

Upstate Update

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Upstate Forever's Monthly Bulletin on
Important Issues and Events in the Upstate

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On May 25, 2000, we published our first Upstate Update, and now we proudly release issue number 100! All of our Upstate Updates are posted on our website, are full of useful information on important issues in our region, and are easily searchable. Please check them out!

1. Stimulus Legislation: What It Means for the Upstate

The \$787 billion federal stimulus is a reality. What does it mean for conservation, land use, and the Upstate? Here are some highlights:

- **Energy Efficiency.** Stimulus funds aimed at improving residential energy-efficiency provide a three-fold benefit: conserving resources and improving our environment; creating green-sector jobs; and reducing the financial burden on homeowners, enabling more of them to remain in their homes. South Carolina will receive nearly \$59 million for a weatherization program for households at or below 200% of poverty level. As a recent article in *The Wall Street Journal* notes, “[S]tudies say U.S. homes commonly waste 30% of the energy they use. About one-third of that energy loss could be stopped by such simple moves as caulking and insulating.” Another \$50 million is slated for South Carolina’s State Energy Program, which may be used to make government buildings more energy-efficient, to fund home energy audits and renewable energy projects, or for other initiatives.

Expanded tax credits for home improvements are something nearly every homeowner can take advantage of. Qualifying exterior doors, windows, insulation, roofs, air conditioners, heat pumps, and other home improvements are eligible for a federal income tax credit equal to 30% of the cost. The maximum total credit for all these items is \$1,500 for the two-year period ending December 31, 2010. Solar water heaters, photovoltaic systems, geothermal heat pumps, and wind energy systems are not subject to the \$1,500 cap and qualify for the 30% tax credit through 2016. For complete information on qualifying improvements and products, visit www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=products.pr_tax_credits#s1.

- **Transportation.** The stimulus includes \$463 million for roads and related infrastructure – \$150 million for locally-planned projects, the rest on statewide projects. On February 19, the SCDOT Commission approved the spending of \$200 million of those funds on highway resurfacing (\$100 million, with projects in all 10 Upstate counties), bridge replacement (\$37.5 million, including one Upstate project, the Highway 67 bridge over Durbin Creek), interstate maintenance (\$50 million, with none allocated for the Upstate, but future rounds of funding are expected for I-85 and I-

Promoting sensible growth and protecting special places in the Upstate

385), and safety improvements (\$12.5 million, including projects in Anderson, Cherokee, Laurens, and Spartanburg Counties). Another \$14 million will be allocated for sidewalk enhancement and construction. For details of the plans, see www.dot.state.sc.us/inside/stimulus.shtml. The good news is that South Carolina is following a “fix it first” policy of maintaining existing roads and bridges before constructing new projects. We applaud DOT Commission Chairman Hugh Atkins of Spartanburg who was quoted in *GSA Business Daily* on January 16 saying, “My main goal is to maintain first the highways we already have.”

Transportation, of course, is about more than automobiles. The stimulus includes \$41 million for transit in South Carolina, much of which will likely be used for upgrading transit facilities and buses. Railroads, potentially the most efficient form of transportation, will get a boost with \$8 billion allocated for the development of high-speed rail lines in the country. The Southeast High-Speed Rail Corridor, which includes the route between Charlotte, Spartanburg, Greenville, and Atlanta, is one of ten potential high-speed rail corridors designated by the Federal Railroad Administration in line for this funding. The stimulus bill also includes \$1.3 billion for our nation’s long-neglected passenger rail agency, Amtrak, which has a line running through the Upstate.

At the “Read the Stimulus” website, users can easily search the final text of the bill: www.readthestimulus.org. More information about the federal government’s recovery efforts can be found at www.recovery.gov.

2. Upstate Forever Submits Recommendations on Greenville County Comprehensive Plan

Upstate Forever is actively involved in comprehensive planning initiatives throughout our region. Greenville County has compiled the goals and objectives developed by its six theme committees, on which many *Upstate Forever* members and staff participated, and is now undertaking a series of community meetings to discuss the committees’ reports. Visit www.imaginegreenville.com/community_meetings.asp for the schedule. We recently submitted a detailed memo to Greenville County Council and the Greenville County Planning Commission setting forth numerous recommendations to be included in the final plan.

The memo encapsulates many of the principles and policies that *Upstate Forever* advocates for not just in Greenville, but for all of our region’s counties. We urge Greenville County to adopt the following:

- 1 to 1 growth ratio (ratio of percentage increase in developed land to percentage of increase in population) as its basic guiding policy (see 2008 Strom Thurmond Institute Growth Projection Study and a related article in the Spring 2008 *Upstate Advocate*).
- Infrastructure and service boundary.
- Transfer of development rights program.
- County conservation bank.
- Traditional neighborhood design ordinance.
- Mandatory open space design ordinance.
- Transect model of zoning.
- Other policies and initiatives relating to transportation and roadways; school capacity and siting; affordable housing; parks, greenways, and open space; energy-efficiency; regionalism; landscaping and tree cover; and air quality.

You can read the memo in its entirety at www.upstateforever.org. Please contact your representatives on County Council to express your support for our recommendations. For Council members’ contact information, go to www.greenvillecounty.org/County_Council/.

3. New Park at Cedar Shoals Funded After 12-Year Wait

Many years of frustrating delay came to an end with the public acquisition of the spectacular Cedar Shoals property along the Reedy River in southern Greenville County.

The story begins on June 26, 1996, when the interstate pipeline that crosses the Reedy River near the Highway 417 bridge ruptured. Nearly 1 million gallons of diesel oil poured into the river, killing over 35,000 fish and causing extensive environmental damage for 34 miles downstream. It was the worst oil spill in South Carolina history and the fifth worst inland oil spill in the nation's history.

In February, 1998, the State's claims against Colonial Pipeline Company, the owner of the line, were settled for \$6.65 million, the largest settlement of an environmental case in South Carolina. Attorney General Charlie Condon came to Greenville City Hall and proudly announced that the amount received in the settlement would be used to benefit the Reedy River. But a few days later, he reversed his position and said that the amount would be deposited in the State's General Fund. Fortunately, Friends of the Reedy River was there to strongly and swiftly oppose the Attorney General's position, eventually convincing the General Assembly to enact a law directing that the funds be used to directly benefit the river.

The State's "natural resource trustees" (the Governor, the Department of Health and Environmental Control, and the Department of Natural Resources) approved a "Reedy River Restoration Plan" directing how the settlement funds would be spent. The plan included water quality studies, improved river access, environmental education, acquiring Lake Conestee, and \$3 million to protect lands along the river below the spill site. For more information about the State restoration plan, see www.upstateforever.org/upstateupdate/UpstateUpdate35.pdf. For more information about the settlement of the federal government's civil and criminal claims against Colonial Pipeline, see www.upstateforever.org/upstateupdate/UpstateUpdate43.pdf. Regrettably, under federal law, none of the funds recovered by the United States from Colonial could be used to benefit the river.

In 2000, approximately \$200,000 of the settlement fund was used to acquire the original bed of Lake Conestee, the first step of the amazing Lake Conestee Nature Park project. But for the next nine years, state and local agencies and elected representatives in Greenville and Laurens Counties argued endlessly over how to spend the \$3 million in the land protection fund. Finally, earlier this year, the impasse was resolved through the leadership of Rep. Eric Beddingfield of Greenville County, Rep. Mike Pitts of Laurens County, and Greenville County Council member Fred Payne. The fund, along with the interest earned during the years of delay, will be divided equally between the two counties, which will take the lead in proposing specific projects for approval by the State's natural resource trustees.

The Greenville County Recreation District (GCRD) wasted no time in proposing a spectacular project for its share of the funds—the acquisition of approximately 100 acres surrounding the breathtaking Cedar Shoals on the Reedy and the establishment of a passive nature park for public use and enjoyment, which should be completed in the spring of 2010. The activities will include, among many others, being able to enjoy a four-hour canoe or kayak trip from an access point at New Harrison Bride Road to Cedar Shoals. For more information about the GCRD's plans, see this article in *The Greenville News*: www.greenvilleonline.com/article/20090124/NEWS01/901240325/1068.

Special kudos to the following for making this wonderful park a reality: Friends of Reedy River, *Upstate Forever* Land Trust Director Dana Leavitt, Rep. Beddingfield, Rep. Pitts, Greenville County Council member Payne, GCRD Executive Director Gene Smith, and Barry Beasley of DNR.

4. Hot Topic: Landfills

Back in 2004, when *Upstate Forever* coordinated the successful campaign against a proposed mega-landfill in Spartanburg County, we saw that the state's regulations for determining the need for and size of new and expanded landfills were seriously flawed. Along with many other organizations and citizens in South Carolina, we asked DHEC to address and correct these flaws. In August 2008, the DHEC Board acknowledged the deficiencies in the state regulations and appointed a task force to study the issues and make recommendations. *Upstate Forever* staff member Shelley Robbins serves on this task force.

Meanwhile, a bill is pending in the General Assembly (S.324) to impose a two-year moratorium on new and expanded landfill projects in the State while the task force completes its work. This legislation is part of the Common Agenda agreed upon by more than two dozen South Carolina conservation organizations. On March 17, Shelley testified at a hearing on the bill before a subcommittee of the Senate Medical Affairs Committee, and two days later the full Committee unanimously approved the legislation. Hopefully, the Senate and the House will approve the bill and send it to the Governor next month.

Several landfill proposals are currently in the news across South Carolina. In the Upstate, a construction and demolition (C&D) landfill proposed for Hamlin Road in Anderson County has divided the County Council and is testing the county's Zoning Enabling Ordinance and the will of county government to enforce its own ordinances. A citizens group in Laurens County continues to oppose a C&D landfill near Gray Court. In Cherokee County, Waste Management Inc. is seeking an amendment to the County's Solid Waste Management Plan to allow for the replacement of the aging Palmetto Landfill (in Spartanburg County) with a new facility that would also include single-stream recycling and C&D recycling facilities.

5. Upstate Forever Releases LID Recommendations Report

Stormwater runoff is one of the main causes of water quality impairment in the Upstate. The amount of stormwater that runs off a site is directly proportional to the amount of impervious surfaces—the more paving, the more runoff. Transportation-related infrastructure (streets, driveways, parking lots, sidewalks, etc.) creates approximately 60-70% of the impervious surfaces in the built environment. So in 2006, *Upstate Forever* released a "pavement audit" that summarized all of the pavement ordinances that guide the creation of these surfaces in new developments in Greenville and Pickens Counties. The audit also made recommendations on how these regulations should be changed to reduce the amount of non-essential impervious surfaces created in new developments and to lower the cost of development.

In 2007, *Upstate Forever* followed up on the audit by convening the Greenville County Low Impact Development (LID) Roundtable—comprised of engineers, developers, emergency officials, and city and county representatives—to discuss the recommendations made in the pavement audit and determine how each could be applied in Greenville County and its municipalities. The group met over an eight-month period and refined the recommendations to be appropriate for specific local conditions. *Upstate Forever's* Clean Air and Water Program has now released a report with the results of the Roundtable's work.

Currently, the path of least resistance (i.e., quicker permitting) for developers is high impact development that relies on directing all stormwater runoff into pipe systems and then managing it using end-of-pipe solutions, such as detention ponds. This system, however, does not provide adequate treatment of stormwater runoff and results in further degradation of water quality. The report's recommendations would add flexibility to local rules to allow developers the option of easily using different methods that will reduce the amount, and improve the quality, of stormwater runoff.

The complete LID Recommendations Report for Greenville County is available at www.upstateforever.org. The recommendations include narrowing street widths, reducing parking minimums, reducing cul-de-sac radii, and encouraging or requiring functional landscaping to slow, absorb, and filter stormwater in parking lots. In our memo on the comprehensive plan (see item 2 above), we urge Greenville County Council to adopt these recommendations.

6. Build Green – Spring Into an EarthCraft House

Thinking about building a new house? With this generous offer from [Meritus Signature Homes](#), your GREEN energy-efficient home will not only save you money but will benefit the Upstate region too. From now through April 30, Meritus will make a significant donation to **Upstate Forever** for every contract signed to build an energy-efficient [EarthCraft](#) home. For more information, contact Jeff, Andy or Bobby at (864) 888-1717.

7. Upstate Forever: Now on Two Wheels

You may be noticing more **Upstate Forever** staff members tooling around Greenville on bicycles, now that our loaner bike program is up and running. First, the Greenville County Sheriff's Office donated six used bicycles from its warehouse of unclaimed recovered property. [TTR Bikes](#) generously repaired and tuned up the bikes, which we park on a rack donated by Furman University. Scott McCrary of TTR Bikes provided us with a detailed (and entertaining!) training on urban bicycle safety; he also donated vests, lights, books, maintenance kits, and other supplies. We have established a new incentive program for staff members to commute to work by bike both at the Greenville office and the Spartanburg office, where cycling is already a popular mode of transportation and a bike rack has long been part of the décor. Thank you, TTR Bikes, Greenville County Sheriff's Office, and Furman!

And while we are handing out thank yous, we must recognize the generosity of member Martha Barron, who has stocked our Greenville office kitchen with dishes, cups, and other items gleaned from area thrift stores, enabling us to avoid using disposable products. She has also improved our indoor environment by donating potted plants. Thank you, Martha!

8. "Best of Upstate Forever" Now Available

Across all of **Upstate Forever's** programs, writing is at the heart of what we do. Our education and advocacy efforts for conservation, environmental protection, sustainable development and growth management are based on a careful study of facts and figures and conveyed by the written word. As part of our celebration of **Upstate Forever's** first decade of work, we put together a collection of some of the finest writing by our board, advisory council and staff members published in newspapers, magazines, and newsletters between 1998 and 2008. The publication was designed pro bono by **Upstate Forever** member Jennifer Kouyoumjian (www.sketchinfo.com) and is available at www.upstateforever.org/index_doc/090324BestOfUFWriting.pdf. Thank you, Jennifer, for donating your time and talents! We are proud to share this retrospective with our members and the general public.

9. Upcoming Upstate Forever Events

Saturday, April 25

Greer Earth Day Run

Downtown Greer, SC, 8:00 a.m.

Registration is now open for the Greer Earth Day Run, which will include a half-marathon, 5k race, and kids' fun run. The event, which will benefit **Upstate Forever**, endeavors to reduce the resource use of a typical road race event. There will be no race packets and consequently no trips required to pick up those packets. To register online, go to <http://gvltrackclub.clubexpress.com/>; bibs will be mailed to registrants. Or, sign up and purchase a race bib at Fleet Feet on Augusta Road in Greenville. For more information, email Flemming Josephsen at GEDDDirector@greenvilletrackclub.com.

Saturday, April 25

Lawnmower Exchange for Greenville and Spartanburg Counties

Suber Road Soccer Complex, 305 Suber Road, Greer, SC, 9:00 a.m. - noon

Mow down pollution! On average, a gasoline lawnmower produces as much air pollution in one

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hour as car does after driving for 200 miles. Trade in your gas-powered lawnmower and buy an electric one at a reduced cost and improve air quality on our area at this event for residents of Greenville and Spartanburg Counties. Other electric gardening equipment will be available as well. For full details, go to www.greenvillecounty.org/air_quality/pdf/lawnmower_exchange2009_details.pdf or contact Sandra Yudice in Greenville at (864) 467-7105 or Mary Lynn Eaddy in Spartanburg at (864) 595-5326.

Tuesday, April 28

Conservation Lobby Day 2009

South Carolina Statehouse, Columbia, SC, 11:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Join conservationists from across the state for this fun and educational annual event. There will be briefings about the year's accomplishments and challenges and a visit to the Statehouse to observe the legislative process and speak to your legislators about conservation issues. An optional evening celebration includes food, drink, music, and great company. Vans will leave from both Greenville and Spartanburg at 9:00 a.m. and return by 11:00 p.m. (an early return option will also be available). For more information, contact Nancy Fitzer at nfitzer@upstateforever.org or (864) 250-0500x30.

10. Quote of the Month

"The days where we're just building sprawl forever, those days are over. I think that Republicans, Democrats, everybody recognizes that that's not a smart way to design communities."

-- President Barack Obama, answering a question about transportation and infrastructure in the stimulus bill at a town hall meeting in Ft. Myers, Florida, 2/10/09

