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Donor offers \$300,000 for Stumphouse Mountain fund in Oconee County

Plans to match \$1 for every \$2 contributed

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Originally published 05:50 p.m., July 12, 2007
Updated 09:38 p.m., July 12, 2007

Save Stumphouse Mountain

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WALHALLA, SC — The Nature Conservancy, needing \$1.4 million to complete funding for a project that would protect nearly 1,000 acres on Stumphouse Mountain, including Issaqueena Falls, received \$300,000 in a challenge.

The anonymous donor will match with \$1 every \$2 The Nature Conservancy raises to protect the mountain and historic waterfall, said Kristen Austin, a spokeswoman for The Nature Conservancy in South Carolina.

The gift also is contingent on the City of Walhalla entering into a conservation easement to protect its

nearly 440 acres of watershed property on the mountain, Ms. Austin said.

On June 20, the South Carolina Conservation Bank board approved \$1.2 million for Upstate Forever, a Greenville-based conservation group, to purchase a conservation easement from Walhalla for its property adjacent to Stumphouse Tunnel and Issaqueena Falls Park. The city operates the park.

The Nature Conservancy has entered a contract with the owners of an additional 511 acres next to the Walhalla property for a Heritage Preserve. The privately owned property includes Issaqueena Falls that is leased to Walhalla as part of the park.

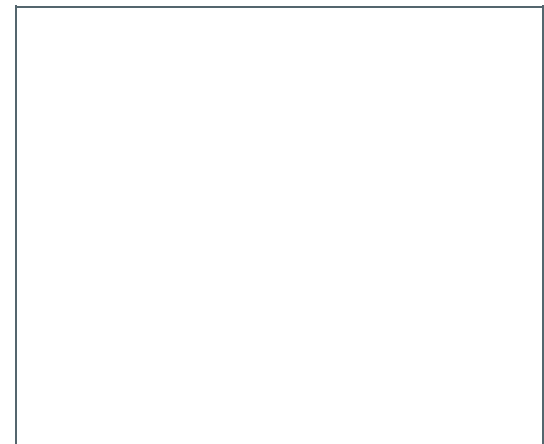
Clemson University will continue to own Stumphouse Tunnel, which is also leased to the city for the park. The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources has committed \$1.5 million for the Heritage Preserve and the Graham Foundation in Greenville has donated \$180,000.

Frank Holleman, an Oconee County native and Greenville attorney who has worked with the conservation organizations in developing the nearly 1,000-acre project, said Thursday progress has been made.

"If we succeed in matching that \$300,000 with \$600,000 then we would be within \$500,000 of our goal," he said. "Right now it is my understanding we need to raise about \$820,000. We have made a lot of progress in three weeks."

Mr. Holleman said that not all donations have been high dollar.

"Individuals from all over the area are interested in the project," Mr. Holleman said. "One lady sent \$5 because that's what she could afford. A man in a rest home; his mind is sharp, but he



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can't get around called and wanted to contribute something to save the mountain. And someone whose ancestors helped originally survey the area wanted to contribute."

Eddie Martin of Walhalla, who owns Oconee Farm and Garden on College Street, has set up a contribution point in his business behind Blue Ridge Bank.

"A few people have stopped by and talked about the Stumphouse project," Mr. Martin said. "We will accept donations and turn them over to The Nature Conservancy. The money goes right straight to the project."

The area to be protected includes the falls, views of the Blue Ridge Mountains from S.C. 28, two of the three tunnels blasted into the mountain prior to the Civil War, the old railroad bed and sites revered by the Cherokees.

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