

Upstate Update

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

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1. Stumphouse Mountain Threatened

Last month, a Florida developer proposed to purchase the former Walhalla Watershed property at Stumphouse Mountain in Oconee County, setting off a firestorm of protest and a counteroffer from a conservation group. The 440-acre property in question is currently owned by the City of Walhalla and is adjacent to the historic Stumphouse Tunnel and Issaqueena Falls, a popular recreational destination. If this section of Stumphouse Mountain is developed, it will be altered forever, with adverse environmental consequences for the mountain, the falls, and the entire region.

A conservation partnership that includes *Upstate Forever*, The Nature Conservancy, Naturaland Trust, and Chattooga Conservancy proposed to find a conservation solution to address the City's fiscal needs while protecting the land. Naturaland Trust followed up with an offer of \$2.2 million--comparable to the developer's offer--to purchase the property, which it would place under permanent protection. The Department of Natural Resources has also stated its interest in purchasing the property. Concerned citizens, including many *Upstate Forever* members, wrote letters, made phone calls, signed petitions, and attended Council meetings to urge the City to weigh other possibilities before signing an irrevocable agreement with the developer.

On February 8, rather than authorizing the sale to the developer as originally scheduled, the Council agreed to wait. At a subsequent public hearing on Feb. 15, a standing-room-only crowd filled the 170-seat meeting room, with the overwhelming majority opposed to developing the property. We urge Oconee-area members to continue to press the Walhalla City Council to make the right decision and enable the preservation of this truly special land.

2. Art and Conservation Celebration a Grand Success

It was a beautiful night on January 27 for *Upstate Forever's* first annual Art and Conservation Celebration. More than 200 people attended the event at Saffron's in Greenville's West End, enjoying nature-based paintings, sculptures, and photography by 37 prominent artists along with delicious food and drinks. In the end, over \$10,000 was raised to support *Upstate Forever's* programs. Our heartfelt thanks go to our generous sponsors: Whole Foods Market, Irene Morrah Fine Art, and *The Greenville News*; to the talented artists who agreed to donate 50% or more of their sale proceeds; to our wonderful volunteers: Donna Astle, Alan Ethridge, Charles Gentry, Colin Hagen, Jason Hayden, Irene Morrah, Fritz Mumford, Dan Roberts, and Ric Standridge; and to our tireless staff members John Tynan and Ralph Settle. See you next year!

Promoting sensible growth and protecting special places in the Upstate

3. National Forests for Sale—Again

You may remember last year’s controversial proposal by the Bush administration to sell off over 300,000 acres of national forest land to fund rural schools (see [UU73](#)). The proposal was shelved after overwhelming negative public response to this ill-conceived plan. Well, here we go again. The proposed US Forest Service budget for fiscal year 2008 requires the sale of 273,806 acres. This figure includes 4,656 acres in the Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests in South Carolina. Upstate counties affected are Union (591 acres), Laurens (9 acres), and Oconee (1233 acres).

While the Forest Service has, according to their official web site, always retained a “very limited authority” to sell off land holdings deemed difficult to manage, isolated, or ecologically insignificant, the magnitude of the proposed sale and the designation of half of the funds generated for non-forest-related projects raise a huge red flag. Their web site also notes that “the tool used most often for conveyance of lands within National Forest boundaries is land exchange,” not outright sale. *Upstate Forever* believes that any sale of public land should occur slowly and deliberately, with no net loss of acreage. Unfortunately, that is not what the current proposal calls for.

Selling off public lands is not a sustainable or sensible way to fund rural schools or any other recurring federal budget item. Additionally, in fast-growing regions like the Upstate, public lands are becoming ever more valuable; thus, their protection should be a top priority.

Please contact your congressional representatives stating your opposition to including this proposed sale in the FY08 budget--it was a bad idea last year and is still a bad idea this year.

Sen. Jim DeMint
340 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Phone: (202) 224-6121
Upstate phone: 864-233-5366
[Email Sen. DeMint](#)

Sen. Lindsey Graham
290 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Phone: (202) 224-5972
Upstate phone: (864) 250-1417
[Email Sen. Graham](#)

Rep. Gresham Barrett (3rd District)
439 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: (202) 225-5301

Anderson phone: (864) 224-7401
Greenwood phone: (864) 223-8251
[Email Rep. Barrett](#)

Rep. Bob Inglis (4th District)
330 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: (202) 225-6030
Greenville phone: (864) 232-1141
Spartanburg phone: (864) 582-6422
Union phone: (864) 427-2205
[Email Rep. Inglis](#)

Rep. John Spratt (5th District)
1401 Longworth Building
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: (202) 225-5501
Rock Hill phone: (803) 327-1114
[Email Rep. Spratt](#)

For a parcel by parcel listing of proposed sale properties, visit www.fs.fed.us/land/staff/spd.html. To learn more about the Forest Service’s policy on land sales, see www.fs.fed.us/land/staff/disposal.html.

4. *Upstate Forever* Makes an Impact at the State House

On February 13, *Upstate Forever* had its own Conservation Lobby Day at the SC General Assembly. We came to Columbia in full force, with a whopping 23 representatives, plus one journalist who followed us for the day. This was the best turnout of any conservation organization this year. Following a briefing by the Conservation Voters of South Carolina and the SC Coastal Conservation League, we proceeded to the State House, where we wrote notes and spoke to as many legislators as we could, focusing on funding for the SC Conservation Bank, DOT reform, regulatory takings/community protections, and other conservation issues. After lunch, we fanned out to visit our Senate and House members in their offices.

A huge thank you goes out to the wonderful *Upstate Forever* members who gave up an entire day to make their voices heard in Columbia: Dick Carr, Emily Davis, Jason Hayden, Suzanne and Hans Hoogeveen, Tom Keith, Tom Kester (*Upstate Forever* board chairman), Bridget O'Donoghue, Wayne Pendergrass, Boots Plyler, Robert Stenhouse, and Kathy Taylor. We also thank our two interns, Colin Hagan and Mary Hays Hughuley, as well as the nine staff members who attended. We hope to see you all again next year!

You can read Jeanne Brooks' wonderful [article](#) about Lobby Day in *The Greenville News*; there was also great [coverage](#) in the *Spartanburg Herald-Journal*. To stay informed about pressing issues in the General Assembly, [sign up](#) for weekly email Legislative Updates from *Upstate Forever*.

5. Tax Incentives for Land Preservation May Become Permanent

US Sen. Max Baucus (D-MT), along with co-sponsor Sen. Charles Grassley (R-IA), has introduced S. 469, a bill that would make permanent the recently expanded temporary tax incentive for conservation. President Bush also included in his fiscal year 2008 budget a provision to make the tax incentives permanent.

The tax incentives for conservation donations were instituted by Congress in late 2006 (see [UU77](#) for more information) and are set to expire at the end of 2007. S.469 would prevent that, and boost the incentive to landowners of modest incomes to make donations for conservation. A recent [article](#) in the *Wall Street Journal* features landowners who have used the new incentives to protect their land.

For more information on the expanded tax incentives, visit the Land Trust Alliance website at www.lta.org. To find out more about donating a conservation easement on your land, contact *Upstate Forever's* Land Trust Director Dana Leavitt at 250-0500x23, or visit www.upstateforever.org/programs/landtrust.html.

6. Viney Honored by SC Wildlife Federation

At its annual meeting on January 20, the South Carolina Wildlife Federation (SCWF) presented its prestigious Conservationist of the Year Award to Angela Viney, Director of *Upstate Forever's* Sustainable Communities Program and Spartanburg Office Director. Angela formerly served as Executive Director of the SCWF. This is a well-deserved honor for one of the most respected and effective conservation leaders in our state. How fortunate we are to have her on the *Upstate Forever* team! Congratulations, Angela!

Also honored was Frank Holleman, an active *Upstate Forever* member and longtime Greenville conservationist. Frank received the SCWF's Water Conservation Award for his tireless efforts on behalf of the Reedy River and Lake Conestee. Furman University received the Organization Award for its commitment to sustainability and conservation education. And Rep. Bob Inglis was named Legislator of the Year for his progressive leadership on conservation issues in Congress and especially among conservatives. Well done!

7. *Imagine Anderson Seeks Citizen Feedback*

As we reported in October, Anderson County is in the midst of creating a comprehensive vision plan to improve the County's quality of life and foster economic growth over the next 20 years. After conducting a series of community meetings in the fall, Imagine Anderson has completed a draft plan and is now seeking citizen feedback. The plan includes sections on growth management, education, economic development, health and human services, and leisure and recreation.

Upstate Forever applauds Anderson County's initiative and found excellent goals in the draft plan, including the creation of green space and revitalization of downtowns. We did submit a letter to Imagine Anderson with several suggestions, including creating a "conservation" category, including stronger language concerning land use plans, and aiming to protect--not "develop"--such natural treasures as Lake Hartwell.

If you live, work, shop, recreate, or own property in Anderson County, we encourage you to also get involved and share your vision of the County's future. You can view the draft plan online at www.aimnewmedia.net/imagineanderson/documents/draft_plan.pdf. Comments can be submitted electronically via this [form](#) or by mail to: Imagine Anderson, Anderson Chamber of Commerce, 907 North Main Street, Suite 200, Anderson, SC 29621.

8. *Upcoming Events*

Upstate Forever Events

February 24, Lake Conestee Operation Clean Sweep, Mauldin, SC, 8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Lake Conestee Nature Park supports a lush bottomland forest and rich diversity of wildlife and contains over 2 miles of trails and boardwalks. Unfortunately, Lake Conestee serves as a major repository for the debris entering the Reedy River. To help restore this area, meet at the former Municipal Stadium on Mauldin Road; refreshments will be provided. For more information, contact John Tynan at jtynan@upstateforever.org or (864) 250-0500x31.

March 10, Trout Stream Hike, Greenville, SC, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. For anglers, or for those of you who just love water, we'll take a moderate, 3-mile hike along the beautiful Reedy Cove Creek, a tributary of the Easttoe River. We'll fish and learn about aquatic habitat in our wild and beautiful rivers. For more information or to register, contact Gretchen Wilson at (864) 250-0500 or gwilson@upstateforever.org.

March 14, Climate Change and Other 21st Century Catastrophes that will Impact Society, Watkins Room, Furman University, Greenville, SC, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. Noted author and engaging speaker James Howard Kunstler will speak about climate change and its relation to the U.S. and world economies and our dependence on oil. Kunstler's acclaimed books include *The Long Emergency* and *The Geography of Nowhere*. For information, contact John Tynan at jtynan@upstateforever.org or (864) 250-0500x31.

Other Events

February 26 - April 16 (Mondays), Landscape and Garden Design, Hayden Conference Center, SC Botanical Garden, Clemson, SC, 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. Clemson's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute presents this course on landscape and garden design, covering principles of design, planting aids (such as dealing with clay) and easy gardening tips. You will learn how to produce designs for your property to create a pleasing environment. Fee: \$50.00. For more information, call (864) 656-6912 or e-mail OLLI@Clemson.edu.

March 3, Every Day is Earth Day Festival, Temple of Israel, Greenville, SC, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Enjoy activities, crafts, games, food, music and informational displays for families. Cost is \$2 per child; all proceeds to benefit the Temple's Early Childhood Center. For more information, call (864) 787-4672.

March 6-7, The State of South Carolina's Trails, Piedmont Forestry Center, Tamassee, SC. Learn about future trail systems, emerging trends in outdoor recreation, and successes in trail funding and design at this conference, sponsored by the SC Forestry Commission, SCPRT, SCDNR, and USDA Forest Service. For more information, contact Jennie Morris at (803) 896-8852.

March 14, South Carolina Solar Council General Meeting, Burgess Theatre, Furman University, Greenville, SC, 4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. The South Carolina Solar Council promotes wide utilization of solar energy through such means as providing solar energy education, promoting the application of solar energy technologies, and acting as a solar energy technologies expert resource for the people of South Carolina. For more information, visit www.scsolarcouncil.org.

March 15, Gardening by the Moon, Hayden Conference Center, SC Botanical Garden, Clemson, SC, 11:30 a.m. -1:00 p.m. Are all days equally advantageous for gardening? Find out in this course from Clemson's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, which will look at how the moon's phases affect the earth and the plants that grow on it. The course is free, but registration is required: call (864) 656-6912 or e-mail OLLI@Clemson.edu.

March 15, South Carolina Chapter of the National Brownfield Association Reception, Innovate Building, Greenville, SC, 5:30-7:30 p.m. This event is an opportunity for property owners, developers, service professionals, and governmental representatives to share information about the responsible development of brownfields. The evening will feature a presentation by Greenville Mayor Knox White and will showcase the Innovate building, a historic textile mill. RSVP by March 10 to kwebb@synterracorp.com or call (864) 421-9999 for more information.

March 20, South Carolina's Special Places, Founders Hall, Southern Wesleyan University, Central, SC, 7:00 p.m. Dr. Patrick McMillan, host of the new television series *Expeditions*, will speak at the monthly meeting of the Upstate Chapter of the SC Native Plant Society. Learn about the natural treasures of South Carolina that can be found nowhere else. For more information, visit www.scnps.org.

March 31, Native Plant Sale, Jeff Lynch Appliance Center, Greenville, SC, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. It's time for the annual Native Plant Sale by the Upstate Chapter of the SC Native Plant Society in the Jeff Lynch parking lot on Roper Mountain Road. SCNPS members will be available to answer questions and make plant recommendations. For more information, visit www.scnps.org.

April 14, Native Plant Sale, Landrum Depot, Landrum, SC, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. The Upstate Chapter of the SC Native Plant Society in will hold its first Native Plant Sale in Spartanburg County. SCNPS members will be available to answer questions and make plant recommendations. For more information, visit www.scnps.org.

9. Lots o' Links

[Governor Sanford Says Global Warming is for Real.](#) South Carolina's governor will appoint a commission to determine how our state can best address the issue of climate change.

[Stepping It Up on Climate Change.](#) On April 14, a new organization called Step It Up 2007 is inviting organizations to hold rallies and events across the country to inspire action on climate change. So far, over 300 events are planned in 39 states, including two here in the Upstate.

[A Relic Tree From the Dinosaur-Era.](#) The Wollemi Pine, one of the world's oldest and rarest tree species belonging to a 200 million-year-old plant family, is making a comeback.

[Urban Cover-Up.](#) Cities reap rewards for decking highways with parks.

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[1,500 Feet Above the Upstate.](#) Jumping Off Rock in the Jocassee Gorges area offers spectacular views of three states.

[Easley family makes gift to the city.](#) Catherine Ladnier is donating 37 acres of land (already placed under easement with *Upstate Forever*) to the City of Easley to be used as a park and educational center.

[Upstate House: Sustainable Forestry Initiative Certified.](#) An interview with *Upstate Forever* board member Carlton Owen in a national publication features Upstate House.

[Walkable Neighborhoods Reduce Driving.](#) A new study makes the connection between sprawl and obesity.

10. Quote of the Month

“I feel like I accomplished something. Yes. My voice was heard, no matter how briefly.”

-Boots Plyler, *Upstate Forever* member, on her experience participating in *Upstate Forever's* Lobby Day at the SC General Assembly, quoted in *The Greenville News*, 2/15/07

