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## News

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### Groups pushing campaign to save local waterways

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A new campaign being pushed by Upstate Forever and the Coastal Conservation League is clear in its assertion, right down to the title of the campaign: "Water Matters."

Upstate Forever clean air and water program co-director John Tynan, Coastal Conservation League governmental relations associate Patrick Moore and Upstate Forever rural waters project associate Chris Starker were in Greenwood and other parts of the Upstate to pitch the campaign, which seeks to reinforce the need for legislation to address water quality and quantity concerns.

"We are a conservation group and we work on water quality and quantity issues across the whole Upstate region, from Oconee, Abbeville and Greenwood, all the way over to Spartanburg, Cherokee, Union," Tynan said. "We cover 10 counties. Really, our effort is to engage citizens in the decision making processes that preserve and restore our water quality and quantity."

Tynan said Upstate Forever and the Coastal Conservation League are collaborating on the Water Matters campaign, which is part of the Conservation Common Agenda.

Tynan touched on this year's key water quality issue.

"There is a bill that (S.C. Rep) Mike Pitts introduced last year that made it all the way through the House, so now it is sitting in front of the Senate, that would require wastewater utilities that have 1,000 gallons or more spill of wastewater to communicate directly to the public through print media, radio or television within 12 hours," Tynan said. "Right now, that notice only goes to DHEC and sometimes it's lost in an e-mail or buried on their Web site or gets stuck in a file drawer and the public really never hears about it."

Tynan said a companion bill could be introduced that would dictate that anytime there is a consistent violator — which would be a wastewater facility that has three 1,000 gallon spills or more in a year — that facility would be required to have an audit and adhere to the recommendations of that audit.

On the water quantity front, Tynan said a potential surface water withdrawal permitting bill is in the works.

"The gist of it is that right now you can stick a straw in a river or lake in South Carolina and suck out as much of it as you want — no limits, no nothing," he said. "What this (bill) would do is establish a permitting system so that we know how much is being pulled out, who's pulling it out and you would need a permit if you are pulling out three million gallons or more per month. It also establishes a minimum flow that has to remain in a river in order for a river to be a river."

Moore said the surface water withdrawal permitting bill currently is in front of state Sen. Danny Verdin's senate agriculture and natural resource committee.

"He is in favor of the concept and has been working on it for a long time. Of course, the barriers to getting anything done down there right now are impeachment and the budget situation. Basically, we need to make enough noise and get enough interest from constituents to make sure that it is impossible to not pay attention to it."

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