

# Upstate Forever

Promoting Sensible Growth and  
Protecting Special Places in the Upstate

**For Immediate Release**

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## **UPSTATE FOREVER ANNOUNCES RECORD YEAR IN LAND PROTECTION**

Upstate Forever just wrapped up the best year ever for its land protection program. The organization protected almost as much land in 2006 as it did during the first six years of its land trust program.

During the year, Upstate Forever signed 15 land protection agreements covering over 3,005 acres.

The organization now has 39 agreements protecting almost 8,000 acres.

Dana Leavitt, Upstate Forever's Land Trust Director, said, "I think there are several reasons why this was such a good year for us: the new tax incentives for conservation; more property owners understanding that protecting their land can be a huge "win-win"; the great support of the South Carolina Conservation Bank; and additional staff for our land trust program. Our goal is to assist even more landowners this year."

The land protection agreements include a wide variety of important properties throughout the Upstate.

Last month Upstate Forever concluded the third and final phase of a project that protects a key "missing piece" of the Mountain Bridge Wilderness Area—a tract of approximately 860 acres that adjoins Jones Gap State Park. The tract includes Head Foremost Falls, which plummets down the Blue Ridge Escarpment in a series of cascades totaling over 1,000 feet and is arguably the highest waterfall east of the Mississippi; 1.3 miles of frontage along the Middle Saluda River; the eastern tip of Pinnacle Mountain; and the famous viewshed from YMCA's "Pretty Place" Chapel. As part of the project, Naturaland Trust will soon donate to the State of South Carolina 300 acres for inclusion in Jones

Gap State Park; this tract will also be protected by a conservation agreement with Upstate Forever.

Upstate Forever signed its first agreement in Laurens County: a 190-acre tract known as Timber Creek Farm near Gray Court, featuring a mixture of farmland and mature hardwood forests. Dianne Culbertson, the landowner, said, “I always knew that I was going to protect this wonderful place, but I have to say that the new tax incentives were the main reason I decided to go ahead and get it done last year.”

Upstate Forever also protected its first property in Anderson County: a 218-acre tract, with many of the same features as the Timber Creek Farm tract.

Upstate Forever’s third largest protected property is a 586-acre tract owned by the family of Laura Townes. This property is located on the border of Greenville and Pickens County and contains 1.6 miles of frontage along the spectacular South Saluda River. The South Carolina Conservation Bank provided half of the funds for the agreement, with the family donating the other half of the value.

Laura Townes, the sister-in-law of renowned scientist Charles Townes, said, “My daughters and I wanted to make sure that this green space and wonderful wildlife habitat would be here forever. As we saw the expanding development along Highway 11, we realized our property was an important place to protect. I hope other owners who really care about their property will consider doing the same thing.”

Also using funds provided by the Conservation Bank, Naturaland Trust acquired the 175-acre Camp Spearhead property and then signed a land protection agreement with Upstate Forever. The property will ultimately be open to the public for passive recreation and environmental education use, providing an opportunity for visitors to enjoy the mountain stream and waterfalls, the lush flora, and other scenic attributes. Camp Spearhead will continue to operate on the property until a new camp is completed at Pleasant Ridge County Park.

Another grant from the Conservation Bank was provided to ensure the protection of Greenbrier Farms, a 124-acre active working farm near Dacusville that produces herbicide- and pesticide-free natural meats for local markets.

Upstate Forever signed what it believes is the first land protection agreement in the world on a conservation burial ground—the Ramsey Creek Preserve in Oconee County. This agreement will serve as a model for the protection of green burial grounds, which are increasing in

popularity across the nation. Green burial grounds utilize the burial process as a means of facilitating ecological restoration and protecting and preserving valuable natural areas of distinctive beauty. The Ramsey Creek Preserve is 32 acres, contains over 220 species of plants, and has a quarter mile of frontage along Ramsey Creek, a tributary of the Chauga River.

After signing a land protection agreement, Upstate Forever member Catherine Ladnier donated a 37 acre tract to the City of Easley. The goal is to establish a park named in honor of her mother—the Nalley Brown Nature Park—that will provide passive recreation and environmental education opportunities for school groups and the public.

Photographs of the Cleveland, Timber Creek, Greenbrier Farms, and Townes tracts are attached. Additional photographs as well as information about other properties protected by Upstate Forever last year are available upon request.

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