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Upstate rallies Saturday bring attention to climate
Part of national Step It Up campaign

Published: Thursday, April 12, 2007 - 9:18 am

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Upstate residents will gather at Clemson and Furman universities Saturday for rallies to show concern over global warming.

Both events are free and open to the public as part of a national Step It Up campaign.

More than 1,300 rallies are planned across the nation Saturday, said May Boeve, a national co-coordinator for the day of grassroots actions.

The nationwide actions are designed to "call on Congress to cut carbon emissions by 80 percent by 2050," Boeve said.

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The point is to demonstrate that people are concerned about the environment, said Les Grady, professor emeritus in Clemson University's School of the Environment, who chaired the steering committee for the Clemson event.

"We'd like to see people of all ages turn out to show that together we can slow global warming. We want to make this as dramatic as possible," Grady said.

Locally, global warming impacts concerns including air and water quality and there are things private individuals can do, said James Wilkins, Environmental Sustainability Intern for Furman University, who organized activities planned there.

"Top scientists in the country and the world are showing more and more that this is going to be a huge problem," Wilkins said.

"The federal government has ignored this issue," Wilkins said. "The United States is the number one contributor in the world to carbon dioxide in the atmosphere."

The Furman rally is planned at Furman Lake from noon until 4 p.m., and includes live entertainment, educational activities, prizes and fun for the whole family, Wilkins said.

People are asked to bring banners and signs.

There will be a cook out with free food as long as supplies last on a first come first served basis, Wilkins said.

The Clemson rally is at 1 p.m. on the plaza between R.M. Cooper Library and Strom Thurmond Institute.

Participants will spell out CO₂ with a downward-pointing arrow to show their support of action to slow the onset of global warming and a photograph will be taken from the library roof to send to legislators, along with messages and a petition urging them to support legislation to reduce carbon dioxide emission.

Brad Wyche, executive director of Upstate Forever; Alan Elzerman, director of the School of the Environment at Clemson; Steve Johnson of the Green Sanctuary Committee and Laura Ceva, co-president of Students for Environmental Awareness at Clemson, will speak at the Clemson rally.

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