

# Upstate update

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

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### **1. Controversy Erupts Over Cliffs Development; Upstate Forever and Cliffs Agree to a 45-Day "Truce"**

The Blue Ridge Mountains and development do not easily mix. With their steep slopes, permeable soils and small, pristine streams, the mountains are extremely vulnerable to improper development practices. Moreover, our mountains are recognized as an ecosystem of global significance with over 400 rare species of plants and animals and with more species of trees than in all of Europe. Land-disturbing activities can have a devastating impact on the flora and fauna of this extraordinary area.

So when *Upstate Forever* recently became aware of development plans that would severely impair the North Saluda River, we responded immediately. In a nutshell, Cliffs Communities has applied for permits from the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) and the US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) for two river-impacting activities at the Mountain Park development in northern Greenville County:

- The discharge of 175,000 gallons per day of sewage effluent into the river, at a location just north of Highway 11, rather than utilizing a "land discharge" system. The proposed plan would threaten trout habitat, waste clean water for golf course irrigation, and set a dangerous precedent for future development.
- Construction of a golf course along two and a half miles of the North Saluda, involving inadequate buffering and the piping or impounding of approximately a half mile of the river's tributaries. The proposed plan, grossly misrepresented as a "restoration," will turn a relatively healthy and diverse river corridor into a stabilized, hardened, and highly landscaped ditch. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has submitted extensive comments, strongly opposing the plan.

On November 13, we sent an action alert to many of our conservation partners and asked them to join us in opposing the issuance of the permits for these activities. The response was immediate and powerful. In less than two days, over 50 letters and emails were sent to DHEC and the Corps! Our action alert is now posted on our website: [www.upstateforever.org/index\\_doc/0711CliffsActionAlert.pdf](http://www.upstateforever.org/index_doc/0711CliffsActionAlert.pdf).

In response to the outcry, the Cliffs asked to meet with us last week, and of course we were willing to do so. During this meeting, they expressed a sincere interest in evaluating an environmentally sensitive design for the golf course and a "no discharge" land application system for the wastewater.

### **Promoting sensible growth and protecting special places in the Upstate**

We agreed to a 45-day “truce” to give us time to discuss these alternatives; the Cliffs has requested that the Corps and DHEC take no action on the pending applications during this 45-day period. We will keep you posted on our progress.

## 2. Greenville County Tree Ordinance Fails By One Vote

Advocates for “Keeping the Green in Greenville” suffered a painful defeat last week. After nearly three years of hard work by many dedicated citizens and elected officials, the proposed tree conservation ordinance for Greenville County fell short by just one vote at second reading on November 20. Voting in favor of the ordinance were Jim Burns, Cort Flint, Judy Gilstrap, Butch Kirven, Xanthene Norris, and Tony Trout. Council members voting against it were Sid Cates, Joe Dill, Lottie Gibson, Willis Meadows, Fred Payne, and Bob Taylor. Seven votes were needed to approve the ordinance and move it forward to third and final reading at the next Council meeting.

While this particular ordinance, crafted and unanimously endorsed by a diverse and knowledgeable Council-appointed committee, is dead for now, *Upstate Forever* and other advocates for tree protection will not give up. We are confident that in the not-too-distant future, objections by one or two Council members to some of the ordinance’s content can be overcome, a new version can be introduced, and tree protection will become a reality in Greenville County.

In the meantime, please thank the six [Council members](#) who showed the leadership and foresight to vote in favor of the ordinance. Our deep gratitude goes out to all of you who wrote and called Council members and attended meetings. Even though we did not achieve our goal this time, your voice definitely made an impact.

## 3. More on Ozone

In [UU88](#), we reported on the EPA’s current proposal to institute a more stringent ozone standard. *Upstate Forever* endorsed this change as necessary to protect public health. As a side benefit, it could serve as an impetus for the Upstate to get serious about managing growth.

In the article, we stated that “transportation sources of ozone, especially cars, are a huge problem that is only getting worse.” One of our readers took issue with this assertion and referred us to published [published EPA reports and fact sheets](#) showing that while vehicle miles traveled are predicted to increase by nearly 60% in Greenville County by 2025, new emissions control technology, stricter standards for new vehicles (after 2004), and reduced sulfur content in fuels are predicted to decrease emissions of the two main ozone precursors, volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides, by 65-75%.

However, the case for a more stringent ozone standard remains. Public health must be protected now. Children, the elderly, and people with asthma and other respiratory conditions cannot wait until 2025 for a reduction in ozone levels. And there is certainly an immediate and urgent need for more effective growth management policies in the Upstate.

## 4. *Upstate Forever* Names Annual Award Winners

November 10 was a glorious day for *Upstate Forever's* Annual Meeting, held at Camp Spearhead in northern Greenville County. Nearly 200 *Upstate Forever* members and other guests enjoyed the music of National Banjo Champion Charles Wood, presentations about our organization's accomplishments during the year, lunch from Saffron's, hikes, and fellowship. A highlight of the day was the presentation of our annual awards:

- **Concerned Citizens of Walhalla: Land Conservation Champion.** This dedicated grassroots group from Oconee County deserves a lot of the credit for the preservation of historic Stumphouse Mountain. In early 2007, the City of Walhalla entered into negotiations to sell the 440-acre Walhalla Watershed property, which included the mountain and the popular recreational destination Issaqueena Falls, to a developer from Florida. The group quickly mobilized public opposition to the proposal—an overflow crowd, carrying “Save Stumphouse Mountain” signs, greeted the Council at its next meeting. Eventually the City agreed to work with *Upstate Forever* in applying to the SC Conservation Bank for funding to purchase a conservation easement on the property. The project grew to include an adjacent 510 acres purchased with \$4.3 million in contributions from more than 1,000 donors.
- **Johnson Development: Sustainable Communities Champion.** Johnson Development Associates, Inc. is undertaking several mixed-use projects in the central business district of Spartanburg. The Haven at Easton (on the former Lan Yair golf course) is a model for their development program throughout the Southeast. It places significant emphasis on providing natural amenities in their communities, including walking trails, open green spaces and intimate landscaped settings, and thus encourages sustainable lifestyles.
- **Bill Brown: Clean Water Champion.** Bill Brown has worked in floodplain mapping and management, watershed planning, and stormwater management for some of the most rapidly-growing counties in the country. Bill came to the Upstate last year to run the City of Greenville's stormwater program and has already ushered in great improvements. He rewrote the City's stormwater ordinance from scratch and built support for its passage.
- **Gene Smith: Public Servant of the Year.** As Director of the Greenville County Recreation District, Gene Smith developed a plan to obtain funding for new and improved county parks. His strategy involved assembling a broad-based coalition of supporters that became known as the Tourism, Recreation and Athletic Coalition (TRAC), basing funding on a hospitality tax, and meeting one-on-one with each County Council member. The hospitality tax was approved by a vote of 10 to 2 and will generate approximately \$7 million per year for parks throughout Greenville County, thanks to Gene's vision, determination, and leadership. His success also inspired Spartanburg County Council to follow suit—they recently approved a hospitality tax for their parks as well!
- **Frank Holleman: Volunteer of the Year.** Frank Holleman played a key role in the preservation of two key Upstate properties this year. When a dispute erupted over the Camp Spearhead property in northern Greenville County, Frank brokered a deal to place it under permanent protection. The Oconee County native then led the huge effort to save Stumphouse Mountain and Issaqueena Falls in Walhalla. The talented attorney, passionate conservationist, and superb writer and speaker soon became known as “Mr. Stumphouse.” These two amazing success stories could not have been written without Frank.

- **Billy Campbell: Extraordinary Achievement Award.** Dr. Billy Campbell has received national recognition for his pioneering leadership of the green burial movement. In a green burial, bodies are literally allowed to return to the earth--“dust to dust.” Plain wooden or cardboard caskets or cloth shrouds are used. Vaults and embalming are not allowed, and the grave is marked by a small, natural marker. In 1998, Memorial Ecosystems, a company founded by Billy and his wife, Kimberley, established a green burial site in Oconee County called the Ramsey Creek Preserve. This year, Billy ensured the permanent protection of this property; his conservation agreement with *Upstate Forever* is the nation’s first conservation agreement on a green burial site.

## 5. SC Mayors Urge Leadership on Climate Change

Less than three months before South Carolina’s “first in the South” presidential primary, a bipartisan group of more than 100 South Carolina state mayors, led by Rock Hill Mayor Doug Echols, Union Mayor Bruce Morgan, and Charleston Mayor Joe Riley, on November 2 released an open letter to the 2008 presidential candidates urging them to make climate change solutions a priority in their campaigns.

The mayors’ letter recognizes the importance of energy independence and climate change to South Carolina residents, and calls on all 2008 presidential candidates, regardless of party, to make these issues a priority in their conversations with Palmetto State voters. Mayors who signed the letter preside over large cities and small towns, representing more than one million South Carolina residents. To underscore support for the mayors’ efforts on climate change, Carolina Climate Network and *Upstate Forever* placed ads featuring the letter in three major South Carolina daily newspapers.

“This is the issue of our time,” Charleston Mayor Joe Riley said. “The ability of future generations to live a good life depends on what we do now, and what the next President of the United States does to address climate change.”

To read the mayors’ letter and the list of signatories, visit <http://carolinaclimate.com/mayors%20ad.pdf>.

## 6. Upstate Forever Launches Green Building Blog and Webpage

If you are interested in green building, you must check out the new “Building Spartanburg Green” section of our website: [www.upstateforever.org/ufs\\_ECHMain.html](http://www.upstateforever.org/ufs_ECHMain.html). It is chock-full of information, both specific to Spartanburg and of general interest, including an overview of the EarthCraft building program, a listing of local green builders and suppliers, details of available tax incentives, and descriptions of local projects. One of those local projects is the future home of Curt McPhail and Molly Chappell-McPhail in Spartanburg. Curt has created a blog—“[Building Green on a Budget](http://buildinggreenc.blogspot.com/)”—to track the project’s progress and to discuss his experiences with the EarthCraft building process. Visit the blog at <http://buildinggreenc.blogspot.com/>.

## 7. Stay Informed—Subscribe to Email Bulletins

You may be missing out on important information and events! *Upstate Forever* distributes a number of different newsletters and bulletins, some of which are only available online. If you received this *Upstate Update* in the mail, you can also save paper and mailing costs by switching your subscription to the email version.

Simply email Nancy Fitzer at [nfitzer@upstateforever.org](mailto:nfitzer@upstateforever.org) and let us know which of the following you would like to receive:

- [Upstate Update](#) by email rather than US Mail; subscription will include timely alerts about events and pressing issues;
- [Keeping the Green in Greenville](#), an ad hoc bulletin updating the progress of the tree conservation ordinance in Greenville County;
- [Upstate Events](#), a listing of events of interest to our membership, including those sponsored by [Upstate Forever](#) as well as other organizations, published approximately once per month.

Visit our website at [www.upstateforever.org](http://www.upstateforever.org) to view these publications, along with our library of the [Upstate Advocate](#) (bi-annual newsletter), [Annual Report](#), and [On the Move](#) (Spartanburg County topics).

## 8. Upcoming Upstate Forever Events

Friday, January 18

**Building Our Future Speaker Series: Rethinking Outdoor Recreation**  
Spartanburg Marriott at Renaissance Park, Spartanburg, SC, 7:30 a.m.

The next event in our free breakfast series will feature Fran Mainella, former Director of the National Parks Service and current visiting scholar at Clemson University. As active living, sustainability, and livability movements have gained steam nationwide, more and more communities are learning to protect, invest in, and promote their recreation amenities. This presentation will focus on the benefits of parks and recreation facilities, best practices in designing and promoting them, and their overall economic impact. This event is hosted by [Upstate Forever](#), Partners for Active Living and the Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce. For more information or to register, contact [spartanburg@upstateforever.org](mailto:spartanburg@upstateforever.org) or call (864) 327-0090.

Thursday, January 31

**Art and Conservation Celebration**

Saffron's Sidewalk Cafe, West End Market, Greenville, SC, 6:00 - 10:00 p.m.

Our annual fundraiser returns featuring local and nationally-known artists showcasing their nature-based works. The artwork will be available for sale, with at least 50% of the purchase price benefiting [Upstate Forever](#). Delicious edibles will be provided by Whole Foods and Saffron's. This magical evening is not to be missed! For more information, contact Kirbie Crowe at (864) 250-0500x21 or [kcrowe@upstateforever.org](mailto:kcrowe@upstateforever.org).

## 9. Lots o' Links

[Get Only the Catalogs You Want; Save Natural Resources.](#) The Ecology Center, National Wildlife Federation and NRDC have launched on a new on-line consumer service called Catalog Choice, which enables consumers to choose which catalogs they will receive in the mail and which ones they wish to stop.

[Shortage of Renewable Energy Grows.](#)

[Cultivating a Culture of Two Wheels.](#) In Portland, Oregon, bike-friendliness has led to a bike economy.

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[Greenhouse Gas Emissions Hit Danger Mark.](#)

[Energy Debate Hits Home.](#) Fort Collins, Colorado, a “deeply green city,” confronts its energy needs and nuclear worries.

[Do You Know a Young Eco-Hero?](#) Action for Nature is sponsoring the International Young Eco-Hero Awards to recognize the individual accomplishments of young people (ages 8-16) whose personal actions have significantly improved the environment.

## 10. Quote of the Month

“For the first time, we must deal with the nitty-gritty side of development in the mountains. What we do now will have a great effect on what the region looks like 20 years down the road.”

-Dennis Chastain, Pickens County resident and member of South Carolina’s drought response committee, on the controversy over Cliffs Communities’ permit requests, quoted in the *Greenville Journal*, 11/16/07

