

**For Immediate Release**

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**UPSTATE FOREVER RECEIVES TWO STATE ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS**

Upstate Forever has been honored with two state awards for its work in conservation and environmental education.

The South Carolina Wildlife Association awarded the organization its 2001 Land Conservationist of the Year Award. Since its formation in 1998, Upstate Forever has strongly promoted the use of conservation easements as a method of protecting some of the region's most significant natural and historic resources. In November, 2000, it sponsored the first major conference ever held in the Upstate on conservation easements. To date, through its Land Trust program, Upstate Forever has received eight easements protecting nearly 2,000 acres in the region, including tracts on Paris Mountain, along Highway 11, adjoining the Jocassee Gorges area, and on the Pacolet River.

Brad Wyche, Upstate Forever's Executive Director, said, "Conservation easements are a win-win for the landowner and the public. The landowner continues to own the property and can receive substantial tax benefits, while protection of the land can result in a wide range of benefits to the public, such as improved air and water quality, preserved habitat for wildlife, and scenic vistas. Much of our work is simply trying to get the word out to landowners about conservation easements. Not that every landowner will grant one, but every landowner ought to at least think about it."

At its annual conference in March, the Environmental Education Association of South Carolina (EEASC) presented its Environmental Educator of the Year Award to Upstate Forever for its outstanding work in educating policy makers and the general public about growth and land use issues. EEASC President Mary Lou Jones said, "Our organization is pleased to recognize Upstate Forever for its dedication to raising awareness about the critical need to care for and conserve our magnificent but threatened natural resources. Because of their tireless efforts, the Upstate region of South Carolina will be a better place for us and for our children."

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