

Upstate Update

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

In this Upstate Update:

1. How Did Our State Legislators Score on Conservation Issues?
2. Furman University Adopts Sustainability as an Overarching Goal and Declares Year of the Environment
3. Land Purchase Preserves 39,000 Acres in Lowcountry—Largest in South Carolina History
4. BMW Turns Waste into Paint
5. Column: Politicians Can't See the Forest for the Trees
6. Upcoming Events
7. Lots o' Links
8. Quote of the Month

1. How Did Our State Legislators Score on Conservation Issues?

The Conservation Voters of South Carolina (www.conservationvotersofsc.org) has released its biennial Conservation Scorecard. This report rates our state's legislators based on their votes on key conservation-related issues during the 2005-2006 legislative session.

First, some good news. Fifteen important conservation-related bills were enacted, including full funding for the SC Conservation Bank, the establishment of an environmental grand jury, an eminent domain amendment "clean" of regulatory takings, and retail facilities ("big box") revitalization incentives. There was one major defeat: the passage of the Billboard Protection Act, which essentially usurps local authority over billboards and represents special treatment for this particular industry. Eight bills were left unfinished at the session's close and therefore expired; they will be reintroduced in 2007.

In the Senate, Upstate Senators John Drummond (D-Greenwood) and Larry Martin (R-Pickens) were singled out as "Conservation Champions" for their commitment to protecting South Carolina's natural resources. Sen. Martin was also commended for paving the way for debate on Priority Investment Area legislation.

In the House of Representatives, members received numerical scores based on seven key votes. Democrats averaged 61% (down 5% from the previous session), while Republicans improved their average to 42% (up an impressive 18% from the previous session). Top scoring Upstate House members were Reps. B.R. Skelton (R-Pickens)—86%, Bill Whitmire (R-Oconee)—83%, Harold Mitchell (D-Spartanburg)—75%, David Hiott (R-Pickens)—71%, Gene Pinson (R-Greenwood)—71%, Bob Leach (R-Greenville)—67%, and Phil Sinclair (R-Spartanburg)—60%. Rep. Whitmire was rated the "Most Improved" House member, zooming from 10% in 2003-2004 to 83% in 2005-2006. Rep. Michael Thompson (R-Anderson) was praised for sponsoring a bill requiring the removal of MTBE from motor fuels, and Rep. Scott Talley (R-Spartanburg) was lauded as a major force behind the passage of the Big Box revitalization incentives. On the negative side, three House members scored 0%, and all three are from Greenville: Reps. Dwight Loftis, Fletcher Smith, and Dan Tripp. Other low-scoring Upstate members were Reps. Becky Martin (R-Anderson)—14%, Rex Rice (R-Pickens)—14%, Bill Sandifer (R-Oconee)—14%, Bob Walker (R-Spartanburg)—14%, Karl Allen (D-Greenville)—17%, and Mike Pitts (R-Laurens)—17%.

In the Executive Branch, Governor Mark Sanford has racked up an impressive record on environmental issues. He had the courage to veto the Billboard Protection Act "in the face of tremendous lobbyist pressure." This veto was unfortunately overridden by the Legislature. Gov. Sanford was also cited for overseeing the protection of more acreage than any previous governor. And he was the first Republican governor in the nation to petition the US Forest Service not to allow roads in certain National Forest lands.

Promoting sensible growth and protecting special places in the Upstate

Please take the time to thank those elected officials who have proven to be friends of South Carolina's environment, and urge those with poor records on conservation to rethink their positions on key issues. Contact information for all Upstate House and Senate members is available at www.upstateforever.org/region_officials.html. To read the 2005-2006 Conservation Scorecard in its entirety, visit www.conservationvotersofsc.org/downloads/Scorecard_2006_finalfinal.pdf.

2. Furman University Adopts Sustainability as an Overarching Goal and Declares Year of the Environment

Furman University recently adopted a commitment to environmental sustainability as one of its foremost strategic goals. In his 2006 Annual Report, President David Shi reports that "Furman wants to be the national leader among liberal arts colleges committed to sustainability, both educationally and operationally." The report summarizes the great work that Furman has already accomplished in this field, including South Carolina's first LEED certified building, the Eco-Cottage, and the biodiesel project, and describes some of the exciting plans for the future, such as the new science center and an expanded trail system.

To underscore its commitment to sustainability, Furman declared this coming school year as "The Year of the Environment." The school officially kicked off the year on September 13 with an opening convocation, which featured a keynote address by *Upstate Forever* Executive Director Brad Wyche entitled "Natural Capitalism: The Path to a Sustainable World." His address will be posted on our website shortly. Furman also awarded Brad with an honorary doctorate degree in humanities for his leadership in promoting sustainable development and environmental protection. Congratulations, Brad!

Throughout the year, Furman will sponsor a series of programs, lectures and events to emphasize environmental citizenship and develop greater environmental consciousness, both on campus and off. Among other initiatives, the school will work with local farmers to provide the freshest food possible in the dining hall, undertake an experiment in residential living that will give students a more complete understanding of environmental issues, begin a restoration of the Furman Lake, and host a three day conference on September 25-27 entitled "The Environment: Critical Issues in the 21st Century." Former U.S. Sen. John Glenn, the first American to orbit the Earth, will be the keynote speaker. A number of policy experts, business and non-profit leaders, and scientists will be on hand to discuss issues of state, national and international importance. See *Upcoming Events* section below.

To learn more about Furman's sustainability efforts, visit www.furman.edu/sustain. For the conference schedule, see www.furman.edu/riley/docs/EnvirConfSchedule206.pdf.

3. Land Purchase Preserves 39,000 Acres in Lowcountry—Largest in South Carolina History

In July 2005, International Paper, once the nation's largest private landholder, decided to undertake a massive sell-off of its domestic forest holdings, including up to 630,000 acres in South Carolina. This announcement generated widespread concern about inappropriate development on some of the huge tracts of land about to hit the open market, and national conservation organizations sprang into action to preserve the most ecologically sensitive of these properties.

On August 30, 2006, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and The Conservation Fund (TCF) closed on two historic land purchases from International Paper:

- 25,668 acres at the Woodbury tract (Brittons Neck) in Marion County, on the Great Pee Dee and Little Pee Dee Rivers.
- 13,281 acres at the Hamilton Ridge tract in Hampton County on the Savannah River.

The total purchase price for the two properties was approximately \$50.8 Million, but the South Carolina

Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) then paid approximately \$29 Million to TNC and TCF to acquire an undivided interest in the properties. Once the sale to SCDNR is completed, this will be the largest land conservation project in the history of the state. This is great news to all of us who care about the protection of water quality and wildlife habitat, and we thank SCDNR, TNC, and TCF for their herculean efforts to arrange the sale.

SCDNR has posted on its website a detailed news release about the purchase; read it at www.dnr.sc.gov/news/Yr2006/sept11/sept11_historic.html. To learn more about TNC's Southern Forests Conservation Project in South Carolina, visit www.nature.org/pressroom/ip/about/scarolina.html. To read an article from TNC's magazine about the current sell-off of forest lands and multi-state purchases from International Paper, go to www.nature.org/magazine/autumn2006/forests/index.html.

4. BMW Turns Waste into Paint

With the latest phase of its gas-to-energy project, BMW Manufacturing has taken the use of landfill gas beyond the production of energy. This summer, BMW became the first automotive company to use "green" energy to fuel its painting facility, which is the largest consumer of energy within the factory. The paint shop will utilize landfill gas to fuel 23 oven burners and to provide indirect heat for the area. This will greatly reduce the reliance on natural gas while further utilizing the previously untapped resource. In total, this expansion project will achieve a CO₂ reduction of approximately 17,000 tons per year. For more information about this innovative program, visit: www.bmwusfactory.com/community/environment/gastoenergy.asp.

5. Column: Politicians Can't See the Forest for the Trees

On August 18, reporter Nicholas Charalambous published the following piece in the Anderson Independent-Mail:

When I moved to South Carolina from the high desert of southern Idaho seven years ago this week, what I noticed most was the trees.

The Upstate's beauty is breathtaking to anyone who hasn't grown up around the pines and oaks of the Piedmont. But when the value of something is meaningless to people they're not prepared to protect it or make a single sacrifice for it.

Take the apparent nonchalance regarding Anderson County's loss of about 7 percent of its total forest cover between 1985 and 2000, according to a soon-to-be-released study by Jeffery S. Allen, director of the South Carolina Water Resources Center at Clemson University. Greenville and Spartanburg Counties each lost about 21 percent.

During the *Anderson Independent-Mail* primary election candidate forums, we heard all the candidates declare themselves "environmentalists." That's at the same time they demanded water and sewer pipes for development in every nook and cranny of this mostly rural county. And while they were trumpeting their willingness to pimp this community's wealth and natural resources to anyone willing to create jobs here, no matter how few or low-paying.

Environmentalism isn't a decorative luxury. It's a moral imperative. It's also smart business, if you consider recognizing the economic value — and the economic cost — of destroying complex ecosystems.

Consider the soil erosion, flooding and drainage problems so many brand-new subdivision suburbanites are complaining about whenever more than an inch of rain falls. Any scientist will explain that neighborhood trees with their root systems would fix the problem in a jiffy. Instead, those homeowners demand steel-and-concrete solutions everyone pays for.

The good news? It's not too late to safeguard this community's aesthetic appeal – and unarguably one of its biggest economic development resources – by jumpstarting discussion about how to preserve tree cover with sticks and carrots.

And we better do it before the forest-products industry strips a projected 4 million tons of trees from this heavily forested state as demand for wood products rises.

Anderson County tried a tree ordinance five years ago. Unsurprisingly, the effort was hobbled rather quickly by development interests. A so-called progressive council couldn't summon the political courage to require commercial developers to plant any more than one tree per 20 parking spaces or to preserve any existing trees at all. Meanwhile, it gleefully pursued the fig leaf of a meaningless "Tree City USA" designation.

Property-rights absolutism that champions development at all costs is immoral, shortsighted and counterproductive.

Environmentally conscious development enhances the long-term value of property.

Politicians who support developers only interested in stripping wealth from our community can't see the forest for the trees.

Nicholas Charalambous would like to hear from readers about environmental issues. He can be reached at (864) 260-1241 or by e-mail at charalambousnc@IndependentMail.com. Our thanks go to the Anderson Independent-Mail for permission to reprint this column.

6. Upcoming Events

Upstate Forever Events

September 30, Woodland Garden Planting Day, Upstate House, Greenville, SC, 8:00 am - noon. Join us in transforming the vacant lot next to Upstate House -- the only virgin property in Greenville's Pettigru Historic District -- into a vibrant and publicly accessible native plant Woodland Garden! To participate, contact Erin Knight at eknight@upstateforever.org or (864) 250-0500x26. Meet at the lot next door to 620 Pettigru Street; bring work gloves and, optionally, a shovel or spade. If you have questions on the day of the event, call Carlton Owen at (864) 232-0909.

October 20, Creating Suburban Neighborhoods of Lasting Value, Spartanburg Marriott, Azalea Ballroom, Spartanburg, SC, 7:30 a.m. The final "Building Our Future" Speaker Series event of 2006 features Tom Low, Director of Town Planning for Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co. of Charlotte, and Rick Sumerel, Chief Operating Officer of Verdae Development, Inc. of Greenville. The series, sponsored by *Upstate Forever* and the Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce, provides a forum to address the economic benefits of planning for sensible growth and development as they relate to Spartanburg County. There is no charge for this event, but reservations are requested. To register, call *Upstate Forever's* Spartanburg office at (864) 327-0090 or e-mail spartanburg@upstateforever.org. For general information, visit www.upstateforever.org/ufs_event.html.

October 21, Rain Gardens 101, Upstate Forever office, Greenville, SC, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. For those with or without a green thumb, come see what it means to have a rain garden in the Upstate. We may even build a small rain garden at the *Upstate Forever* office! For more information or to register, contact Gretchen Wilson at (864) 250-0500 or gwilson@upstateforever.org.

November 4, Upstate Forever Annual Meeting, Rocky Bottom Retreat and Conference Center, Sunset, SC, 10:00 a.m. Get to know our new staff, mingle with other members, learn more about *Upstate Forever's* work, and experience some of the special places in the Upstate at our 2006 Annual Meeting. For more information or to register, contact Gretchen Wilson at (864) 250-0500 or gwilson@upstateforever.org.

Other Events

September 25-27, The Environment: Critical Issues in the 21st Century, Furman University, Greenville, SC. The Richard W. Riley Institute's annual national conference will feature former U.S. Senator John Glenn. Panels and addresses, which are all free and open to the public, will take place at various times over the three days, including an event at 8:00 each evening. See www.furman.edu/riley/docs/EnvirConfSchedule206.pdf for the complete schedule, locations, and details. For more information, contact the Riley Institute at (864) 294-3251 or info@rileyinstitute.org.

September 28, Greenville County Tree Policy Advisory Committee, Greenville County Square, Conference Room A, 8:00 a.m. This committee will be discussing specific recommendations for inclusion in a future county-wide tree ordinance. Public comments are welcome during the first 15 minutes. Meetings are also scheduled for October 12 and 26. For more information about the committee, read our "Keeping the Green in Greenville" newsletter at www.upstateforever.org/prog_tree/ktgg_060907.pdf. You may also contact Diane Eldridge, a member of the Committee, at diane.eldridge@charter.net.

October 1, Screening: "An Inconvenient Truth," Greenville Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 7:00 p.m. A free screening of former Vice President Al Gore's noted film about global warming, followed by a discussion. This local showing is part of a nationwide project sponsored by The Regeneration Project (www.theregenerationproject.org) and Greater Washington Interfaith Power and Light (www.gwipl.org) with the goal of mobilizing a national religious response to global warming while promoting renewable energy, energy efficiency and conservation. For more information, contact Christine Grewcock at 859-0140; for directions, see www.greenvilleuu.org/directions.htm.

October 7, GROW (Gardening and Recycling Organics Wisely) Workshop, Greenville City Hall 1st Floor, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. This workshop features sessions on: gardening for your watershed, soils, plant identification, composting, and integrated pest management. Fee of \$10 includes lunch, snacks, notebook, and environmentally friendly gas can. This event is sponsored by DHEC, City of Greenville Solid Waste Division, and Greenville County Solid Waste Division. To register, call (864) 467-8300.

October 17, The Plants from Hell, Dental Building, Greenville Technical College Barton Campus, 7:00 p.m. New invaders sneak in each day, but a small army of vigilant folks is trying hard to keep the worst of these pests out of South Carolina. Learn how we can help. The Upstate Chapter of the SC Native Plant Society welcomes speaker Kathy Ellingson of the Clemson University Department of Plant Industry. For more information, visit www.scnps.org.

October 24, The Trials, Tribulations, Joys, and Successes of an Itinerant Gardener on the Roads Less Taken, Cultural Center Auditorium, Lander University, Greenwood, SC, 7:00 p.m. Horticultural researcher and author Dr. Michael Dirr presents the Second Annual Lander Arboretum Lecture, an evening of insights and adventures that will delight any gardener or plant professional. Tickets are \$5, and all proceeds will benefit the Lander University Arboretum. For tickets, call (864) 993-7866.

7. Lots o' Links

Valuing the Suburbs: Why Some "Improvements" Lower Home Prices. An analysis of new data showing that some features, such as fences, sidewalks, in-law suites, and home offices, actually lower the sales prices of conventional suburban homes. The conclusions have important implications for developers of New Urbanist communities.

The Green Rule. The organization Faith and the Common Good has drawn from the world's faith traditions to create The Green Rule: "Do unto the Earth as you would have it do unto you." On their website is beautiful poster of a tree with branches bearing quotations from fourteen world religions about the sacredness of creation.

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[Lowe's to Sell Expandable Katrina Cottage Kits.](#) Gulf Coast residents can buy pre-fab home kits for as little as \$45 per square foot.

[Cultural Environmentalism: A Deeper Shade of Green.](#) This *National Geographic* article by noted author Bill McKibbin argues for a new kind of environmentalism.

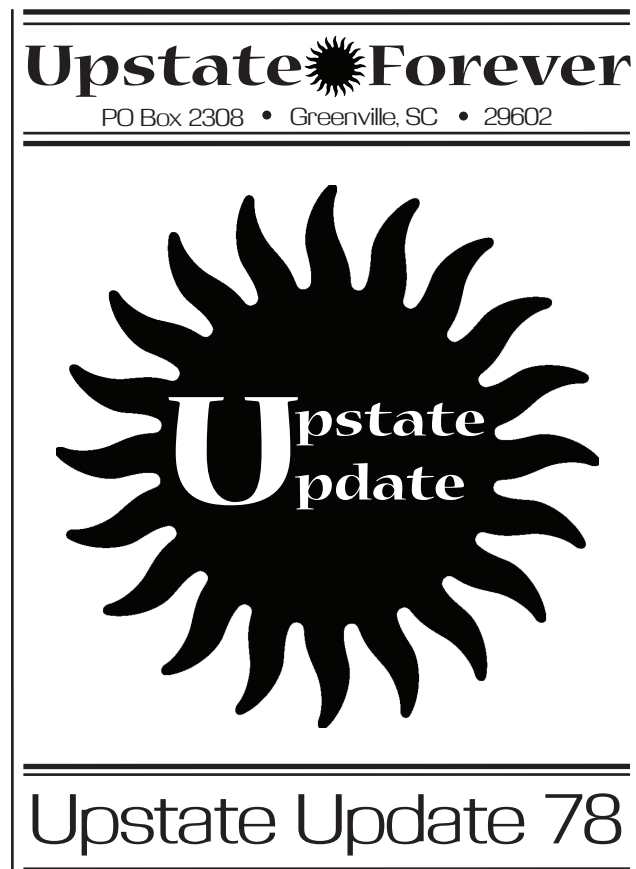
[Most Americans Believe They Know More About the Environment Than They Actually Do.](#) A ten-year study of environmental literacy finds that about 80% of Americans are heavily influenced by incorrect or outdated environmental myths, and just 12% of Americans can pass a basic quiz on awareness of energy topics. However, 95% of this public supports environmental education in our schools, and 80% believe that private companies should train their employees to help solve environmental problems.

[Massachusetts Home Made from "Big Dig" Scraps.](#)

8. Quote of the Month

"Sustainability has at its heart the idea of enlightened simplicity—which in its essence demands neither a vow of poverty nor a life of rural homesteading. It can be practiced in cities and suburbs, townhouses and condominiums, on college campuses. It requires neither pinched frugality nor holier-than-thou virtue. Its basic requirement is a deliberate ordering of priorities so as to distinguish between the necessary and superfluous, the useful and wasteful."

- 2006 President's Report: Sustainability and Furman University



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