

Upstate Update

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

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Corps of Engineers to Study Union County Lake

Civic and business leaders in Union County have proposed damming the Tyger River to create a 5,300 acre lake with over 70 miles of shoreline. Proponents say "Patriot's Lake," more than 70 percent of which is within Sumter National Forest, would be a boon for recreation, economic development, and the drinking water supply. Opponents, including the Sierra Club, S.C. Wildlife Association, and National Audubon Society, have voiced concern about wildlife habitat destruction and the selling of public land for private development.

Upstate Forever believes that we must seek to balance the economic and environmental needs of our region. We have advocated for a comprehensive, objective, and independent study of the costs and benefits of the project. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Union County have announced a partnership to study the feasibility of meeting regional water-supply and recreational needs through the lake's construction—from engineering, economic, as well as environmental perspectives. *Upstate Forever* hopes that the Corps will incorporate the study topics outlined in our [position statement](http://www.upstateforever.org/front_union2.htm) http://www.upstateforever.org/front_union2.htm. We will report on findings as they become available.

Laurens County to Fund Parks

Kudos to the Laurens City Council, which recently voted to institute a two percent hospitality tax on restaurant meals and a three percent accommodations tax on hotel rooms. The City plans to use the funds to upgrade existing parks and establish new ones, providing locals and visitors alike with sorely needed recreational opportunities.

In an era when "tax" is a four-letter word, municipalities large and small, from Greenville to Honea Path, are utilizing accommodations and hospitality taxes to fund parks, recreation, and tourism-related projects throughout our region. Like a sales tax, such taxes are paid by the user, who may reside outside the area in which the tax is collected.

After some initial organized resistance by local restaurant owners, the proposal was met with very little public opposition when it was brought before the City Council, where it passed easily. As Laurens Mayor Sharon Brownlee, who advocated for the tax, said, "This is a way to upgrade recreation in the city without raising [property] taxes to pay for it."

Pickens County Implements Stormwater Ordinance

Pickens County's strong new stormwater ordinance took effect last month, turning control and responsibility for stormwater management over from the state to the local level, in compliance with the Federal Clean Water Act. The County now issues its own permits for new construction and has established its own regulations governing stormwater management, sediment and erosion control, and pollution discharges. Read the ordinance in its entirety at: <http://www.co.pickens.sc.us/newsreleases/newsletters/356stormwaterord.pdf>.

Promoting sensible growth and protecting special places in the Upstate

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Safe...For Now

As reported in [Upstate Update 63](#) and [65](#), the U.S. Senate included in its energy bill a provision for oil drilling in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, a move strongly opposed by *Upstate Forever* and other environmental groups. Despite the fact that opening the ANWR to oil exploration is one of President Bush's top energy goals, this measure was not included in the compromise bill passed by both Houses of Congress in late July and signed into law earlier this month. Nevertheless, those who care about protecting the vulnerable ANWR must remain on alert: this fall, House Republicans plan to propose separate legislation enabling drilling there.

It has been 13 years since Congress last passed a broad energy bill, and the current legislation was six years in the making. It includes provisions for increased use of ethanol, tax credits for purchasers of hybrid vehicles and energy-efficient windows, and tax breaks for the power industry.

Upstate Forever News

Rail-Trail Project Update

Saturday, August 6 marked the last of the summer's rail-trail workdays. According to *Upstate Forever* Board Chairman Carlton Owen, who helped coordinate the trail effort, the rail line stretching from downtown Greenville to Travelers Rest is now 95 percent clear of brush and overgrowth.

To the multitudes of volunteers who have spent Saturday mornings laboring on the trail since June: Thank You! Special recognition is due to the crew from the Greenville County Detention Center; they were a huge help eight Saturdays in a row. Supplementing the weekend workdays, a group from the Greenville Natural History Association volunteered on Wednesday mornings. Project sponsors, in addition to *Upstate Forever*, are the Palmetto Conservation Foundation, Furman University, Greenville County, and the City of Travelers Rest.

Professors Jill Newberry of USC Upstate and Joe Pollard of Furman have surveyed the trail to identify members of two endangered plant species: dwarf flowering heartleaf and bunched arrowhead. Provisions are being made to ensure that these rarities are protected.

What happens next? Individual volunteers and small groups will continue to work on the three short segments left to clear. In October or November, the Surface Transportation Board will rule on the Greenville County Economic Development Corporation's request for official abandonment of the rail line. A positive ruling will enable the GCEDC to establish formal use of the trail, and the next stage of work can begin. Check the Upstate Update this fall for the latest news!

Spartanburg Office News

Upstate Forever's Spartanburg office has completed the first year of a five-year grant from the Mary Black Foundation, with the mission of making Spartanburg a more active and greener county. They have completed the Active Living Assessment (see below) and are in the midst of conducting a follow-up survey of homeowners and development professionals. Later this month, they will undertake a Rapid Needs Assessment Study of park acquisitions and greenspace needs. The study will be conducted by The Conservation Fund, with the goal of generating public interest in and support for more parks in Spartanburg County.

The Active Living Assessment Task Force is meeting this month to discuss the final report from The Lawrence Group. The report evaluates land development regulations and plans for the City and County of Spartanburg and identifies provisions that impede the development of neighborhoods that encourage residents to engage in regular physical activity, such as bicycling and walking, as part of their daily routine. With this assessment now complete, *Upstate Forever Spartanburg* will work with the Task Force and other interested parties on education initiatives and advocacy for appropriate changes in regulations and policies based on the report's recommendations.

Upcoming Events

Upstate Forever Events

October 14, Vince Graham, Spartanburg County Public Library, Barrett Room, 7:30 a.m. The developer of I'on Village in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina will talk about his endeavors as a builder and renovator of traditional neighborhood developments.

November 5, Upstate Forever's Annual Meeting, Asbury Hills Methodist Camp, Cleveland, SC, 10 am. Plan to join us at this beautiful mountain camp for the meeting, followed by lunch and hikes.

Other Events

Third Saturday of Each Month, Garner's Natural Market and Café, Greenville, SC. Shop at Garner's and help raise money for *Upstate Forever*! On the third Saturday of every month, Garner's will donate ten percent of what you spend to *Upstate Forever*. Simply mention that you are making the purchase in our name and Garner's will handle the rest! For more information about Garner's, visit www.garnersnatural.com.

August 20, Great American Backyard Campout. The National Wildlife Federation has designed this event to restore a simple tradition in the U.S., the backyard campout! Folks all across America will come together in backyards, parks, and camps to enjoy a night of star-gazing, listening to nocturnal wildlife, and exploring a whole other world just outside their doors. It is one step in the National Wildlife Federation's larger campaign to get kids to drop the hand-held videos, turn off the TV and get outside. Register your campsite and download helpful resources at: <http://www.backyardcampout.org/>.

August 25, Driving Down the Cost of LEED, Driving Up the Value of Your Building, Savannah, GA, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Offered by Paladino & Company in partnership with the U.S. Green Building Council. To register, go to www.paladinoandco.com, click "Events," then "Get to Green."

August 26-28, Thunderhead Training, Decatur, GA. The Thunderhead Alliance is a national coalition of state and local bicycle and pedestrian advocacy organizations working to break down the barriers to safe bicycling and walking in North American communities. This training is for leaders to help their organizations grow and become more effective. <http://www.thunderheadalliance.org>

September 10, Countywide Litter Pick-Up, Greenville, SC. Choose your own road, park, or other area in which to pick up litter; Greenville County will provide trash bags and vests. At last year's event, over 450 volunteers picked up over 19,395 pounds of litter and debris from Greenville County roads. To sign up yourself or your group, contact Wendy McNatt, Recycling Education Specialist, at 234-5781 or wmcnatt@greenvillecounty.org.

September 10, Civic By Design Forum, Levine Museum of the New South, Charlotte, NC, 9:00a.m. - 5:00p.m. Participants will discuss how to elevate the quality of Charlotte's built environment and to promote public participation in the creation of a more beautiful and functional region for all. The afternoon includes a bus tour of northern Mecklenburg County. Sponsored by the Charlotte Region Civic Design Forum. To register, contact erica@aiacharlotte.org or call 704.369.2302. This free forum is part of a larger conference, "New Urbanism in Charlotte: The Legacy of John Nolen," presented by The Seaside Institute: <http://www.theseasideinstitute.org/net/content/go.aspx?s=31870.0.79.7801>

September 13-21, Physical Activity and Public Health Courses, Hilton Head, SC. For public health professionals; learn how to promote active living. <http://prevention.sph.sc.edu/seapines/index.htm>

September 13-15, Watershed Leadership Train-the-Trainer Academy, Callaway Gardens, Pine Mountain, GA. Presented by the Southeast Watershed Forum, the Watershed Academy trains participants in basic tools for water quality and watershed protection, smarter growth alternatives, floodplain management, establishing local partnerships, conflict resolution and public negotiation, and building consensus for changing development patterns. <http://www.southeastwaterforum.org/>

September 28, Living with and Working in South Carolina's Wetlands, Columbia, SC. A practical seminar in sustainable wetlands for developers, builders, contractors and others in the building trades. Learn about wetlands identification, legislation and regulation, and how to avoid violations. Sponsored by the Home Builders Association of South Carolina: <http://www.hbaofsc.com> or contact cmauldin@hbaofsc.com

Oct 14, Building Green Communities Conference, South Carolina Urban and Community Forestry Council, Columbia, SC. Workshops on incorporating tree preservation and environmental conservation into the development process. <http://www.scurbanforestry.org/pages/760088/index.htm>

October 27-30, Community Planning Collaborative Summit 2005: Democracy and Planning in Action, Orlando, FL. A forum for sharing and exchanging knowledge about tools for community design and decision making, featuring keynote speaker Bruce Babbitt, former U.S. Secretary of the Interior. <http://www.planningcollaborative.org/>

November 3-4, Forum on the Future of Conservation Easements in the South, Greenville, SC. South Carolina land trusts along with land trusts from Georgia and North Carolina will discuss current practices in conservation, designing conservation easements for permanent defense, and improving the monitoring and defense of easements. Burnet Maybank, Director of the S.C. Department of Revenue will be the keynote speaker; he recently presented testimony and recommendations to the U.S. Senate on curbing abuses of conservation tax incentives, and his agency is currently investigating abuses of the state's conservation tax credit. For more information, contact the Land Trust Alliance Southeast program office at southeast@lta.org or S.C. Land Trust Network chair Brad Wyche at bwyche@upstateforever.org.

November 9-11, Greenbuild International Conference and Expo 2005, Georgia World Congress Center, Atlanta, GA. Sponsored by the U.S. Green Building Council, Greenbuild is the annual meeting place for green building industry professionals to learn about the latest advancements in green building design, construction, project financing and building management. Early registration deadline is Sept. 1. www.greenbuildexpo.org

November 17-18, American Forests National Conference on Urban Ecosystems: Nature at Your Service, Westin Hotel, Charlotte, NC. The urban forest is an untapped resource--one that can help cities meet regulatory requirements for clean air and water, revitalize neighborhoods, and reduce the costs of building and maintaining infrastructure. This conference will focus on how to reconnect people to their cities' natural resources; *Upstate Forever's* Diane Eldridge will be speaking about the connection between land use and forest health. <http://www.americanforests.org/conference/>

Lots o' Links

“What Tree is That?” A pocket guide for identifying 135 different trees is available from the National Arbor Day Foundation. <http://www.arborday.org>

U.S. Joins with Five Asian Countries to Counter Climate Change. The United States is partnering with China, India, Japan, South Korea, and Australia to develop and use cleaner energy technologies in hopes of curtailing climate-changing pollution. The agreement is not viewed as a replacement for the Kyoto climate pact, which the U.S. has rejected. <http://enn.com/today.html?id=8358>

More Forests May Be One Answer to Climate Change. Cost-effective climate change policies should also include storage of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in U.S. forests, according to a new report from the Pew Center on Global Climate Change, “The Cost of U.S. Forest-based Carbon Sequestration.” Among the authors’ key conclusions: The estimated cost of sequestering up to 500 million tons of carbon per year—an amount that would offset up to one-third of current annual U.S. carbon emissions—ranges from \$30 to \$90 per ton. On a per-ton basis, this is comparable to the cost estimated for other options for addressing climate change, including switching to alternative fuels and increasing energy efficiency. See the full report at: http://www.pewclimate.org/global-warming-in-depth/all_reports/carbon_sequestration/index.cfm

Climate Change Calculator. Speaking of carbon emissions, you can track your personal use of fossil fuels at this site: <http://www.americanforests.org/resources/ccc/>

What Housing Bubble? A former *Wall Street Journal* real estate reporter believes predictions of market collapse are unfounded and claims housing prices will remain high. <http://www.nbnnews.com/NBN/issues/2005-08-01/Housing+Forum/index.html>

Decades of Hurricanes Threaten U.S. Offshore Oil. Oil companies in the United States are pinning the hopes of the nation’s energy future on big oil finds in offshore waters even as scientists predict the Atlantic will spawn more powerful hurricanes through the next two to three decades. <http://www.planetark.com/dailynewsstory.cfm/newsid/31894/story.htm>

Hurricane Season Lasts from June 1 through November 30. Find out more about hurricanes in South Carolina at: www.dnr.state.sc.us/climate/sco; go to the “SC Climate” menu and choose “Hurricane Climatology.”

Bicycles Selling Like Hotcakes in U.S. Stores. Americans purchased more bicycles than new cars and trucks combined in the past year -- and all without employee discounts or zero-percent financing. <http://www.planetark.com/dailynewsstory.cfm/newsid/31898/story.htm>

Shortages Stifle a Boom Time for the Solar Industry. A worldwide shortage of solar panels has put most local projects on hold. <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/05/national/05solar.html>

Research Shows Ethanol Not Worth the Energy. Ethanol burns more energy than it produces, according to researchers from Cornell and UC Berkeley, who conclude the country would be better off investing in solar, wind, and hydrogen energy. <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/8607389/>

A Pollution-Free Ship? A new design for transporting cargo relies on solar, wind, and wave power. <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/8037087/>

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Smithfield Foods to Stop Feeding Antibiotics to Healthy Pigs. The world's largest pork processor and hog producer, based in North Carolina, is curbing the use of antibiotics to promote growth in its livestock. The overuse of antibiotics in food animal production contributes to the rise of antibiotic resistance, which makes drugs lose their effectiveness in humans, as well as to contamination of the air, water, and soil. http://www.greenbiz.com/news/news_third.cfm?NewsID=28514&CFID=4250844&CFTOKEN=73048898

Quote of the Month

"The atmosphere almost looks like an eggshell on an egg, it's so very thin. We know that we don't have much air; we need to protect what we have." Commander Eileen Collins, on board the Space Shuttle *Discovery*, quoted by Reuters, 8/4/05

