

For Immediate Release

November 20, 2009

**UPSTATE FOREVER ANNOUNCES
PROTECTION OF CHESTNUT RETURN**

Upstate Forever is proud to announce that Dr. Joe James and his wife Sandra have entered a conservation agreement to permanently protect their 244-acre property *Chestnut Return* in Seneca, South Carolina!

This beautiful, privately-owned farm contains rolling Piedmont hardwood forests and fields with views of the Blue Ridge to the north and extensive footage on Coneross Creek. The property is also home to Dr. James' orchards of experimental Phytophthora-resistant American chestnut hybrids. Dr. James, who was recently featured in the Sept.-Oct. issue of SC Wildlife magazine, hopes that his research at Chestnut Return may one day restore this beloved native species, which has been very nearly eliminated by blight.

Dr. James is now the second board member of Upstate Forever to protect his private property with a conservation agreement. This agreement restricts industrial, commercial and retail uses, residential subdivisions, parking lots, billboards, and mining, while allowing traditional uses like hunting, fishing, farming, and harvesting timber to continue.

Dr. James is also a member of Oconee Forever, a grassroots group of local citizens who work to protect important lands within their home county. Currently, Oconee Forever is rallying support for an Oconee County Conservation Bank, which would allocate local funding to the protection of important lands exclusively within Oconee County. Similar funding sources for land conservation have been met with great success in Beaufort and Charleston Counties, but none so far in the Upstate. For more information about an Oconee County Conservation Bank visit www.oconeecountyconservationbank.org.

Upstate Forever is a regional conservation organization, which works to promote sensible growth and to protect special places in the Upstate. Currently, Upstate Forever has worked with 68 landowners to protect 12,660 acres of farms, fields, and forests in the Upstate using conservation agreements.

More information about Upstate Forever or protecting your land with a conservation agreement visit www.upstateforever.org.

Contact: Dana Leavitt, Upstate Forever Land Trust Director, 864-250-0500 (ext. 23).