

For Immediate Release

October 1, 2009

**UPSTATE FOREVER ANNOUNCES
PROTECTION OF ROSE HILL FARMS**

Upstate Forever has partnered with the John Ivester family and the South Carolina Conservation Bank to protect the first phase of Rose Hill Farms, a 336-acre parcel of land that borders Oconee Station State Park and Sumter National Forest.

Rose Hill Farms includes seven tributaries of Oconee Creek along with access to the 50 foot high Lee Falls in Sumter National Forest. The privately owned tract, which was approved for funding by the SC Conservation Bank Board in June of 2008, is a scenic buffer and wildlife corridor that consists of beautiful rolling hills and steep ravines descending down into hayfields and pastures.

“Rose Hill Farms is one of those ‘top priority’ properties and the protection of this land is really a reason to celebrate,” says Dana Leavitt, Upstate Forever’s Land Trust Director.

Initially, John Ivester intended to sell the farm, however, after working closely with Upstate Forever and the South Carolina Conservation Bank, he decided keeping it for his heirs with a conservation agreement was a better choice. The conservation agreement, also called conservation easement, will insure future generations can enjoy the unique values of Rose Hill Farms. Although his love of the land and family’s use and enjoyment of the property were motivating factors, compensation from the South Carolina Conservation Bank and the increased tax benefits in 2009 made this a viable transaction.

State budget cuts delayed the SC Conservation Bank funds last year threatening the future of this parcel (along with others across the state) and preventing the closing from occurring until mid-September of this year. The John Ivester family has been very supportive of his decision to place a conservation agreement on the land and is delighted to protect the property and be able to retain ownership.

“The state Conservation Bank program was essential to our decision to protect this land so we can continue grazing cattle and managing for wildlife. I hope this program receives increased support so

other landowners have the opportunity to participate in conserving their land,” remarked Mr. Ivester.

Upstate Forever is a non-profit organization based in the Upstate of SC that promotes sensible growth and the protection of special places. The organization consists of three program areas: land trust, sustainable communities, and clean air and water. The Land Trust Program has worked with 65 landowners to protect 11,113 acres of special land in the Upstate through conservation agreements.

The South Carolina Conservation Bank (SCCB) is a state program dedicated to conserving natural resource lands, wetlands, historical properties, and archaeological sites in order to improve the quality of life in South Carolina. The SCCB has been instrumental in providing funding for conservation agreements and land purchases to protect exceptional properties such as Stumphouse Mountain in Oconee County, the Nine Times Tract in Pickens County, Firefly Forest and Lake Conestee Nature Park in Greenville Counties.

More information about Upstate Forever and the South Carolina Conservation Bank can be found at www.upstateforever.org and <http://sccb.sc.gov/>.

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