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If you've ever gazed at the mountain, consider saving it

July 14, 2007, 12:00 a.m. EST

submitted

Some things are just worth preserving.

Stumphouse Mountain, a portion of which was in the cross hairs of private development interests just a few months ago, is one of those things.

It's time for as-yet-uninvolved public and private interests to step up and see that it happens.

The Nature Conservancy needs to raise an additional \$1.42 million by August 29 to make sure that the historic and nature-laden tract of land adjacent to the City of Walhalla's 440-acre watershed is also preserved for public use.

The South Carolina Conservation Bank Board has done its part by awarding Upstate Forever \$1.227 million to purchase a conservation easement from Walhalla to protect the watershed property. The Conservancy has entered into a contract to purchase an adjoining 511 acres, which would become a State Heritage Preserve.

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources has committed \$1.5 million toward the purchase of that property, and the Graham Foundation in Greenville has donated \$180,000. That leaves the remaining \$1.42 million up to us.

This week, an anonymous donor came forward and agreed to give \$1 for every \$2 the Conservancy raises, up to \$300,000. It is a generous offer that simply cannot be squandered. The potential \$900,000 this grant challenge could produce would put the Conservancy within striking distance of its August 29 goal.

The additional land in question includes Issaqueena Falls, three tunnels built on the mountain prior to the Civil War and natural forests. The project area is near the Stumphouse Mountain Tunnel now owned by Clemson University.

If everyone who has ever set foot on the Stumphouse Mountain property or viewed the beauty of Issaqueena Falls donated a few dollars, the matching grant would be fully realized and the public would forever preserve these incomparable natural resources for public enjoyment.

Causes are a dime a dozen these days, but few of them stand majestically in our backyard. This one does. We challenge everyone to take a look toward the mountain and then donate a few dollars to preserve that irreplaceable view.

To make a contribution to the Stumphouse Mountain and Issaqueena Falls Project, contact: The Nature Conservancy P.O. Box 5475 Columbia, SC 29250 or call (803) 254-9049 ext. 12.

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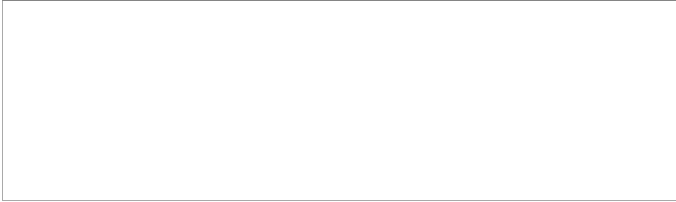
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