

Conservancy: Swamp can be destination for tourism

By Liz Carey

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ANDERSON — Converting the Rocky River Swamp into a nature preserve can not only aid wildlife in Anderson, but also can bring tourism to the area, conservancy members say.

Juan Brown of the Rocky River Conservancy said restoration of the swamp area on either side of U.S. 29 near the old Anderson County fairgrounds would attract residents and tourists and serve as an educational tool for schools and the university. Brown spoke Wednesday to the Anderson University Board of Visitors. The university owns the former fairgrounds, which it now uses for athletics, and part of the swampy area.

"The Rocky River swamp is a diverse treasure trove of learning, history and recreation right inside the city limits," Brown said. "Great communities have great parks ... and I think this area can and will be a destination point for our community."

Brown said the conservancy will be seeking partners soon to work on the area. The group, consisting of members of Anderson University, the city of Anderson, Anderson County, [Upstate Forever](#) and other organizations, said it will not be asking for any funding from the city or the county.

The group hopes to take more than 400 acres, about 125 of which are owned by the university, and turn them into recreation trails, a nature conservancy, an educational facility and a wildlife preserve.

Inside the area are wetlands, deciduous forest, thickets and a multitude of flora and fauna, he said, including what one expert thinks is a plant on the federal endangered species list, the bunched arrowhead.

And the area could become part of a larger green space. Trails and abandoned railroad track through the area could one day provide hiking and biking trails from Belton through Anderson to Greenville.

"Most of the city's and county's proposed greenways intersect at the swamp," he said.