

Upstate Update

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

In this Upstate Update:

1. Tree Committee Releases Report
2. Progress in Protecting Stumphouse Mountain
3. Greenville Passes Big Box Design Standards
4. Governor Speaks Out on Climate Change
5. Mayors Support Energy Alternatives
6. *Upstate Forever* Chosen for Pilot Accreditation Program
7. Are You a Conservation Buyer?
8. Lake Conestee Clean Up
9. Upcoming Events
10. Lots o' Links
11. Quote of the Month

1. Tree Committee Releases Report

One of Greenville's greatest assets -- our green infrastructure -- may be better protected thanks to the hard work of the Greenville County Tree Policy Advisory Committee. Readers may recall -- or have been a part of -- the packed County Council meetings when a county tree protection ordinance, regulating new development, was first proposed in 2005. In October of that year, a citizens committee was appointed to study the issue and report back to Council. Former *Upstate Forever* staff member Diane Eldridge, who had been a convincing and persistent voice for creating a tree protection ordinance, was one of twelve people appointed to this committee.

On February 20, after a year of intensive collaboration, research and public meetings, Committee Chairman David Holmes presented to Greenville County Council the Committee's unanimous conclusion: yes, Greenville County should have a comprehensive tree protection ordinance. After hearing the presentation, the Council empowered the Tree Policy Advisory Committee to draft an ordinance that incorporates their specific recommendations. Some of these recommendations include: hiring a county arborist to monitor and enforce tree protection, establishing tree minimums for new developments, and creating a tree bank for developments that cannot fulfill planting minimums onsite.

We sincerely thank Diane Eldridge and her fellow Committee members for all their hard work over the past year. Next, it is crucial that the Committee's findings and expertise are utilized to create rules with "teeth." Once the draft ordinance is complete, we will share our assessment of it with our members and encourage you to join us in advocating for an ordinance that protects Greenville's treasured tree cover.

2. Progress in Protecting Stumphouse Mountain

In [UU82](#), we reported that Walhalla City Council was considering selling to a developer the 440-acre Walhalla Watershed property on Stumphouse Mountain. The threat to this exceptional land was followed by a huge public outcry. In late February, the developer withdrew his offer before the City Council's scheduled vote on the proposal.

We are pleased to report that on March 13, Walhalla City Council voted unanimously to work with *Upstate Forever* in submitting an application to the South Carolina Conservation Bank for funding to place a conservation easement on the property, forever keeping it undeveloped and in the public domain. We are honored to work with the City on this project and are already drafting the Conservation Bank application.

Promoting sensible growth and protecting special places in the Upstate

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This is a great example of the power of grassroots activism. Hundreds of Walhalla residents and many others throughout the region got involved and made it clear they did not want to see this special place turned into a private development. And City Council listened!

3. Greenville Passes Big Box Design Standards

Future development along Greenville's commercial corridors should be less ugly in the future, as Greenville County Council recently passed an ordinance regulating the design of "Big Box" developments. Big Boxes are huge stores, often housing chain retailers; in Greenville's ordinance they are defined as buildings 40,000 square feet or larger. New projects will now be required to use neutral colors, be primarily constructed from natural materials or concrete, have varied facades and roof lines, and conceal loading docks and trash containers, among other standards.

While we applaud Greenville County's ordinance as a step in the right direction, the massive scale of these stores requires standards that do more than simply improve aesthetics. Additional standards and safeguards are needed to reduce the tremendous impact these stores have on traffic, the environment, and surrounding land uses. We can go further, as other communities have done, by regulating store size, requiring renewal plans for future vacancies, eliminating parking minimums, moving some parking areas to the sides and rear of buildings, controlling stormwater through the use of permeable pavement and appropriately designed landscaping, planning for traffic impacts, and requiring bus shelters and other transit accessibility. With such standards in place, area residents can continue to benefit from the convenience and low prices offered by Big Box retailers while ensuring that the resources and quality of life of Greenville County are protected.

To learn more about the issues surrounding Big Box developments, visit www.upstateforever.org/program_bigbox.html. To read about *Upstate Forever's* Big Box Initiative in Spartanburg, visit www.upstateforever.org/ufs_bigbox.html.

4. Governor Speaks Out on Climate Change

Last month, Governor Mark Sanford issued an executive order establishing a Climate, Energy and Commerce Advisory Committee, charged with submitting an action plan by March 2008. In his statement, the Governor took a strong stance on the conservative's duty to address climate change:

"For the last twenty years of my life, I have seen the ever-so-gradual effects of rising ocean levels at our farm in Beaufort County. In some cases, it's been watching pine trees die in that fragile zone between uplands and salt marsh; in other cases it's meant finding roots in areas that would never grow a tree, given the current salt water levels. While I understand very clearly the debate on whether or not these events come as a result of man's activity, or just the effects of nature taking its course, I've had other personal experiences that strongly suggest to me that man is having an impact on the environment...

"...while it's been my longtime belief as a conservative that I should exercise as many rights and freedoms as possible, those rights and freedoms end when they begin to infringe upon the rights of others...So based on this notion of some people losing rights and freedoms because of the actions of others - in either the quality of the air they breathe, geography they hold dear, the cost of their insurance, or future environmental impacts to children they love, I think it is very reasonable for us to study climate change and its possible impacts for South Carolina."

5. Mayors Support Energy Alternatives

And speaking of climate change, a bipartisan coalition of mayors has come together to form the South Carolina Mayors for Climate and Energy Leadership. The 12 mayors represent 480,000 South Carolina citizens. Participating from the Upstate are Mayors Bill Barnet of Spartanburg, Knox White of

Greenville, Floyd Nicholson of Greenwood, and Bruce Morgan of Union. In a press conference on February 28, the mayors described their efforts to conserve energy, increase the use of alternative fuels, and cut greenhouse gas emissions. In particular, they cited the City of Spartanburg's efforts to promote active living by becoming more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly and the City of Union's commitment to using bio-diesel in their municipal fleet.

For more information about the Mayors' organization, visit www.targetglobalwarming.org/new/files/scmayors.pdf.

6. *Upstate Forever* Chosen for Pilot Accreditation Program

Upstate Forever has been selected as one of 22 land conservation organizations in the United States—and the only one in the Southeast—to participate in a pilot project for a new national accreditation program for land trust programs. The accreditation program will recognize organizations meeting national standards for administering and managing land trust programs.

The accreditation program, which is being tested this year and will be available to other interested organizations beginning in 2008, will enable land trusts to join the ranks of other nonprofit organizations that gain professional recognition through accreditation, such as museums, zoos, aquariums, colleges and hospitals. Accreditation will assure the public that a land trust meets national standards for excellence, upholds the public trust and ensures that conservation efforts are permanent. Currently, there are more than 1,660 land trusts across the country.

Upstate Forever applied to participate in this pilot program believing that accreditation will build even broader public support and trust for our work protecting significant lands and resources in the Upstate, such as ecologically sensitive areas, working farms, scenic vistas, wildlife habitat, historic sites, and areas bordering rivers and streams. *Upstate Forever* currently has 39 conservation agreements protecting nearly 8,000 acres in the region, with more currently in progress. More information about our Land Trust's efforts can be found at www.upstateforever.org/programs_landtrust.html.

7. Are You a Conservation Buyer?

Another new initiative of *Upstate Forever's* Land Trust Program is a conservation buyers' registry. Essentially a matchmaking service for landowners and buyers, our Land Trust staff will identify "conservation buyers," who desire to purchase significant lands and are willing to protect them, and match them with "conservation sellers," landowners who need to sell wonderful properties, but don't wish to see them all cut up into development. In most cases, some limited use of the conservation property is appropriate, such as a few single-family residences, farming, and timber management. In addition, tax benefits might be available to the buyer.

If you are on the lookout for a great conservation property, please contact Dana Leavitt, Director of *Upstate Forever's* Land Trust Program, at (864) 250-0500x23 or dleavitt@upstateforever.org.

8. Lake Conestee Clean Up

For more than 100 years, much of Greenville's trash has ended up—intentionally and unintentionally—in the Reedy River, floating downstream and settling in Lake Conestee. To combat this build-up of refuse in the newly-opened Lake Conestee Nature Park, the Conestee Foundation, *Upstate Forever*, Friends of the Reedy River, the Saluda-Reedy Watershed Consortium, and the SC Water Resources Center jointly sponsored a clean-up day on February 24. That morning, 150 dogged volunteers removed a mind-boggling 8.57 tons of trash, plus 152 tires, from the lake and surrounding wetlands and forest. Volunteers represented diverse companies and organizations, including Michelin, ScanSource, Tekgraf, Western Carolina Regional Sewer Authority, *Upstate Forever*, Friends of the Reedy River, PalmettoPride, Greenville Organic Foods

Organization, Gamma Sigma Sigma Sorority at Clemson, JL Mann High School, and Boy Scouts of America. The Belmont Fire District was on-site for emergencies and worked at the lake as well, while the Greenville County Sheriff's Office sent over members of their Dive and Environmental Teams.

Our heartfelt thanks go out to all the wonderful sponsors and volunteers for cleaning up Greenville County's hidden gem.

9. Upcoming Events

Upstate Forever Events

March 22, Great Expectations: Spartanburg County Citizens and the Land Use Planning Process, Olin Theater, Wofford College, Spartanburg, SC, 7:00 p.m. Spartanburg County Assistant Administrator Chris Story and Planning Director David Rutherford will present information on the land use planning process, including an overview of current policies as well as insight into opportunities for citizen input. This meeting is intended to clarify the process Spartanburg County will soon begin that will result in the county's new comprehensive plan. Sponsored by *Upstate Forever*, the League of Women Voters, and the PRIDE Task Force, this event is free and open to the public. For more information, contact spartanburg@upstateforever.org or (864) 327-0090.

April 3, Using Hydrology as an Integrating Framework for Development, University Center, Greenville, SC, 7:45 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. Join *Upstate Forever* and the Home Builders Association of Greenville for the second event in our 2007 Low Impact Development Breakfast Series: a public presentation by John Knott of the Noisette Company. For more information, visit www.saludareedy.org/events.html. The event is free of charge and breakfast will be provided. RSVP to John Tynan at jtynan@upstateforever.org or (864) 250-0500x31.

April 14, Saluda Scenic Paddle, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Join us for a leisurely paddle down a pristine stretch of the Saluda River. Learn what a "blueway" is all about and how it might work in our region. For more information or to register, contact Gretchen Wilson at (864) 250-0500 or gwilson@upstateforever.org.

May 1, Light Imprint New Urbanism, University Center, Greenville, SC, 7:45 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. Join *Upstate Forever* and the Home Builders Association of Greenville for the third event in our 2007 Low Impact Development Breakfast Series: a public presentation by Tom Low of Duany, Plater-Zyberk & Company. For more information, visit www.saludareedy.org/events.html. The event is free of charge and breakfast will be provided. RSVP to John Tynan at jtynan@upstateforever.org or (864) 250-0500x31 to reserve your place.

Other Events

March 20-23, Recycling: Main Street to Your Street, Hyatt Greenville, Greenville, SC. The Carolina Recycling Association will hold its 17th annual conference, featuring workshops, tours, presentation of awards, and a golf tournament. For more information or to register, visit www.cra-recycle.org.

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 22, Freedom of Information Act/Open Government Forum, Greenville City Hall, First Floor Conference Room, Greenville, SC, 7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. Sponsored by the Sierra Club, this forum will engage citizen activists and governmental representatives in an informative and lively discussion on open

Upstate update

NUMBER 83
MARCH
2007

government and obtaining public records. Refreshments will be served. For more information, contact Dennis Chamberlain at (864) 331-3069 or Kathleen Kempe at (864) 213-9504.

March 30, EarthCraft House Builder Training, Greenville, SC, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. EarthCraft is a voluntary green building program that serves as a blueprint for healthy, comfortable homes that reduce utility bills and protect the environment. The class is sponsored by the HomeBuilders Association of Greenville and will be taught by EarthCraft technical staff. Cost is \$125. For more information, contact Eston Rogers at (864) 254-0133 or erogers@hbaofgreenville.com.

March 30-31, Connecting Natural and Social Systems, Furman University, Greenville, SC. The Environmental Education Association of South Carolina will hold its annual spring conference, featuring workshops, hikes, field trips, an auction, and awards. For registration information and a detailed schedule, go to <http://alpha1.fmarion.edu/~scenvedu/EEASC-S-2007.html>.

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 on hand to answer questions and make recommendations. For more information, visit www.scnps.org.

April 3, Greenville Green Beer Nite, Barley's Taproom, Greenville, SC, 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Green Beer Nite is an unofficial gathering that provides an informal setting for people interested in environmental issues to talk, meet, and network. This event will repeat on the first Tuesday of every month. Contact Jessica Breland at (864) 569-8221 with questions.

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 will hold its first Native Plant Sale in Spartanburg County. SCNPS members will be on hand to answer questions and make recommendations. For information, visit www.scnps.org.

April 14, Taste of the Backcountry, Walnut Grove Plantation and Historic Price House, Woodruff, SC, 11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Experience backcountry South Carolina as it was in the early 1800's, with historic cooking and domestic arts demonstrations, tours of the Price House and slave cabin, and period music. Admission fee is \$5. For more information, visit www.spartanburghistory.org or call (864) 576-6546.

April 21, Reedy River PaddleFest and 5K Trail Run, Greenville Tech Brashier Campus, Simpsonville, SC. Paddle the river and participate in a short trail run on Earth Day! The PaddleFest is organized by the Greenville County Recreation District, Friends of the Reedy River, the South Carolina Water Resources Center, and area paddlers. Proceeds from the event benefit Friends of the Reedy River. For more information about this event, visit www.gcrd.org/images/paddlefest%20flyer.pdf.

April 21, Mountain Foot Festival, Clinton House Plantation, Clinton, SC, 10:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. Presented by the Joe Adair Outdoor Education Association and the Laurens County Chamber of Commerce, this benefit features a wide variety of activities, including shooting clays, kayaking and canoeing, a walk and talk with naturalist Rudy Mancke, a sit-down dinner, and live entertainment and dancing. Tickets are \$45 and must be purchased by April 21. Call Laura Blind at (864) 984-5492 with questions; for a complete schedule and ticket purchase instructions, visit www.laurenscounty.org/cc/pdf/2007_footfestival.pdf.

10. Lots o' Links

[Homebuilders Sitting Out Green Construction Trend](#). Some large residential builders say consumers are unwilling to pay for green features in new homes.

[Katrina Cottage to Replace School Portables](#). In Charlotte, a plan to adapt the Katrina Cottage housing model to temporary—or not-so-temporary—school buildings.

Upstate Update

NUMBER 83
MARCH
2007

[“Voters’ Remorse” in Oregon.](#) State residents and leaders are rethinking Measure 37, a controversial land use law trumpeted by property rights groups across the nation, including South Carolina.

[SC School Buses: Worst Polluters in the Nation.](#) According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, in 2006 the average school bus in our state released nearly three times as much soot as the average bus in Delaware.

[Honeybees disappearing; experts baffled.](#)

[Recycle Your Fleece.](#) Donate your worn-out Polartec fleece of any brand to Patagonia and the company will recycle it into new clothing.

11. Quote of the Month

“Clearly, we can’t change the world from Spartanburg, but we can do something to start the ball rolling.”

-Spartanburg Mayor Bill Barnet, at a press conference announcing the formation of the SC Mayors for Climate and Energy Leadership, quoted in the [Charleston] *Post and Courier*, 3/1/07

