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Upstate Forever unveils 6 'special places' to preserve

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The North Tyger River is a special place, where river birch and sycamore trees grow around mossy boulders and sandy banks. Flowing water slips over river rocks, and nature reigns as far as the eye can see.



This "special place" at the North Tyger River and Ferguson Creek is one of six identified by Upstate Forever in a just-released inventory of Spartanburg County's most ecologically sensitive lands. Other conservation focus areas include Landrum and Campobello; north of Pacolet; Croft and southeast of Glenn Springs; Tyger River; and Enoree. Combined, the focus areas span 67,140 acres.

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Local environmentalists and community members joined Upstate Forever leaders for a hike Tuesday along the Tyger River. Shelley Robbins, at right, leads the hike.

The report was released Tuesday on Tyger River Foundation property along Walnut Grove Road, where a public access area is expected to open within the next year. Local environmentalists and community members joined Upstate Forever leaders on a short hike along the river to experience an environment rich in natural resources.

Upstate Forever is a nonprofit organization that, according to its Web site, promotes "sensible growth and the protection of special places in the Upstate."

"This is an important report that we hope will become an essential resource for local government and business leaders as they plan for the inevitable continued growth and development of Spartanburg County," said Angela Viney, director of the Spartanburg office of Upstate Forever. "This report also should serve to highlight for the public Spartanburg County's pristine, unprotected, environmentally sensitive lands."

Until the recent economic downturn, 23 acres of land in Spartanburg County were being developed each day, according to the report. For every 10 percent the population increased, land development increased by 50 percent. The inventory calls for purposeful planning for growth and development while protecting these special places that showcase Spartanburg's natural history.

County Councilwoman Jane Hall, who attended the unveiling, said the county must find a balance between protecting natural resources and encouraging industry and economic development.

"South Spartanburg is a very special place to me," said Hall, who represents the southern portion of the county where part of the Tyger River flows. "It has natural resources we want to capitalize on and open it up to the public so everyone can enjoy this."

The special places were identified using a mathematical analysis of five factors: vegetative land cover, species richness, stream systems, rare plants and population

He doesn't offer his patients one kind of treatment.

The Palmetto Bank
Founded 1906

density. Areas with the most overlap in these categories were found to have the most intact biological and historical resources.

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Some of the areas, like Croft, include public, protected spaces, but many are at least partially on private lands.

Shelley Robbins, special projects coordinator for Upstate Forever, pointed out that many of these places will be gone in 20 years if growth continues at its recent rate. That's why, she said, the inventory should be used as a reference tool in future land-use planning decisions.

"You can't adore or protect something you don't even know is there," Robbins said. "We have this and lots more areas that people don't realize are here."

The full report is available on Upstate Forever's Web site, www.upstateforever.org.