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## Pickens land sold for nature preserve

### Nature Conservancy buys 560-acre Nine Times Reserve

*By Terry Cregar*  
**STAFF WRITER**

The Nature Conservancy has bought a 560-acre tract of wooded land in northern Pickens County that it plans to convert into a nature preserve.

The conservancy's South Carolina chapter purchased the property from Upstate Forever, which acquired the land late last year from Crescent Resources, the real estate arm of Duke Energy.

Known as the Nine Times Reserve, the 560-acre tract is just south of State 11 between Holly Springs and Sunset. It is part of a 2,208-acre tract that Upstate Forever has a two-year option to purchase from Crescent.

Pickens County leaders got together last year to save the property after Crescent announced it was for sale.

According to a press statement from the Conservancy, the land includes five mountains and supports seven distinct forest types and is home to an abundance of fish and wildlife, including reptiles, amphibians and black bears.

A botanical survey revealed 134 native wildflower species and a "high concentration" of the peregrine falcon that was recently removed from the endangered species list.

The Little Eastatoe River and Nine Times Creek flow through the tract, which is known both as the Nine Times tract and Big Rock Mountain.

Dana Leavitt, land trust director of Upstate Forever, has called the property the second-most ecologically significant property in South Carolina, in terms of the presence of rare and endangered plants.

Mark Robinson, executive director of The Nature Conservancy of South Carolina, said the Conservancy received a \$1.5 million grant from the South Carolina Conservation Bank that went toward the purchase of the 560 acres, along with a "very generous gift" from Fred and Alice Stanback, and other contributions from individuals and foundations.

Although the land will be open to hunting this fall, the Conservancy will be working to prepare it for additional public use and plans to officially open the preserve next spring.