

For Immediate Release

COTTON PATCH PROPERTY PRESERVED

March 17, 2003

The stunning 400-acre property in Polk County known as "The Cotton Patch" has been preserved through a conservation easement granted to Upstate Forever, a nonprofit organization that administers and manages a land trust program in and near the Upstate region of South Carolina.

The Cotton Patch, a property rich in both history and natural resources, is a centerpiece of the "Hunting Country," the beautiful area that generally lies between Landrum and the North Pacolet River. The property has played a key role in the development of Tryon, North Carolina as one of the nation's premier equestrian communities. For example, in 1956, the property was one of the sites of the U.S. Equestrian Team Selection Trials for the Olympic Games in Stockholm.

The main house at the Cotton Patch was designed by the renowned architect Russell S. Walcott and built in 1938. Although extensive renovations have been made to the house over the years, it still retains the flavor and structural integrity of Walcott's original design.

Cotton Patch has almost three miles of frontage along both sides of the North Pacolet River, one of the region's most important freshwater resources and the most significant tributary to Lake Blalock, a principal source of drinking water for Spartanburg County. The conservation easement contains stringent provisions to protect the river and the adjoining riparian lands. The Spartanburg Water System has expressed its strong support for the conservation easement and its river protection provisions.

The Cotton Patch is located in close proximity to Four Columns and Fairview Farms, two large tracts that also border the North Pacolet River and have been protected by conservation easements. The total river frontage protected by all three easements exceeds five miles.

In 1992, the Cotton Patch was acquired by Robert H. Wallace, Jr., who brought a keen appreciation of the land's value and potential. "I was attracted to the property by its spectacular beauty. It has always been my plan to keep it that way," said Wallace. Shortly after acquiring the property, Wallace agreed to designate it as a "Stewardship Forest" under a program developed by the U.S. Forest Service. The Cotton Patch's Forest Stewardship Program was among the first of its kind in North Carolina and the first ever in Polk County. Implementation of the program, which involved enhancing the growth of hardwoods and stabilizing stream banks, has made

The Cotton Patch “probably the most beautiful piece of land in the Hunting Country,” according to Wallace.

The property contains eight rare species of plants, including the rare white walnut tree and the very rare bristly sarsaparilla. According to *The Natural Heritage Program List of Rare Plants in North Carolina* (Jaime Amoroso editor, 1999), the latter species has never before been found in the state.

Wallace retained the services of Greenspace Consultants, LLC, a consulting firm that specializes in open space protection and “conservation developments,” to develop a land use plan for the property. Under this plan, which is incorporated into the conservation easement, the property may be subdivided into no more than eight residential tracts. On each of these tracts only one single-family residence and a few small ancillary structures associated with the residence may be built. Approximately two-thirds of the property will be common open space on which no development of any kind is permitted.

Bud Myers, a principal with Greenspace Consultants, said, “This is a ‘win-win’ land use plan that preserves the beauty and quality of the property but allows the owner to realize some economic return from the land. We hope this will serve as a model for other large tracts in this fast-growing region.”

Brad Wyche, Executive Director of Upstate Forever, which also holds the easements on the Four Columns and Fairview properties, said, “We are deeply honored to be a partner with Mr. Wallace in preserving this wonderful piece of the Hunting Country forever. This is a huge accomplishment for conservation in this region.”

A conservation easement is an agreement in which the property owner continues to own and use the land but gives up most of the rights to develop it. There can be significant tax benefits associated with the granting of conservation easements. To date Upstate Forever has received twelve conservation easements protecting over 3,000 acres of land in the region.

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