

**For Immediate Release**

**EASTATOOE VALLEY OWNER  
AGREES TO PRESERVE LAND**

***Linda Bowie Grants First Conservation Easement  
In the Valley***

**April 12, 2004**

The Eastatoee Valley in northern Pickens County is a place of stunning beauty and extraordinary ecological importance. The 2,500-acre Valley is traversed by the pristine Eastatoee River and surrounded by the magnificent Jocassee Gorges. The Valley and its adjoining mountain slopes provide habitat to a spectacular diversity of plant life, including 41 rare species, three very rare species, and a species of goldenrod that is probably new to science.

The Valley also has great historic significance. For centuries before the Europeans arrived, the Valley was home to the Eastern Branch of the Cherokee Nation which farmed the rich soils along the river. Hundreds of Cherokee artifacts have been discovered in the Valley.

For several years, a serious effort has been underway to protect and preserve the Valley. The goal is achievable because there has been little development to date and 15 property owners control over half of the land in the Valley. Yet the Valley faces grave threats as land begins to be transferred to the next generation and growth and development pressures intensify. Unless proactive measures are taken and implemented soon, the Valley, as it has existed for millennia, will be lost to some kind of development, whether a golf course, gated residential community, or strip mall.

One of the measures that has been advocated for preserving the Valley is the conservation easement—a wonderful legal tool in which the property owner relinquishes the right to develop the property, while continuing to own and enjoy it. It has been a highly effective means of protecting similar special places throughout the United States.

Several landowners in the Valley have been seriously considering the use of the conservation easement to protect their properties. On March 26, one of these owners—Linda Bowie—stepped forward and became the first Eastatoee Valley landowner to protect his or her property with a conservation easement. The owner of about 25 acres, including substantial frontage along the Eastatoee River, Ms. Bowie granted the easement to Upstate Forever, a nonprofit organization that administers and manages a land trust program for the Upstate region of South Carolina. In the easement, she reserves the right

to build only one small residence; all other development rights are forever relinquished.

Ms. Bowie was born and raised in the Valley and has lived there almost her entire life. "The Eastatoee Valley is truly the most beautiful and special place in the world," said Ms. Bowie. "While I don't own much land, I hope that what I have done will inspire my neighbors to do the same thing. Together we can make sure that this amazing place is preserved forever."

Brad Wyche, Executive Director of Upstate Forever said, "This is a huge achievement for conservation in our region. There is no project with higher priority than protecting the Eastatoee Valley. Linda Bowie not only has preserved her own tract but she has shown other landowners that they do have a choice about what happens to their property. The fate of the Eastatoee Valley is in their hands."

For more information, please contact Linda Bowie at 864-878-9629 or Brad Wyche at 864-250-0500.