

Upstate Update

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

In this Upstate Update:

1. Saluda River Named Nation's 6th Most Endangered River; *Upstate Forever* Launches "Saving Lake Greenwood" Campaign
2. Upstate Reality Check is a Resounding Success
3. Stormwater Ordinances in Greenville and Spartanburg Counties
4. Landfill Regulations at the Tipping Point
5. DHEC Board Refuses to Require Minimum Flow Release from Table Rock Reservoir
6. Spring Into a New EarthCraft Home
7. Upcoming *Upstate Forever* Events
8. Quote of the Month

1. Saluda River Named Nation's 6th Most Endangered River Upstate Forever Launches "Saving Lake Greenwood" Campaign

On April 7, American Rivers, a national river conservation organization, announced that the Saluda River has been named America's 6th Most Endangered River for 2009. On the same day, *Upstate Forever* launched its "Saving Lake Greenwood" campaign, drawing attention to a unique opportunity to improve the quality of the Saluda River and Lake Greenwood in the coming months. The two major sources of the lake are the Saluda and Reedy Rivers.

Upstate Forever's [Saving Lake Greenwood report](#) is the result of five years of intensive research by the Saluda-Reedy Watershed Consortium (SRWC), a broad-based coalition headed by *Upstate Forever* that includes universities, natural resource agencies, private businesses, and other conservation organizations. The report identifies two primary threats to the long-term health of Lake Greenwood: sediment from upstream development and phosphorus from wastewater discharges.

Together these pollutants can lead to substantial algae growth in Lake Greenwood, which in turn can result in substantial reductions in lakeshore property values and significant fish kills in the lake. We have already seen the effects of these pollutants. The lake has lost over 300 acres of open water and 2 billion gallons of water storage capacity due to sedimentation. In addition, portions of the lake are impaired for phosphorus, and others areas show the initial signs of phosphorus impairment. High phosphorus levels in the rivers and upper reaches of the lake resulted in the catastrophic algae bloom of 1999 that led to the creation of the SRWC.

Upstate Forever has been working to address sediment and erosion issues for some time in the upstream reaches of the watershed. In the last two years, we secured a Targeted Watershed Implementation Grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that will allow us to establish and pilot innovative, market-based mechanisms to encourage low-sediment, water-friendly development. In addition, we have been actively working with Upstate counties to revise and improve their stormwater and erosion control regulations and enforcement measures.

[American Rivers' Most Endangered Rivers report](#) highlights the fact that ten wastewater treatment plants are discharging unregulated amounts of phosphorous into the Saluda River, threatening the health of the river and lake as well as the quality of life of surrounding communities. In 2009 and 2010, eight of the wastewater treatment plants on the Saluda (and two on the Reedy not highlighted in the report) must renew their discharge permits. Collectively, these plants account for 80% of the wastewater discharges in the watershed. If the permits are renewed without phosphorus restrictions, these discharges could lead to the long-term degradation of the rivers and Lake Greenwood.

Promoting sensible growth and protecting special places in the Upstate

According to the S.C. Department of Natural Resources (DNR), wastewater discharges are the principal sources of phosphorus in the watershed. During dry years, when the rivers and lakes are most vulnerable to algae blooms, wastewater treatment plants on the Saluda River account for over 70% of the phosphorus that reaches Lake Greenwood. DNR has also shown that quick action is essential. Currently only a 25-50% reduction of phosphorus levels in Lake Greenwood is necessary to save it; but if we do not act soon, the necessary reductions could climb to 50-75%.

Therefore, *Upstate Forever* and American Rivers are calling on the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) to impose meaningful phosphorous limits on all wastewater treatment plant permits in the Saluda watershed in order to protect the health of the Saluda River, Lake Greenwood, and communities that depend on them. In addition, more stringent phosphorous limits on the two wastewater treatment plants on the Reedy River are needed to protect that river and the lake.

To read *Upstate Forever's* Saving Lake Greenwood report, visit www.upstateforever.org/newsviews_other/CAW_SavingLakeGreenwood.pdf. To view the Endangered Rivers report, visit [American Rivers' website](http://AmericanRivers.org) or www.upstateforever.org. If you would like to receive regular updates on our Saving Lake Greenwood campaign, contact Lisa Wickliffe at lwickliffe@upstateforever.org or (864) 250-0500 (ext. 28).

2. *Upstate Reality Check is a Resounding Success*

On April 8, hundreds of people from across the Upstate came to the Carolina First Center to participate in "Reality Check," a regional visioning and dialogue exercise created by the Urban Land Institute. Working in diverse groups of 10, the participants gathered around large-scale maps of the Upstate to discuss, debate and decide how to accommodate the 235,000 more people, 118,000 more households, and 203,000 new jobs expected in our region by 2030. There were 370 people participating (at 37 tables)—a new national record for Reality Check.

The first task was to establish certain guiding principles for the exercise, and then the participants began placing on the maps Lego® bricks for the new households and jobs and different colored yarns for the transportation options (roads, light rail, rapid bus and pedestrian) and green space. At the end of the exercise, which lasted about two hours, each table had essentially established a vision of the Upstate's future. The participants were then asked to identify the most significant barriers and solutions for achieving that vision.

During lunch, while a consultant gathered and evaluated the results from the tables, the participants heard an inspiring speech by Robert Grow, the founding chairman of Envision Utah, which is widely recognized as the leading regionalism initiative in the country. Mr. Grow explained that by reaching out to the public and focusing on commonly held values, Envision Utah has truly brought the Salt Lake region together to work on growth, transportation and conservation issues. For many years, *Upstate Forever* has advocated for an Envision Utah-type approach in our region. If they can do it in Salt Lake, we can do it here!

In the afternoon session, the participants heard the results of the morning's exercise and shared their views through an electronic survey. The consultant identified four basic development patterns from the visioning work:

- "Corridor Development," which places development along existing roads and transit corridors and balances jobs and housing.
- "Compact Development," which concentrates new growth in existing city centers, mixes jobs and housing, and protects open space and rural character.
- "Rural Village," which supports development in small towns, provides goods and services on Main Streets, combines households and jobs in town centers, and protects rural character.

- “Dispersed Growth,” which places less development in existing city centers, spreads growth throughout the region, separates jobs from residential areas, and increases dependence on roads and automobiles.

The participants were asked to select the pattern that they would most like to see in the Upstate. Compact finished first, receiving 33% of the vote, followed closely by Corridor with 31%. Rural Village received 25%, and Dispersed finished last with only 11%. That’s the good news—the bad news is that Dispersed is the dominant development pattern in the Upstate.

The three most important guiding principles chosen by the participants were increased education opportunities and job creation (20%), improved regional transportation (18%), and leveraging existing transportation and promoting regional linkages (15%).

The three most significant barriers were effective regional collaboration (20%), lack of funding for infrastructure (16%), and lack of regional leadership (14%).

The three most effective solutions were regional coordination and collaboration (33%), funding mechanisms (20%), and implementing visions, plans and ordinances (19%). A detailed report on the results of the event will be available shortly.

At the end of the day, Irv Welling, co-chair of the Reality Check event, took the stage to answer the question that was on everyone’s mind: “What’s next?” Mr. Welling announced that a new nonprofit organization called “Ten at the Top” (referring to the ten Upstate counties at the top of the state) is in the process of being formed in order to seize on the momentum of the event and to continue moving regionalism forward in the Upstate. The first meeting of the Board of Directors will be held on May 11, and a full-time director should be hired soon.

From our very inception, *Upstate Forever* has strongly advocated for a regional approach to land use, development and conservation issues in our region. In 2004, we were the primary sponsor of the first conference on regionalism in the Upstate, featuring former Envision Utah chair Greg Bell. The following year, we co-sponsored another conference on regionalism. Last year *Upstate Forever* and the Strom Thurmond Institute at Clemson University jointly released the eye-opening growth projection study for the Upstate, showing what our region will look like in 2030 if current development policies and practices remain unchanged.

So we enthusiastically welcomed and supported the Reality Check event. *Upstate Forever* Executive Director Brad Wyche served on the Steering Committee for the event, co-chaired the Next Steps Committee, and is serving on the Board of Directors of Ten at the Top. Three of our staff served as facilitators for the event. We look forward to continued progress in making regionalism a reality in the Upstate!

3. Stormwater Ordinances in Greenville and Spartanburg Counties

Pollution from stormwater runoff is one of the leading causes of water quality problems in the Upstate. Under the Clean Water Act, both Spartanburg and Greenville Counties are required to update their stormwater ordinances, with the basic goal of preventing water quality degradation and, in the case of Spartanburg County, also to control flooding. (Greenville County does this with a separate ordinance).

Greenville County appointed a broad-based task force of stakeholders, including its own staff, home builders, developers, engineers, and *Upstate Forever* staff, to review drafts of the ordinance and recommend changes. After many months of hard work, the task force recommended a final ordinance to County Council, which recently approved it at second reading. We are disappointed that our recommendations relating to buffers, infiltration and landscaping were not accepted, but in general we support the new ordinance and urge County Council to approve it at third reading next month.

The Spartanburg stormwater ordinance had a different process and outcome. The ordinance, which was approved earlier this month by Spartanburg County Council, was significantly weakened at the behest of the Home Builders Association of Spartanburg. These deficiencies include not requiring a simple flood risk study for areas where that risk has not been determined. As Greenville County has experienced first hand, building in flood prone areas can result in extensive property damage and flood buyout programs, costing taxpayers millions. Another deficiency is that the ordinance exempts developments of less than two acres, although it appears that state regulations specify the exemption level at one acre. Nonetheless, since Spartanburg County has never had an effective stormwater program, the ordinance is a good first step. Hopefully, County Council will strengthen it in the near future.

4. Landfill Regulations at the Tipping Point

Improvements to South Carolina's landfill capacity regulations have reached a crucial tipping point for this legislative session. The recently completed work of DHEC's Statewide Landfill Capacity Taskforce is in jeopardy if changes to the regulations are not quickly approved by the DHEC Board. These changes, while not perfect, would represent a vast improvement over the current regulations. The changes must be approved by the Board in order to be submitted to the House of Representatives for legislative review this session.

In the General Assembly, a bill ([S.324](#)) that would impose a temporary landfill permitting moratorium was passed unanimously by the Senate in early April. It has stalled, however, in the House Agriculture Committee, as some House leaders seem satisfied with continuing to let industry control this issue. South Carolina has built more than double the landfill capacity it needs and came close to permitting the nation's seventh largest landfill in Williamsburg County. Much of the excess capacity is filled by trash imported from the Northeast. The moratorium bill is part of the [Common Agenda](#) agreed upon by more than 20 South Carolina conservation organizations.

The best case scenario: the revised regulations are approved by the DHEC Board and the legislature without a time-consuming appeal. The worst case scenario: the revised regulations are not approved, S.324 does not pass, industry begins applying for tremendous capacity increases, and South Carolina's fate as the nation's dumping ground is sealed.

5. DHEC Board Refuses to Require Minimum Flow Release from Table Rock Reservoir

The Greenville Water System (GWS) currently owns and operates two 30-inch lines that transport raw water from the Table Rock Reservoir to the GWS treatment plant in northern Greenville County. GWS proposes to construct a new 42-inch line to replace these lines, to abandon one of the 30-inch lines, and to use the other 30-inch line as a back-up for emergencies. The new line, almost eight miles long, would cross the South Saluda River three times, Duck Creek and Matthews Creek one time each, numerous tributaries to the South Saluda and Duck Creek 26 times, and three wetland areas. The project requires authorization from both the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC).

Upstate Forever does not oppose replacing the old lines, which were constructed in the 1930s and are approaching the end of their useful life. In fact, we commend GWS for being proactive and taking steps now to install the new line. We are deeply concerned, however, about the impact of the project, as currently proposed, on both water quality and water quantity in the South Saluda River and its tributaries. We strongly support the position of the S.C. Department of Natural Resources (DNR) that GWS should be required to release a minimum amount of water from the reservoir into the South Saluda. DNR's proposal is quite reasonable and adjusts the minimum flow based on the season of the year and drought conditions. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also supports DNR's proposal.

Every stream that flows into the Table Rock Reservoir and the reservoir itself are classified as "Outstanding Resource Waters (ORW)," the highest water quality classification possible. These are the

“crown jewels” of South Carolina’s water resources and deserve stringent protection. But immediately below the Table Rock dam, the classification for the South Saluda River drops by two levels—from ORW to “Trout Put, Grow and Take.” (The classification between these two levels is called “Trout Natural”). The reason for the lower classification is obvious—the lack of water being released by GWS from the Table Rock Reservoir into the South Saluda River.

The DHEC staff approved the project without any requirement for a minimum flow release into the river. *Upstate Forever* and four other conservation organizations—the South Carolina Wildlife Federation, South Carolina Native Plant Society, Save Our Saluda and Sierra Club—appealed the staff’s decision. Our appeal also seeks to strengthen six specific conditions relating to the installation and maintenance of the line in and near the stream and wetland crossing areas and to include a condition stating that the existing 30-inch line can be used only for true emergencies.

The DHEC Board heard the appeal on April 9 and affirmed the staff decision. After an executive session with its counsel, the DHEC Board chairman informed the public that the agency does not believe it has the legal authority to require a minimum flow release. We strongly disagree with the Board’s view. We believe that there is ample authority under current law and regulation for a minimum flow requirement. We also believe that the DHEC staff and Board erred in not strengthening the permit conditions for the project and in not including a condition on emergency use of the existing line. Thus, *Upstate Forever* and the other four conservation organizations will appeal the decision to the South Carolina Administrative Law Court.

6. Spring Into a New EarthCraft Home!

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

7. Upcoming Upstate Forever Events

Thursday, May 7 - Friday, May 8
Sustain SC Conference 2009
Carolina First Center, Greenville

The US Green Building Council SC Chapter’s inaugural Sustain SC Conference and Exposition will be an exciting two-day event featuring keynote speakers who are influencing and advancing sustainable building practices nationally; LEED workshops; half-day tours of landmark LEED certified buildings; continuing education seminars providing education on various topics related to green building; social events; an Exposition Hall; and more. Sustain SC attendees will include architects, engineers, developers, realtors, building owners, facility managers, academics, landscape architects, interior designers, utility providers, manufacturers, service providers, non-profits and government from South Carolina and throughout the region. Sustain SC partners include AIA, CSI, ASLA, ULI, and *Upstate Forever*; the conference will include a presentation on sustainable communities by *Upstate Forever*. To register, go to www.usgbcsc.org, or call (843) 329-3131 for more information.

Saturday, May 16
Spartanburg Farm Field Trip
Windmill Hill Farm, Inman, SC, 10:00 a.m.

Come take a tour of Windmill Hill Farm and meet farmer Fran Davis! Occupying the highest point in Spartanburg County, this farm is all-organic and produces tomatoes, potatoes, squash, peppers, green beans, okra, and cut flowers. Participants will get to roam the farm with Fran and learn more about

Upstate Update

NUMBER 101
APRIL/MAY
2 0 0 9

her organic practices and about what it takes to own and operate a small farm. Cost: \$15 per person. To register, contact Gretchen Wilson at (864) 250-0500 or gwilson@upstateforever.org. Carpool meeting location TBA.

Saturday, June 6

Land Trust Day

Mast General Store, Greenville, SC, 10:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.

For the sixth straight year, Mast General Store at 111 North Main Street in downtown Greenville has chosen *Upstate Forever* to be the beneficiary of their annual Land Trust Day. The store will donate 20 percent of all sales on Saturday, June 6 to *Upstate Forever*. Take your shopping list for weddings, dads, grads, and summer outdoor adventures and celebrate Land Trust Day! Parking is free in the Richardson Street garage, located behind the store. Call *Upstate Forever* at (864) 250-0500 with questions.

8. Quote of the Month

“We’re real proud that we have chosen to get out of the river.”

--Williamston Mayor Carthel Crout, on his town’s plan to improve water quality by no longer discharging wastewater effluent into the Saluda River, quoted in *The Greenville News*, 4/8/09

