

Group seeks special places

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Upstate Forever, a group dedicated to preserving the environment in Greenville County, will hold six public meetings in September to identify special places in the Upstate that residents want to see left undeveloped.

The meetings are the first step toward the citing of ecologically sensitive areas, wildlife habitats, historical sites, farm land, riparian land and other special places in the county.

"Input from the public is going to drive this," said Diane Eldridge, associate director of Upstate Forever. "We want them to help us to identify those special lands that might be eligible for voluntary conservation at some later date."

Simpsonville resident Rick Owens thinks the meetings are a good idea.

"There's a lot of rich history in this community and a lot of people don't realize that," Owens said. "And I

Want to go?

All meetings will be held from 7-8:30 p.m.

■ Sept. 10, Greenville County Square, Council Chambers

■ Sept. 12, Greenville Tech, Greer Campus, rooms 120-124

■ Sept. 17, Fork Shoals Elementary School

■ Sept. 19, Furman University, Townes Auditorium

■ Sept. 24, Greenville Tech, Brashier Campus, Simpsonville, Bldg. 201, Room 124

■ Sept. 26, Rolling Green Village, 1 Hoke Smith Blvd., Greenville, activity room

plan to attend at least four of the six meetings."

Eldridge said that when particular county sites are tapped for clear-cutting and development, their special-place importance is usually

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not brought out in the beginning. By the time residents complain that the land has old growth oaks, wetlands, streams or water fowl habitats, it is too late to stop the development.

"There are a lot of historically important places that aren't commonly known except by the people who live in that community," Eldridge said. "And that's why we're having these meetings — to get an inventory of these special places in the county that the community as a whole thinks would be better off to preserve."

A \$22,500 federal grant will go

toward brochures and printing costs to help get the project started. No properties have been singled out yet as potential conservation sites.

But Eldridge said the growth rate of Greenville County — 16 people and nine acres per day — is the main reason for wanting to preserve certain areas from the county's rapid development.

"We want to stress that any conservation program will be geared to property owners who voluntarily pursue conservation efforts," Eldridge said. "And if we could identify certain places in advance, we could possibly protect them from being developed if that's what the communities want."