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News - News Extras
Monday, Nov. 17, 2008

# The Green 15

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Leading S.C. conservationists who are working to keep the state green. Some have fought for years for tighter pollution control laws to protect swamps, forests, mountains and farmland from destruction.

JOHN FRAMPTON

Director of the S.C. Department of Natural Resources since 2003. Well-connected with conservation land trusts and federal agencies, Frampton, 60, has excelled at finding money to protect vast acreages across South Carolina. He was key in getting state protection for the 33,000-acre Jocassee Gorges mountain preserve in the late 1990s and a major player in creating the 160,000-acre ACE Basin Lowcountry preserve in the late 1980s. More recently, his agency has acquired major tracts of land, such as the 26,000-acre Woodbury forest near the Great Pee Dee and Little Pee Dee rivers.

DAVID SHI

President of Furman University for 14 years, Shi, 57, is the driving force behind a \$1 million-plus experimental, on-campus solar house with the latest in energy-saving technology, construction and architectural features. In the next four years, Furman intends to spend \$30 million reducing its carbon footprint and will require all students to take a course to heighten awareness of humans' relation to the environment.



Top row, left to right: John Frampton, David Shi, Dana Beach and Mildred Myers. Bottom row, left to right: Brad Wyche, Jimmy Chandler, Bob Guild and Ann Timberlake. - The State /The State

DANA BEACH

Beach, 53, with a two-person staff and a \$90,000 annual budget, began the Coastal Conservation League in 1989 to help preserve coastal resources. Today, it is the state's most influential environmental group, with a 30-person staff and a \$3.5 million budget. It pushes to control sprawl (particularly in the Charleston area), to save natural areas from development and to block mega hog farms. These days, the league is fighting the expansion of the state port in North Charleston, saying it will bring too much water and air pollution.

FRANCES CLOSE

As its chief financial supporter in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, Close helped the Energy Research Foundation file lawsuits against the Savannah River Plant (now Savannah River Site) - a secretive federal nuclear weapons facility that stores millions of gallons of radioactive waste. The group forced Savannah River to share information with the public and

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to comply with some environmental laws. Close, 60 and a resident of Columbia, also is a co-founder of the S.C. Environmental Law Project, which for years has sued state and federal agencies in 40 of 46 counties on numerous environmental issues.

#### MILDRED MYERS

Myers, a 61-year-old grandmother, is a community activist and founder of the grass-roots group, S.C. Environment Watch. She has been active in environmental causes since fighting efforts to locate a smelly chicken farm in her Lower Richland community in the early 1990s. Since then, she has helped other rural communities fight development plans they thought threatened the environment or the rural nature of their neighborhoods.

#### TOMMY WYCHE AND BRAD WYCHE

This father-son partnership for years has led the way in the Upstate with major environmental initiatives.

Tommy Wyche. In 1973, Wyche, now 82, formed the Naturaland Trust, one of the first land conservation trusts in South Carolina. The nonprofit group has been involved in protecting much of South Carolina's mountains, a fragile and ecologically rare slice of the southern Appalachians. Wyche was the driving force behind protection of the Mountain Bridge Wilderness north of Greenville and a key behind-the-scenes player in saving the 33,000-acre Jocassee Gorges. His photos have raised awareness of the area's beauty.

Brad Wyche, 58, is a former board chairman of the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control and founder and executive director of Upstate Forever. The nonprofit group, which works to protect the land, air and water in nine S.C. counties, has helped broker more than 50 protection agreements for more than 10,000 acres. The group recently filed its first legal action against DHEC, seeking to force it to analyze more deeply the potential harmful effects of a proposed mountain golf course near a river. "If this case goes all the way, we can expect to spend more than \$50,000," Wyche said. Upstate Forever has about 20 full-time and part-time staffers and more than 3,000 members.

#### HENRY MCMASTER

State attorney general since 2003, McMaster, 61, has pushed for environmental protection since his election. He persuaded legislators to pass a law allowing him to use the state grand jury to investigate major environmental crimes. His office reviews requests to develop marsh islands to see if they are owned by the state, is fighting North Carolina to protect S.C. water rights, and scolded DHEC last year for withholding key pollution data from lawmakers and the public about the Chem-Nuclear landfill in Barnwell County.

#### THE BIG THREE

Jimmy Chandler of Pawleys Island, Bob Guild of Columbia, and Gary Poliakoff of Spartanburg are lawyers who have won significant legal victories that forced DHEC to better protect the environment or made polluters reduce waste.


Jimmy Chandler. For more than 25 years, Chandler, 58, has been a lead attorney in major environmental battles over coastal development and toxic waste disposal. Along with Guild and two state agency lawyers, Chandler won a 15-year legal fight that forced the powerful Laidlaw/Safety Kleen corporation to close its hazardous waste landfill on Lake Marion in Sumter County. He also won a landmark case that prevented conversion of salt marshes to open water in Georgetown County. And he recently won a verdict that reinforces the public's right to sue DHEC for failure to enforce state environmental laws.

Gary Poliakoff, 57, focuses on battles over landfills and polluters whose contamination has hurt people's health or damaged property values. One of his biggest victories came in 2006 when, representing residents, he helped persuade Spartanburg County Council to deny permission to Waste Management Inc. to build a mega-landfill in that county. His victory came over DHEC objections. "DHEC has never sided with me," Poliakoff said.

Bob Guild represents residents in fights against landfills and factory-style poultry and hog farms as well as a host of other issues. Along with Chandler, he helped fight DHEC in the 1990s and finally succeeded in closing the Laidlaw landfill in Sumter County. Guild, 59, also is a legal expert on nuclear waste issues and has fought for years to force tighter disposal practices at the Chem-Nuclear landfill. His work representing residents fighting a mega hog farm near Darlington five years ago ultimately stopped a project DHEC had approved.

#### PHIL LEVENTIS

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A state senator from Sumter, Leventis for years has been the leading voice for conservation and the environment in the state Legislature. The Columbia native has criticized DHEC for failing to check the backgrounds of companies that locate in South Carolina. Leventis, 63, also was an advocate for citizens who fought to close the Laidlaw hazardous waste landfill and has been a leader in restricting mega hog farms. He has championed environmental protection for decades, even when it hurt him politically.

ANN TIMBERLAKE

In the 1970s, Timberlake worked to preserve what is now Congaree National Park. Today, she is director of the Conservation Voters of South Carolina, a frequent lobbying presence at the Legislature. Each year, Timberlake coordinates a common agenda among environmental groups. When the groups agree on priorities, it becomes harder for the General Assembly to ignore their concerns, including land conservation and energy efficiency. Timberlake, 61, is married to Ben Gregg, director of the S.C. Wildlife Federation who is also an outspoken conservationist.

CHARLES LANE AND HUGH LANE JR.

The Charleston brothers and their father were instrumental in helping set aside land for the ACE Basin nature preserve. Avid duck hunters, they have been active in conservation for years. Charles Lane, 54, is chairman of the S.C. Conservation Bank board. He was recently recognized by Field and Stream magazine as a 2008 "Conservation Hero." Hugh Lane Jr., 60, has been active in conservation, having served on the Lowcountry Open Land Trust Board and the Charleston County Greenbelt Bank Board.

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my2cents wrote on 11/18/2008 02:49:59 PM:  
HAHA Dana Beach and CCL are backing massive development on Johns Island! He is in support of the Angel Oak Development. 630 apartments/condos and 80,000 square feet of commerical space. This will put 8,420 more vehicular traffic trips on Bohicket Rd (a SC scenic road). According to the traffic study done by SRS Engineering, it will mean 3 intersections on Bohicket will be created that will be graded an "F" from the start! There are 3 PUDs coming up for vote on 11-19 on Johns Island. They will cover 138 or so acres of development. Where are you Mr. Beach and CCL?

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