

Land protected against future development

By Doug Staley
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The mature hardwood forests and rural farmland along Hen Coop Creek in southeastern Anderson County are a haven for deer, wild turkey and quail.

And Don King and his family want it to stay that way for generations to come.

That's why Mr. King, along with his brother Mark and mother Nancy Masters, recently became the first property owners in Anderson County to participate in Upstate Forever's land conservation program.

"It's been in the family for over 100 years and we as family members feel like it's one of the best things we can leave for the future," Mr. King said. "It's just something that we felt was real important."

The mission of the non-profit land trust is to establish agreements with private landowners to preserve rural farmland, said Dana Leavitt, director of Upstate Forever.

In 2006, Upstate Forever signed 15 land-protection agreements covering more than 3,005 acres. The organization now has 39 agreements protecting about 8,000 acres throughout the Upstate.

"We can draw up a conversation agreement that allows the landowner to keep it in perpetuity," Mr. Leavitt said. "If they have a piece of property that's special to them, they know even if they sell it in the future it will be preserved."

In addition to protecting land from commercial and residential development, Mr. Leavitt said land conservation also is appealing because of the tax advantages it offers.

Mr. Leavitt said the Kings and Mrs. Masters wanted to permanently protect the hardwood forest on their 218-acre tract, but will continue to plant and harvest pine trees on the remainder of the property.

"We meet with the landowners and we design an agreement that's unique to them and their property," Mr. Leavitt said. "We will visit the property once a year to make sure the spirit of the land use is continuing."

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