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## Concern for trees halts work at Morton Elementary site

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A natural trail and scores of trees at the Morton Elementary School site received a reprieve, at least temporarily, after efforts to level the property for a new elementary school were delayed.

Upstate Forever, a Greenville-based nonprofit conservation group, asked Institutional Resources to reconsider its ground-preparation plans for the new school.

Institutional Resources is the company hired by the Greenville County school board to oversee the district's \$756 million project to build or renovate 72 schools by 2005.

Katie Chamberlain, a spokeswoman for Upstate Forever, said there are alternatives to destroying the school's trees and walking trail.

Classed ended forever May 30 at Morton Elementary, which will be torn down to make room for a new, \$9.6 million elementary school. Morton students will transfer in August to Simpsonville Elementary School. In August 2005, all of Simpsonville Elementary's students will transfer to the new school.

Brad Wyche, president of Upstate Forever, said in a letter to school trustees that there is enough land at the site to accommodate the new school, completely protect the nature trail and wildlife meadow, and preserve all of the wooded area on the western side of the property.

"There are, no doubt, other ways to redesign the plan so that the property's natural amenities will be preserved," Wyche said. "The trees, stream, nature trail and wildlife meadows are resources cherished by the students and teachers at Morton. Why would

you ever want to destroy them?"

Plans called for bulldozers to begin leveling the area June 10, but Wanza Bates, the community relations manager for Institutional Resources, said those plans are now on hold.

"We don't have an answer on what we are going to do on the tree situation right now," Bates said.

"We're still looking at what options we have. (Upstate Forever) made a proposal, so we're are still under review. We have taken under advisement the presentation that was made."

Judy Mulkey, former principal of the school, said she would like to see as much of the area as possible be preserved.

"Certainly, it is a beautiful nature trail and they (students) have put a lot of time and effort into it," Mulkey said. "It offers a respite for children that is not always available to them. It's a beautiful place and I would hate for something like that to be destroyed."

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