

Oconee County environmental activist wins National Public Radio award

By Ray Chandler

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WALHALLA — A National Public Radio program has honored a Walhalla environmental activist who helped lead the fight to save Stumphouse Mountain and the surrounding lands from development.

Eddie Martin, conservationist and noted local musician, has been named a recipient of the E-chievement Award, an award recognizing those making a positive contribution to their communities.

Martin's award was given for his work in conservation and for the efforts concerning the Stumphouse Mountain preservation in particular.

The award is presented by e-Town, a program broadcast nationwide on National Public Radio that features music and focuses on raising environmental and social awareness.

"I'm very humbled every time I'm fortunate enough to be associated with an award of this type," Martin said Thursday. "This one not only recognizes the former work I have participated in but also shows that we are carrying forward and continue to make a statement for the environment."

In 2007, Martin was a principal figure in a grassroots effort to preserve lands around Stumphouse Mountain above Walhalla from development.

The local push was joined by the Nature Conservancy, Upstate Forever, Naturaland Trust, the Chattooga Conservancy and Oconee Preservation Unlimited Stewardship Trust.

In the end, the city of Walhalla, which owns the 440-acre property as a watershed, received over \$1.2 million from the South Carolina Conservation Bank and placed a conservation easement on the land, to be held in perpetuity by Upstate Forever.

Currently, Martin is involved in an effort to establish a conservation bank in Oconee County and foster environmental and ecological studies in county schools.

A main means for promoting his causes, Martin says, is through music. He and his band, Conservation Theory, play a mixture of Americana, bluegrass and acoustic blues, with stories and plugs for preservation and environmental sustainability.

Martin can be reached at oconeefarmgarden@bellsouth.net or (864) 557-6168.