the area’s water resources. 🌿



*SELC has been instrumental in defending water in places like Lake Keowee, the Saluda River, and Piedmont Seep Forests.*



MAC STONE



TOM BLAGDEN



(Past awards, continued)

**2017**

Homes of Hope  
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES CHAMPION

ReWa (for Project Rx)  
CLEAN WATER CHAMPION

TreesGreenville  
(now TreesUpstate)  
CLEAR SKIES CHAMPION

Gina McClellan and the Pickens  
County “Traveling Trash Bash”  
THREE R’S CHAMPION  
(REUSE, REDUCTION, RECYCLING)

Larry Martin  
PUBLIC SERVANT OF THE YEAR

Neil Batavia  
VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

**2016**

Paris Mountain State Park Friends  
TOMMY WYCHE LAND  
CONSERVATION CHAMPION

Taylor’s Town Square  
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES CHAMPION

Dr. Gene Eidsen  
CLEAN WATER CHAMPION

Bruce Wood  
CLEAR SKIES CHAMPION

Clemson University Recycling  
Services  
THREE R’S CHAMPION

Matt Schell  
PUBLIC SERVANT OF THE YEAR

Terry Schlager  
VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

**2015**

Ben Geer Keys  
TOMMY WYCHE LAND  
CONSERVATION CHAMPION

Rocky River Conservancy &  
Anderson University  
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES CHAMPION

Dr. Jack Turner  
CLEAN WATER CHAMPION

Dan Powell  
CLEAR SKIES CHAMPION

Joseph McMillin  
THREE R’S CHAMPION

Cathy Reas Foster  
PUBLIC SERVANT OF THE YEAR

Cary Hall  
VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR



LAND PLANNING & POLICY CHAMPION AWARD

# Ginny Stroud

*For her tireless dedication to neighborhood revitalization, improvement, and affordable housing development in Greenville, former Community Development Administrator with the City of Greenville Ginny Stroud is the recipient of the 2021 Land Planning and Policy Champion Award.*

Although my education is in business administration and social work, I was drawn to the field of planning and community development after working in the early 1990s with the United Way of Greenville County and their social planning arm, the Community Planning Council. United Way partnered with the City of Greenville to create a revitalization strategy in the Green Avenue Neighborhood (near Greenville High School). The plan included affordable housing, infrastructure improvements and services that supported the residents toward realizing their workforce potential. Working side-by-side with citizens to support crafting their goals and vision for the community was incredibly rewarding. As a result of that effort, I had the opportunity to join the City of Greenville’s Community Development team and to carry that initiative into other neighborhoods throughout the city. It became a wonderful career-long experience.

During my time with the City of Greenville, I am really proud of our work to develop the capacity of our neighborhood associations by supporting the existing network of community leaders and cultivating a new generation of leadership within the city’s Special Emphasis Neighborhoods: Brutontown, Greater Sullivan, Green Avenue, Greenline-Spartanburg, Haynie Serrine, Nicholtown, Pleasant Valley, Southernside, Viola Street, the West End, and West Greenville.



To offer the amenities people crave in a vibrant city, the housing needs of citizens across the full economic spectrum must be addressed in a way that allows all who contribute to Greenville’s success to simultaneously benefit from it.

— GINNY STROUD

Local governments, non-profit organizations and affordable housing developers can do a lot, but it takes authentically engaged residents to improve communities and build the consensus required to sustain those improvements over time.

I am hopeful for the future of development in Greenville because the public has come to recognize the importance of affordable housing in creating an equitable, diverse, and thriving community. Today there is a greater understanding that in order to offer the amenities that people crave in a vibrant city, the housing needs of citizens across the full economic spectrum must be addressed in a way that allows all who contribute to Greenville’s success to simultaneously benefit from it. Citizens, development partners and policy-makers all contribute to our community growing in a deliberate, inclusive and quality-focused manner.

In order for Greenville to continue to progress and remain an award-winning city, we must ensure that all citizens, regardless of their income, have the opportunity to live in a quality home, close to the wonderful amenities that Greenville has to offer. It is important that we support our own citizens who keep our city moving forward — our hospitality, construction, and service workers as well as our first responders, educators and public servants — by providing a variety of housing options to meet the variety of needs their families have. 🌿



West Greenville



**HELP SHAPE GREENVILLE’S GROWTH WITH SMART LAND USE**

Upstate Forever’s Land Policy team sends out periodic updates and action alerts to a dedicated email list. Visit [upstateforever.org/email](http://upstateforever.org/email) and select “Greenville County Land Planning & Policy Issues” to receive these updates.

**2014**

John Garton & Ben Sill  
TOMMY WYCHE LAND CONSERVATION CHAMPIONS

Eleanor Dunlap  
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES CHAMPION

Edward Enggasser  
CLEAN WATER CHAMPION

WSPA-TV  
CLEAR SKIES CHAMPION

Spartanburg County, Spartanburg Men’s Gardening Club and the Spartanburg Master Gardeners  
THREE R’S CHAMPION

Greg Lucas  
PUBLIC SERVANT OF THE YEAR

Jim Buschur  
VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

**2013**

Shea Airey  
TOMMY WYCHE LAND CONSERVATION CHAMPION

Greenville Health System  
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES CHAMPION

John Lane  
CLEAN WATER CHAMPION

Furman Community Conservation Corps  
CLEAR SKIES CHAMPION

Paul Agnew  
PUBLIC SERVANT OF THE YEAR

Jon Schultz  
VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

**2012**

Bettina George  
TOMMY WYCHE  
LAND CONSERVATION CHAMPION

City of Spartanburg  
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES CHAMPION

Partners for Trout  
CLEAN WATER CHAMPION

City of Greenville  
CLEAR SKIES CHAMPION

John Frampton  
PUBLIC SERVANT OF THE YEAR

Jim Gossett  
VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

(Continued on page 17)



ENVIRONMENTAL EQUITY & JUSTICE AWARD

# Sustaining Way

*For their work to cultivate a thriving, sustainable, and equitable environment in Greenville’s Nicholtown and surrounding communities, Sustaining Way is the recipient of the 2021 Environmental Equity and Justice Award.*

Formed in 2012 by founder Rick Joye, Sustaining Way works to use education, collaboration, and advocacy to create sustainable, caring, and equitable communities for current and future generations.

Food and energy costs create a burden that reduces the ability for low-income individuals to break out of poverty. Through educational programs at the organization’s innovative flagship Annie’s House, located just off the Prisma Health Swamp Rabbit Trail in Nicholtown, Sustaining Way supports the community in living more sustainably, in turn reducing the burden of high food and energy costs.

Some of the current practices demonstrated at Annie’s House include: gardening and chicken keeping, improving home energy efficiency and utilizing renewable energy, water quality education and conservation, green transportation, food preservation, and composting and recycling. And because it’s never too soon to learn about sustainability, the Steward Youth Program provides students in grades K-12 with information to build healthy, lifelong habits.

To help community residents offset rising energy costs, the organization’s Energy Home Visit Program — a partnership with Duke Energy, City of Greenville, Community Conservation Corp and the Nicholtown Neighborhood Association — has weatherized and helped improve the energy efficiency of over 1,000

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Nicholtown homes. Energy efficiency workshops have also provided practical actions and tips for homeowners to lower their energy bills.

As access to fair and equitable housing becomes an increasing concern in the rapidly gentrifying Nicholtown community, Sustaining Way has been offering virtual workshops in partnership with the Nicholtown Neighborhood Association, the City of Greenville and Greenville County Human Relations to educate residents about pathways to homeownership.

Sustaining Way is also working to tackle food insecurity, particularly during the ongoing pandemic. Through its weekly Meals & Masks events with the Nicholtown Neighborhood Association and Project Host, Sustaining Way has been providing meals, FoodShare boxes, and personal protective equipment to vulnerable community members.

In early 2021, founder Rick Joye handed the reins to incoming Executive Director Michael Brown. Under Michael's leadership, Sustaining Way plans to continue work with impacted communities in eradicating the reality of food insecurity, championing affordable housing and promoting energy efficiency in an equitable and sustainable way. 🌱

**Opposite page:** The Sustaining Way team in front of Annie's House, an interfaith initiative in the Nicholtown Community demonstrating the feasibility and benefits of living more simply and sustainably. Founder Rick Joye is at far left, next to Executive Director Michael Brown. **This page, top left:** Sustaining Way's weekly Meals & Masks events. **Right:** Sustainability Coordinator Danielle Parks holds a handful of compost used in the garden at Annie's House.

(Past awards, continued)

**2011\***

Naturaland Trust  
TOMMY WYCHE LAND  
CONSERVATION CHAMPION

Dr. Frank Powell  
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES CHAMPION

Dr. Dave Hargett  
CLEAN WATER CHAMPION

Pickens County  
CLEAR SKIES CHAMPION

Rick Danner  
PUBLIC SERVANT OF THE YEAR

Tommy Wyche  
EXTRAORDINARY LEADERSHIP AWARD

Rick Huffman  
VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

**2010**

Dianne Culbertson  
LAND CONSERVATION CHAMPION

Mary Black Foundation  
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES CHAMPION

Dr. Larry Dyck  
CLEAN WATER CHAMPION

City of Clemson  
CLEAR SKIES CHAMPION

Mike Pitts  
PUBLIC SERVANT OF THE YEAR

Dr. David Shi  
EXTRAORDINARY LEADERSHIP AWARD

Jennifer Kouyoumjian  
VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

**2008**

Alice and Fred Stanback  
LAND CONSERVATION CHAMPION

Todd Usher  
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES CHAMPION

Save Our Saluda  
CLEAN WATER CHAMPION

Mike Caston  
PUBLIC SERVANT OF THE YEAR

Donna and Lou Astle  
VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

(Continued on page 20)

\*In 2011, the land conservation award was named in honor of Tommy Wyche for his extraordinary leadership in protecting more than 100,000 acres of the South Carolina mountains.





## BRAD WYCHE EXTRAORDINARY ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

# Dr. Dave Hargett

Dr. Dave Hargett hails from northern Rutherford County, North Carolina, in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The youngest of six, he grew up in a rural, working family where farming, forest management, and caring for the land formed his conservation values.

Throughout his 31 years in South Carolina, Dave has worked extensively with grassroots conservation organizations and regional and national organizations alike to achieve thoughtful, science-based solutions and sound policies to address challenging environmental problems.

He is an emeritus director of the South Carolina Wildlife Federation and he served as a director of the National Wildlife Federation for nine years. From its inception in 1993 until 2001 he was a director of Friends of the Reedy River, and was its first Executive Director. He served as Chairman of the Board of Upstate Forever from 1998-2003. He was a principal partner in the Saluda-Reedy Watershed Consortium.

In 1999, Dave co-founded the Conestee Foundation.

He conceived the strategy to undertake the insane and improbable task of transforming a long-forgotten industrial pond, a National Priorities List-caliber waste site, into the now beloved Lake Conestee Nature Preserve (LCNP). Dave was continuously involved in the “Conestee Project” from brainstorming as early as 1993, and throughout the execution of nearly two decades of technical studies of the lake and the dam, in close collaboration with SCDHEC and numerous other agencies. He has provided the critical vision to convert a forlorn and abandoned waste site into an exceptional community asset, the “Wildest Place in Greenville,” only 7 miles from downtown Greenville and now visited by over 100,000 people every year. He served as the Executive Director of the Foundation from 2010-2020, directing the growth of the Preserve and the construction of miles of trails and numerous teaching venues. The success of LCNP is a tribute to Dave’s ability to bring together a multitude of local, state, and federal agency partners as well as a broad array of conservation collaborators for a common cause. 🌱

## Q&A with Dr. Dave

*What is your earliest memory in nature?*

I grew up spending every spare minute wandering the forests and fields of northern Rutherford County, exploring the environment, and being baptized in the “power of nature.” There was not a foot of stream or an acre of forest for miles around that I didn’t know.

*What drew you to environmental science and conservation?*

From my roots in the woods and wilds, I developed a keen interest in the relationships between the earth, the soil, the rocks, the water, the forests, and the wild things, but also how man could, or should, work as a steward of these natural assets. I grew naturally into conservation values by immersion.

*Can you share an anecdote from the early days of the Conestee Foundation and LCNP?*

Early in the conception of the “Conestee Project,” I had a conversation with Tommy Wyche to try to garner his support and blessing. He suggested that I should invest my time in other projects more ‘worthy’ of my conservation talents and passion. This exchange happened at the same time Tommy was heavily involved in negotiations for the Jocassee Gorges properties. I challenged him to come out and see Lake Conestee, and he did. Standing over the immense wetlands of the West Bay, I pointed out that Conestee provided a conservation opportunity that the Gorges project would never have, and that was over 100,000 school

*(Q&A continued on page 20)*

***In 1993, right after Ben Geer Keys, Tom Tiller and I founded Friends of the Reedy River, we recruited a group of allies to join us on the Board of Directors. The first person we asked was Dave Hargett, and he enthusiastically said yes. I had met Dave a few years before and was immediately impressed with his expertise in environmental science and his passion for conservation. I knew having him on the Board would be a huge boost to our fledgling organization.***

*It turned out to be more than huge — it was like one of the NASA rockets. With an insatiable desire to learn and inexhaustible energy, Dave quickly became the world’s leading expert on the Reedy River. When a difficult issue or question about the river faced us, the standard answer was: “Ask Dave.” It’s obvious that Friends of the Reedy wouldn’t have been successful without him.*

*Another Board member at that time was Dana Leavitt, who was always intrigued by the potential of Lake Conestee. He and Dave were soon advocating for the Friends to work on the lake as a top priority. It’s now hard to believe this, but in the mid-1990s, very few people had any interest in what was often referred to as “Lake Co-Nasty.” But Dana and Dave wouldn’t be deterred, and the lake and its surrounding lands eventually became the focus of a new nonprofit, the Lake Conestee Foundation.*

*For the next 20 years, Dave was the Conestee Champion, providing extraordinary leadership in acquiring the original lakebed and surrounding lands, raising lots of money, winning many state and national awards, taking steps to shore up the old dam, and establishing what has become the wildly popular Lake Conestee Nature Preserve,*

*In 1998, after founding Upstate Forever, I did the same thing we did for the Friends — I asked Dave to join the Board. He not only said yes, but agreed to serve as our first chair. I’ll always be grateful for his great leadership and wise counsel in getting Upstate Forever off to a good start. And he did all this while leading the Friends, launching the Conestee project, and working full-time as a consultant. No one is more deserving of this award than Dave. Congratulations, my friend — well-deserved!*

— **BRAD WYCHE**, Upstate Forever Founder & Senior Advisor



**Dave (far left) was the first UF Board Chair in 1998.** Other inaugural board members, from left: Mark Taylor, Carlton Owen, Joan Peters, and Brad Wyche.



*(Past awards, continued)*

**2007**

**Concerned Citizens for Conservation**  
LAND CONSERVATION CHAMPION

**Johnson Development Associates**  
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES CHAMPION

**Bill Brown**  
CLEAN WATER CHAMPION

**Gene Smith**  
PUBLIC SERVANT OF THE YEAR

**Dr. Billy Campbell**  
EXTRAORDINARY LEADERSHIP AWARD

**Frank Holleman**  
VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

**2005**

**Madelon Wallace**  
LAND CONSERVATION CHAMPION

**Milliken & Company**  
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES CHAMPION

**Burnie Maybank**  
PUBLIC SERVANT OF THE YEAR

**Carlton Owen**  
EXTRAORDINARY LEADERSHIP AWARD

**Dan Roberts**  
VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

**2004**

**Jeff Randolph**  
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES CHAMPION

**Graham Rich**  
PUBLIC SERVANT OF THE YEAR

**Carolyn Groves**  
VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

**2003**

**Furman University & Craig Gauden Davis**  
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES CHAMPION

**Governor Mark Sanford**  
PUBLIC SERVANT OF THE YEAR

**Virginia White**  
VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

**2002**

**Scott Johnston**  
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES CHAMPION

**Stephanie Monroe**  
PUBLIC SERVANT OF THE YEAR

**Jean Graves**  
VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

**Mary Lou Jones**  
ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR

**Wes Cooler**  
EXTRAORDINARY LEADERSHIP AWARD



**Left:** Dave received the 2000 South Carolina Environmental Awareness Award from Governor Jim Hodges. **Right:** Hargett co-founded the Conestee Foundation and served as the Executive Director of Lake Conestee Nature Preserve from 2010 to 2020.

*(Q&A with Dr. Dave, continued from page 19)*

children within a 30-minute bus ride. He immediately acknowledged, “I get it!” After that he was wholly supportive.

*What accomplishment during your tenure at LCNP are you most proud of?*

Without question, the greatest accomplishment is creating a team of wonderful conservation professionals who are the caretakers and stewards of the Preserve, and who deliver nature education services to the children and families of the Upstate. The gratification from these dedicated folks is manifested in the look of astonishment on every child’s face as they see a dragonfly, or a hawk, or salamander up close for the first time.

*Why is LCNP important for the Upstate?*

The Preserve is located in the heart of Greenville County, and when it was annexed into the City in 2019, it actually doubled the amount of park and preserve space in the City. It offers more handicapped-accessible trails than any other park or preserve in the entire state. LCNP is the regionally- and nationally-awarded ‘poster child’ for watershed-derived Brownfield sites. The Preserve now has over 400 acres of forests, fields, and wetlands, all protected by a conservation easement held by Upstate Forever. It has over 14 miles of trails, over a mile of wetland boardwalks, a treasured nature education program reaching thousands of children each year, and 150,000 visitors annually. The Preserve is an Important Bird Area of Global Significance, a state-sanctioned Wildlife Sanctuary, an Upstate partner with Audubon of SC, and the lake and the dam are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

*Besides hopefully taking some well-deserved time off, what are your plans after stepping down from your role as Executive Director?*

Time off? Is that a thing? I continue to be highly engaged in conservation work in the Upstate, protection of our streams, forests, wetlands, and wild places, and in sustaining our extraordinary Upstate environment. I also continue to be involved as a consultant on environmental assessment and restoration projects in the region. In my “time off,” I will work my certified tree farm in Rutherford County. 🌿

# The reality of Black land loss



**By Megan Burton**

COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR  
[mburton@upstateforever.org](mailto:mburton@upstateforever.org)

*This article includes an account of lynching and hate crimes.*

Just after the turn of the 20th century, Black agriculture was at its peak in America. While the eras of Emancipation and Reconstruction were still recent history, African Americans — largely formerly enslaved people and their descendants — had acquired as much as 14 million acres of land across the United States.

Just a century later, however, that number had dwindled. 90 percent of the land amassed by Black farmers across the country had been lost. According to the most recent U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Census, completed in 2017, Black farmers account for less than 7% of agricultural producers in South Carolina. By Upstate county, that percentage varies from as little as 0.5% (Pickens) to 6.9% (Greenwood).

The reasons for this steep decline in Black land ownership vary. Of course, the overall decrease in small scale agriculture over the past 150 years is a contributing cause, as is the Great Migration, during which millions of African Americans left the rural South for opportunities in the North, Midwest, and American West.

## Black farmers faced discrimination

But more sinister factors were also at play. Discriminatory federal policies and financial lending practices are well documented. Black farmers were often denied access to USDA programs managed by locally elected boards.

In addition to systemic institutional discrimination, African American landowners faced the lasting pervasive racism of many of their neighbors in the South. In some cases, this resulted in the forceful, violent taking of their land, as was the case with Anthony Crawford, a formerly enslaved man who owned a 427-acre cotton farm in Abbeville.

“Crawford’s prosperity had made him a target,” wrote the Associated Press in a 2001 article about Crawford’s lynching. For telling a white mercantile clerk he had received a better offer than the 85 cents a pound for his cottonseed the clerk offered, Crawford was arrested for “cursing a white man.” He was released on bail, only to be accosted by a mob who beat and stabbed him before being carried to jail again, where a deputy reportedly gave the keys to Crawford’s cell to members of the mob. He

was dragged through the town and hanged. No one was ever tried for Anthony Crawford’s murder, and his lynching led to hundreds of Black residents, including some of the Crawfords, fleeing Abbeville. His children who inherited the farm eventually lost it when they couldn’t pay off a \$2,000 balance on a bank loan. A white man purchased the 400+ acre farm for just \$50 at an auction, although it had been assessed at \$20,000 according to land records.

## The leading cause of Black land loss

Freedmen and their descendants often lacked birth certificates and legal documents, as well as access to the legal system, necessary to create wills or estate plans. In this case, the land becomes what is known as “heirs’ property,” fractionally owned by a web of as many as dozens of descendants of the original owner.

The complex issue of heirs’ property is considered the greatest contributor to involuntary African American land loss. Heirs’ property comprises approximately 3.5 million acres across the South, more than a third of Southern Black-owned land, valued at more than \$28 billion.

Without an official title or deed, families who have lived on a property for generations can suddenly find themselves forced into a partition sale by a distant relative, faced with costly legal fees to attempt to resolve ownership, or have their land sold at auction to a speculator or developer. It should also be noted that farms on heirs’ property have historically not been eligible for programs through the USDA, though the 2018 Farm Bill has provided opportunities to establish a farm number to secure access to USDA loans, assistance, and other programs.

*Continued >>*



*An African American man on a tobacco farm in North Carolina ca. 1940. CC BY 4.0, Charles Raines & Guy Cox*



*(Continued from previous page)*

## Black farmers, then & now

Despite facing these hurdles, some families have managed to maintain ownership of their land over the past century.

Margaret Harrison is a local farmer, newly elected Commissioner for the Greenville County Soil and Water Conservation District, and member of the UF Board of Directors. Her husband, Bryant, is the latest among several generations of farmers.

“Until my husband was born, his family were sharecroppers,” Margaret shared during a recent conversation. “His father purchased 100-and-some acres of land in the 1950s and Bryant grew up as a farm boy picking cotton and tobacco. He grew up hard, with 14 children in his family. Most of his siblings don’t farm now. They didn’t want to do it anymore because they knew how hard it is. They all had to work as kids growing up on the farm and often had to miss days of school to work. They wanted to get jobs and get married when they grew up. I think that’s why we didn’t see many farmers like us back then. They weren’t making any money.”

But Bryant stuck with it. In the 1970s, he purchased acreage adjoining his family’s in southern Greenville County. While Bryant’s family made the climb from sharecroppers to landowners, Margaret shared a story of her relatives who had struggled to keep hold of their land.

“My father’s father owned quite a bit of property in Berea. Before the Great Depression, he probably had about 100 acres, but when the Depression came along, he wasn’t able to pay his loans. The bank started taking all of his property.

His wife had been raised by a white family and she got up enough nerve to ask them to loan them money so her husband could save their farm. They made a deal with her to sell



*Margaret and Bryant Harrison farm their property in Southern Greenville County and, alongside their daughter Anita Greggs, sell the produce locally as H & G Produce.*

it to her, but made them agree her husband could never have his name on the deed. They were only able to purchase about 40 of the original 100 acres in the end.”

Margaret and Bryant’s daughter Anita had the idea about a decade ago that they should sell their produce together at the farmers market. After a 35-year career as a lab technician, Margaret donned a straw hat and started getting her hands dirty, harvesting and selling corn, squash, watermelon, collards, sweet potatoes — just about everything — from H & G Produce (for Harrison and Greggs, Anita’s last name) at markets and the Swamp Rabbit Cafe and Grocery in Greenville.

“A man one time at work asked me, ‘why did your husband buy so much land?’ I said, ‘Because he wanted to,’” she said. “I knew if I was white, he wouldn’t have asked me the same question. I’m glad to see that things have changed, are changing.”

## Things are changing

The previously untold — or perhaps, unlistened to — struggles of Black farmers and landowners in the South are becoming more widely known. Their stories are being shared on

social media and by neighbors, and news media are illuminating a previously unreported on topic.

Nonprofit organizations and coalitions like the Lowcountry’s Center for Heirs Property Preservation and SC Black Farmers are working tirelessly to help heirs’ property owners resolve disputes and support African American farmers in South Carolina.

Legislators are also working at the state and federal levels to invest in Black farmers. Berkeley County Representative J.A. Moore has introduced South Carolina House Bill 3543, the “Black Farmer Restoration Program,” that aims to create a fund to purchase farmland and grant it to eligible individuals and provide agricultural training.

At the federal level, the 2018 Farm Bill contained a provision to help heirs’ property owners get farm loans, take advantage of federal programs previously unavailable to them, and receive assistance in resolving land ownership disputes. Senator Tim Scott of South Carolina co-sponsored the heirs’ property language in the bill. Late last year, Senator Cory Booker of New Jersey introduced United States Senate Bill 4929, the “Justice for Black Farmers

Act of 2020,” that as proposed would end discrimination within the USDA, expand upon funding for the 2018 Farm Bill’s heirs’ property programs, establish a USDA grant of up to 160 acres to existing and aspiring Black farmers, and more.

Land conservation has also emerged as a solution to Black landowners with the goal of preventing land loss. Voluntary conservation easements are agreements between a landowner and qualified land trust, such as Upstate Forever, which permanently protect land from future residential subdivision, commercial or industrial development, even if the property changes owners, while allowing traditional land uses such as farming or timber. Landowners that protect their land through a conservation easement often receive significant tax benefits as well.

## Black land ownership matters

A rising tide lifts all boats. Empowering more African Americans to own and farm land benefits surrounding communities by strengthening local economies, building more resilient communities, contributing to robust local food systems, and helping reduce suburban sprawl in rural areas.

Plus, in the words of Margaret Harrison, “There won’t be any more land made. The question is, ‘what do we do with what we have now?’” 🌱



Margaret Harrison with some of H & G Produce’s fall sweet potato harvest. (The UF staff can confirm: these are amazing sweet potatoes)



## ACTION ALERT

# Speak up for Greenville County

Greenville County is drafting a new Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to replace current zoning and land development regulations. The UDO will determine how and where growth occurs to accommodate new residents. It will impact other community priorities such as housing choice and affordability, mobility options, access to clean water and safe green spaces, and more.

Effective policy-making only happens when many community voices — not just government officials, consultants, developers, and special interest groups — work together to identify durable, equitable solutions.

If you want to see the community’s vision for Greenville County enacted through meaningful policy, please take five minutes to contact your council member and tell them:

**We need a UDO that lines up with the vision laid out in the comp plan.** One of the major goals of the UDO is to implement the widely-supported comprehensive plan for guiding future growth unanimously adopted by Council in 2020. Hundreds participated in this process, and their voices should be respected.

**The county’s existing policies for guiding growth are antiquated.** The UDO provides an avenue to overhaul and modernize those policies so they address the community needs of today.

**Policy solutions are not “one-size-fits-all.”** Greenville County is nearly 800 square miles. In urban and suburban areas, where access to services is greatest, the UDO should remove barriers limiting housing choice and affordability. In rural areas, where services are limited, the UDO should slow sprawl and protect productive farmlands.

**Our sprawling growth pattern is inefficient, exorbitantly expensive to serve, and fiscally unsustainable.** The UDO can reverse that course by directing growth to the central portion of the county where infrastructure and services can better support it.

**Future growth need not come at the expense of sensitive natural areas.** The UDO must protect tree canopy and riparian buffers — critical to water quality — and unique natural resources. 🌱

Visit [upstateforever.org/local-officials](https://upstateforever.org/local-officials) to find contact information for Greenville County Council. Not sure who represents you? There’s a “find my official” link on that page as well.



 **THE WYCHE SOCIETY**

Membership in the Wyche Society is open to all who support Upstate Forever annually at a level of \$2,500 or above. Wyche Society members enjoy special events, field trips, and recognition in Upstate Forever materials. To join, email Aldon Knight, Director of Development and Community Relations, at [aknight@upstateforever.org](mailto:aknight@upstateforever.org).

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**Dennis Chastain — renowned naturalist, writer, historian, botanist, guide, and conservation advocate** — led a small group to the Jocassee Gorges Wilderness Area in March to view the rare Oconee bell in bloom. This unique plant cannot be found anywhere in the world outside of a limited radius of Lake Jocassee.

*Dennis Chastain received the Extraordinary Achievement Award at Upstate Forever's 2019 ForeverGreen Annual Awards Luncheon. You can read an essay reflecting on his deep ties to the Upstate at [upstateforever.org/last](http://upstateforever.org/last).*

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NEW UF STAFF See full bios at [upstateforever.org/team](http://upstateforever.org/team)

**Richard Carr**

Richard joined Upstate Forever as a Land Conservation Specialist in 2021 after serving two previous careers in the textile industry and in ministry with the Presbyterian Church (USA). Eventually, Richard's love of the land and his concern for our stewardship of it led him to Upstate Forever. A lifelong resident of Spartanburg, Richard has spent most of his life in the outdoors of the Upstate hunting, fishing, canoeing, and camping. His wife, Shay, is also from Spartanburg, and they have three children in various stages of early adulthood.



**Leigh McGill**

Leigh is a native Greenville who joined Upstate Forever in December 2020 as Assistant Financial Manager. She was Office Manager/Controller for Bannister, Wyatt & Stalvey Law Firm in Greenville for 12 years, and she also has her own consulting business that handles reporting, fundraising and financial management for elected officials. Leigh has two daughters, 17 and 20, and two four-legged canine children. In her spare time, she enjoys tennis, hiking, playing cards and board games, and relaxing on the lake.





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