

Upstate Update

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

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TOP TEN ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2005

Here's our annual Top Ten List of the most notable achievements in land use, conservation, and sustainable development issues in the Upstate (not necessarily in order of importance).

1. Construction of Upstate House in Full Swing

On April 7, a groundbreaking ceremony took place in downtown Greenville. But the folks in the hard hats weren't digging in their shovels at the site of yet another new condo or office project. They were celebrating a first-of-its-kind demonstration project for environmentally-sensitive living.

Upstate House, the brainchild of *Upstate Forever* board member Carlton Owen, is a single-family residence in Greenville's Pettigru Historic District that will meet EarthCraft and Energy Star standards. Upon completion, the house will be open to the public for scheduled tours to allow homeowners, architects, builders, community groups and educators to see firsthand how to lessen the impact of daily living on the environment. Carlton and his wife Brenda will own and live in the house. Next door will be a native woodland garden and public trail linking the Pettigru district to Cleveland Park.

More than two dozen manufacturers and contractors are donating or discounting materials and services to aid in the construction of Upstate House. When the house is finished, the Owens will donate the difference between the actual construction cost and fair market value to *Upstate Forever* and the Home Builders Association of Greenville to promote the EarthCraft House program and other initiatives.

While progress was delayed several months as fifty truckloads of bad dirt were removed from the site and twenty more were brought in to replace them, by the close of 2005 construction was well underway. For more information, and to follow the progress of this truly *groundbreaking* project, visit <http://www.upstatehouse.org>

2. Spartanburg Active Living Assessment Completed

"Active Living" is defined as the integration of healthy physical activity into daily life. The layout and design of streets, buildings, and public spaces in a community can either promote or discourage physical activity. Where walking and bicycling are safe and convenient, citizens are more active; when citizens get more exercise, they are generally healthier.

The Active Living Assessment investigated this connection between public health and community design in one Upstate county. The assessment, conducted by The Lawrence Group for *Upstate Forever*, evaluated in detail the land development regulations and plans for the City and County of Spartanburg, identified provisions that impede the development of neighborhoods that encourage regular physical activity as part of the daily routine, and suggested changes that could help make the Spartanburg area more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly--and therefore healthier. The full report, available online at http://www.upstateforever.org/newsviews_other/Active%20Living%20Assessment.pdf, was presented to the Spartanburg community in August. Next, *Upstate Forever Spartanburg* will advocate for the adoption of the report's recommendations.

Promoting sensible growth and protecting special places in the Upstate

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3. Greenville County Tree Policy Advisory Committee Formed

In April 2005, *Upstate Forever* hosted the conference “Trees: The Care and Protection of a Valuable Upstate Resource.” The informative and well-attended forum helped to galvanize support for a stronger regulatory approach to preserving Greenville’s tree cover. But it was an uphill battle. It took numerous newspaper columns, phone calls from countless supporters, and months of political wrangling, but on October 18 the Greenville County Council unanimously voted to establish a committee to study tree protection and to recommend an ordinance. A standing-room only crowd (including many *Upstate Forever* members) packed Council chambers that evening as the details of the proposal were debated.

Upstate Forever special consultant Diane Eldridge was later appointed by Council Chair Butch Kirven as one of the twelve members of the committee, which will begin meeting in 2006. We look forward to following the progress of the committee, and hope that other Upstate counties will follow suit.

The full package of information from our April conference, replete with everything you ever wanted to know about tree protection, is available online at http://www.upstateforever.org/newsviews_other/Trees08_26_05/index.htm.

4. SC Conservation Bank Fully Funded

More good news from the State Legislature arrived in 2005 in the form of full funding--\$15 million--for the South Carolina Conservation Bank. The Bank provides a dedicated source of revenue to acquire, or protect through conservation easements, a broad range of resources in our state: environmentally-sensitive areas, farmlands, forests, historic sites, and more. The Bank can also be used to acquire land for parks, hunting and fishing areas, greenways, and open spaces for public use and enjoyment. Funded by a small portion of the transfer fee that is collected every time real estate is sold in the state, in its first two years the Bank has supported 31 projects protecting a total of 33,000 acres.

Upstate Forever has jumped at the opportunity to apply for some of these monies to fund conservation easements under our Land Trust Program. In 2005, we were awarded grants to protect the following properties:

- Henderson/Conestee Tract in Greenville County (112 acres)
- Blythe-Goodwin-Hagood House in Greenville County (11 acres)
- Fall Creek in Oconee County (94 acres)
- Cleveland-Wilson Farms in Greenville County, Phase II (271 acres).

For more information about the S.C. Conservation Bank, visit <http://sccbanc.sc.gov>. To learn more about Upstate Forever’s Land Trust Program, see http://www.upstateforever.org/programs_landtrust.html.

5. “Clean Air for the Upstate: An Action Agenda” Report Released

Is the Upstate destined to become the next Atlanta, choked by polluted air and congested roads? We can avoid that fate--if we obey Clean Air Act deadlines, link land use and transportation planning, and expand transit options--according to a report released August 24 by the nonprofit Southern Environmental Law Center. “*Clean Air for the Upstate Area: An Action Agenda*” details the steps we should take to reduce air pollution and improve the health of our people, our environment, and our economy.

According to the report, the two main sources of air pollution in the Upstate are “tailpipes and smokestacks,” also known as automobiles and power plants. Our local governments are already working to address our air quality problems, including appointing an advisory committee representing the counties of Anderson, Greenville, and Spartanburg. However, more action is needed, as the Upstate may be sanctioned

if EPA standards are not met by a 2007 deadline. The SELC report outlines specific changes we should make in our region, specifically:

- Establish a regional organization for transportation planning
- Reform transportation funding priorities that encourage sprawling development and underfund alternatives to automobiles
- Apply a regional approach to land-use planning (see description of “Upstate Together,” below)
- Pass “clean smokestacks” legislation in South Carolina to reduce emissions from coal-fired power plants
- Demand full implementation of the Federal Clean Air Interstate Rule to keep emissions from neighboring states from polluting South Carolina’s air
- Oppose the so-called “Clear Skies” legislation that would remove the teeth of important Clean Air Act provisions and hinder states’ efforts to improve air quality.

For more information and to read the full report, go to http://www.southernenvironment.org/newsroom/publications/upstate_air_report.pdf.

6. “Upstate Together: Grow by Choice or Chance” Regional Conference Held

Back in 2004, *Upstate Forever* brought Utah State Senator Greg Bell to the Palmetto Expo Center to describe the successful “Envision Utah” regional planning effort underway in the Salt Lake region. Our goal was to inspire the decision-makers and citizens of our own diverse region to initiate a similar program here. Working together, we can accommodate our anticipated future growth—340,000 new residents by 2025, according to Dr. Barry Nocks of Clemson University--in a way that minimizes the impact on our natural environment and maximizes our quality of life.

That dream of a regional approach to growth management came one giant step closer to reality on October 20, 2005. Nearly 300 participants from ten Upstate counties gathered at the Airport Marriott to discuss our area’s projected growth and the possibilities for regional planning and coordination. “Upstate Together: Grow by Choice or Chance” featured urban planners Gianni Longo and Jamie Greene, who explained that community visioning and strategic planning is not about turning us into something we’re not; rather, it’s about enhancing what is unique and worth preserving-- and even amplifying-- about our region.

Twelve months from now, we ardently hope that our Top Ten List for 2006 will trumpet the initiation of the regional planning process here in the Upstate. Salt Lake City, Utah; Chattanooga, Tennessee; and Columbus, Ohio have all done it. Now it’s Upstate South Carolina’s turn!

“Upstate Together” was co-sponsored by USC Upstate, Greenville Chamber of Commerce, *Upstate Forever*, BellSouth, The Greenville News, Copia Designs, and the law firm of Gallivan, White and Boyd. The conference agenda, summary report, and research findings are available online at <http://www.uscupstate.edu/upstatetogether/>.

7. Lake Conestee Nature Park Progresses

Imagine a neglected industrial lake transformed into a wildlife refuge and environmental education center, enjoyed by hikers and paddlers, adjacent to a revitalized mill village and connected via greenways to all corners of Greenville County. This may sound impossible, but all this is truly in the works in an area tucked behind Greenville Municipal Stadium on Mauldin Road.

Although a group of dedicated volunteers has been working to turn Lake Conestee into a public greenspace for at least a decade, 2005 marked an amazing year of progress for their efforts. In the past

year, the Conestee Foundation:

- Hired a part-time executive director, Dr. Jeffery Beacham
- Was awarded \$100,000 by the SC Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism to fund trail construction
- Received \$675,000 from the S.C. Conservation Bank for land acquisition
- Received \$205,000 in grants from the Graham, John I. Smith, and Duke Power Foundations for land acquisition
- Was allocated \$90,500 by Greenville County Council, qualifying the Foundation for \$362,000 in federal matching funds for land acquisition and trail construction
- Received \$500,000 from the Community Foundation of Greater Greenville to expand operations
- Was awarded \$75,000 in grants from the Jolly and Hollingsworth Foundations to support master planning

Lake Conestee Nature Park is well on its way to becoming the jewel of Greenville County. See http://www.upstateforever.org/programs_conestee.html for more information. We look forward to more progress in 2006!

8. Swamp Rabbit Rail-Trail Cleared

Another recreation project long dreamed of in Greenville County moved forward by leaps and bounds in 2005. The Swamp Rabbit Rail-Trail will connect downtown Greenville, Furman University, and downtown Travelers Rest along a former rail line now owned by Greenville County.

A host of groups and individual volunteers spent sweaty summer Saturdays and Wednesdays clearing brush, weeds, and trash from the trail, demonstrating just how much this community desires to be able to commute and exercise on such a trail. The effort was sponsored by *Upstate Forever*, Palmetto Conservation Foundation, Furman University, Greenville County, and the City of Travelers Rest. There is still much work to be done, funds to be raised, and legal hurdles to be cleared, but 2005 will be remembered as the year we could truly see what had before only been imagined.

9. Environmental Grand Jury Established

After many years of advocacy by the environmental community, the South Carolina Legislature last spring passed a bill granting the State Grand Jury the authority to investigate and prosecute “knowing and willful” environmental crimes, which are defined as crimes involving water, ambient air, soil and/or land. Sponsored by Sen. Jake Knotts of Lexington and Rep. Jim Merrill of Berkeley and signed into law May 26 by Gov. Mark Sanford, the bill was the top legislative priority for State Attorney General Henry McMaster, who announced, “a strong message has been sent that this state will not tolerate those who would knowingly and deliberately break the law, seek an improper competitive advantage, intentionally despoil our land, and diminish our natural heritage for future generations.”

The legislation was originally opposed by the business community, but a compromise was reached after several months of meetings, resulting in a victory for our state’s environment. By extending the statewide grand jury authority to include environmental crimes resulting in over \$2 million in anticipated damages, the Attorney General is now empowered to subpoena witnesses and documents, as is allowed in the investigation of other crimes such as drug offenses, public corruption, and securities fraud. This expanded power is the key to successfully prosecuting complex, white-collar environmental crimes, from fraudulent record-keeping to illegal dumping of toxic waste.

10. Bowie Farm Preserved

One of the state's largest conservation easements to date was granted near Iva in rural Anderson County in 2005. Dr. Marie Thomason Bowie placed her 752-acre farm under easement with the Upper Savannah Land Trust, preserving it solely for traditional farm uses and educational activities. Dr. Bowie, who has lived on the farm for 71 of her 92 years, told The Anderson Independent-Mail on June 30, "I don't want it sold off in subdivisions. I want it to be for the young people to enjoy and the community."

In addition to cattle, llamas, and hayfields, two large portions of the property are open to the public, free of charge. Facilities include a "fellowship barn," shelters, agriculture museum, hiking and horseback-riding trails, and an island gazebo within a pond. Hats off to Dr. Bowie for preserving this valuable resource for future generations!

Upcoming Events

Upstate Forever Events

February 14, **Water Quality in Lake Greenwood: A Status Report and Next Steps**, Drummond Center, Lake Greenwood State Park, Greenwood, SC, 12:00 - 4:30 p.m. This seminar will give participants a clear understanding of the latest research on water quality dynamics in Lake Greenwood and of the key threats to water quality in the lake, as well as a practical overview of strategies for protecting and restoring water quality in the lake. This is the second in a quarterly series of seminars on water resource management issues called the Watershed Leaders Forum, and is free and open to the Upstate community. It is sponsored by the Appalachian and Upper Savannah Councils of Government and the Saluda-Reedy Watershed Consortium, with support from the V. Kann Rasmussen Foundation. For more information, visit <http://www.saludareedy.org/outreach/forums.html>; to register, call (864) 250-0500 ext. 22 or email jasonvand@upstateforever.org.

Other Events

January 17, **Native Grasses of the Southeast**, Hayden Conference Center, S.C. Botanical Garden, Clemson University, 7 p.m. Dr. Bill Stringer of Clemson University, presented by the South Carolina Native Plant Society. <http://www.scnps.org>

January 21, **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.

Tuesdays, beginning January 24, **Conservation Lobby Team**, Columbia, SC, 11:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Complement the work of the conservation lobbyists at the State Legislature by visiting legislative offices, observing the sessions, speaking to legislators, attending hearings, and generally reinforcing the message of the conservation community. Contact Ann Timberlake of the Conservation Voters of South Carolina at scvoters@bellsouth.net if you would like to participate. <http://www.conservationvotersofsc.org>

Lots o' Links

[Building Better: A Guide to America's Best New Development Projects](#). A new report from the Sierra Club highlights twelve projects nationwide, including the mixed-use Atlantic Station, located on a former brownfield in Atlanta, and the residential redevelopment of Greensboro's Southside neighborhood.

[Internet Sales Spur Downtown Revivals](#).

[Senate Blocks Drilling in Arctic National Wildlife Refuge](#).

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[Citizens for South Carolina Wild Bears.](#) A local group opposes the lengthening of the state's Party Dog Hunt Bear Season.

[Americans Swallow Hurricane Anxiety to Build Coast to Coast.](#)

[Study Finds Economic Gains in Greenhouse Gas Rules.](#) California's strict environmental laws, often derided as a drag on growth, actually saved consumers and businesses \$56 billion through gains in efficiency since the first major oil price spike in the 1970s, a Stanford University study shows.

Quote of the Month

"Green is green." General Electric Chairman and CEO Jeffrey Immelt, describing the economic benefits of the company's new investment in clean technologies, *The Economist*, 12/10/2005

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