

For Immediate Release

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UPSTATE FOREVER CELEBRATES 5th ANNIVERSARY

Upstate Forever celebrated its fifth anniversary during the 2003 Annual Meeting of its members at the Walnut Grove Plantation on November 8.

In late 1998, Brad Wyche left his law practice in Greenville, founded the organization, and has been its full time Executive Director ever since. Wyche said, "We have definitely come a long way since those early days of working alone at my house. Five years ago I never thought that at this point we would have over 1,600 members and a staff of seven. Some days, when the office is abuzz with all seven of us here, along with several volunteers and student interns, I shake my head in disbelief."

Carlton Owen, the Chairman of Upstate Forever's Board of Directors, attributed the organization's success to four factors: "First, people in the Upstate are keenly interested in the issues of growth, land use change and conservation that Upstate Forever is working on. Second, we have a terrific Board of Directors who oversee and guide the organization. Third, we have the best staff any organization (profit or nonprofit) could ask for—a dedicated and immensely talented group of professionals who could be making more money elsewhere but have chosen to work here because they care so passionately about what we do. Fourth, and most important, are our members without whose support Upstate Forever would not exist. It is both humbling and inspiring to see the names of the hundreds of individuals, families, companies, and foundations who believe in our mission and provide the financial fuel needed to keep Upstate Forever in operation."

At the Annual Meeting, Upstate Forever presented a time line that displayed the highlights of the first five years. *[The timeline is enclosed with this press release].*

Among the accomplishments noted are:

- Four major regional conferences (conservation easements, green development, zoning, and affordable housing)
- Receipt of 13 conservation easements protecting over 3,000 acres of important lands in the Upstate
- An increase in membership from its first member in June of 1999 to 1,646 today
- Successful advocacy efforts (often with other groups and individuals) in defeating the Highway 295 Connector

- project in Spartanburg County, in approving the clustered development and commercial parking lot landscaping ordinances in Greenville County, in approving revisions to the development standards ordinance in Pickens County, in defeating a stream piping project in the City of Greenville, in passing the South Carolina Conservation Bank Act, in passing the South Carolina Community School Act, in adopting “green standards” for the massive school construction project in Greenville County, in defeating a proposed new landfill in Spartanburg County, and in protecting the historic Poinsett Bridge in Greenville County
- Receipt of a \$1.5 million grant for a comprehensive study of the Saluda-Reedy Watershed
 - Speeches to over 300 groups and over 30 guest editorials

Wyche said, “Looking at the timeline, I think it’s clear that we have made substantial contributions to conservation in our region and that we have improved public awareness of growth and land use issues. I believe we’re making a difference.”

During the meeting, Wyche pointed out that Upstate Forever has many goals for the future, including opening two other offices in the region, reaching the 5,000-member threshold, expanding the Board of Directors, and establishing an endowment. “If the next five years are like the first five, I have no doubt we will accomplish them all,” he said.

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Enclosure: Upstate Forever Five-Year Timeline