

# Upstate update

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

## In this Upstate Update:

Top Ten Achievements in 2007  
Upcoming Events  
Quote of the Month

Eat, drink, and see some breathtaking art at our **Second Annual Art and Conservation Celebration** on **January 31** from **6:00 to 10:00 p.m.** at Saffron's Sidewalk Café in Greenville, sponsored by The Palmetto Bank. More than three dozen renowned artists will be showcasing their nature-based works, with 50% of all sales benefiting **Upstate Forever**. Cost: \$35 per person, \$60 per couple. Call (864) 250-0500 to register. Don't miss it!

### TOP TEN ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2007

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. Stumphouse Saved

The campaign to save a spectacular 950-acre tract on Stumphouse Mountain was without a doubt the highest-profile conservation story of 2007. This property truly has it all -- Issaqueena Falls, the historic tunnels, Cherokee burial sites, rich biological diversity, and beautiful scenic views. All of it is now protected and will be available for public use and enjoyment forever!

The campaign was one of **Upstate Forever's** top priority projects last year. We supported the efforts of citizens in Walhalla and Oconee County to stop the sale of the City of Walhalla's 450-acre watershed property to a Florida developer. In response to the outcry, the City agreed to pursue a conservation alternative. We applied for and received a \$1.2 million grant from the South Carolina Conservation Bank that was paid to the City in August for signing a conservation agreement with **Upstate Forever**, preserving that watershed tract on the Mountain. Then, we worked closely with The Nature Conservancy and our other partners to raise over \$3.1 million to acquire an adjoining 511-acre tract. This property has been transferred to the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to be managed as a Heritage Trust Site. Public sources of funds for the 511-acre tract include DNR (\$1.5 million), South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (\$200,000), Oconee County (\$300,000), and the South Carolina Competitiveness Council (\$100,000). The balance was raised from over 1,000(!) donors whose contributions ranged from one dollar to \$300,000. What an amazing and inspiring success story!

#### 2. Nine Times Protected

In another piece of exciting conservation news, at the end of the year **Upstate Forever** purchased 560 acres of the 2,208-acre Nine Times tract in Pickens County, which has been identified as one of the most ecologically significant properties in South Carolina. We also received an exclusive two-year option to purchase the remaining 1,648 acres at the same price of \$4,800 per acre.

Crescent Resources, LLC, the land management arm of Duke Energy, announced in the fall its intention to sell this key property. If conservation groups or public agencies did not purchase the property by the end of 2007, it would be marketed for private development. **Upstate Forever**, which currently protects 10,156 acres in the Upstate through conservation agreements, decided to pursue an outright

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

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purchase in order to meet this deadline. (Crescent had no interest in a conservation agreement.) Our acquisition was strongly supported by state and local officials, including Governor Mark Sanford, Senator Larry Martin, Representative Davey Hiott, Pickens County Council, Pickens City Council and Ted Shehan, the former Mayor of Pickens and a member of *Upstate Forever's* Land Trust Committee. We are pursuing both public and private funding sources to repay the loans on the first parcel, after which ownership will be transferred to another organization or public agency. Simultaneously, a second fundraising campaign is being initiated to purchase the additional acreage under option.

The Nine Times tract, also known as Big Rock Mountain, is located at the intersection of the Southern Blue Ridge Mountains and the Piedmont and is less than ten miles from the City of Pickens. Distinctive in both size and ecological significance, it contains five mountains and supports seven distinct forest types. The property is home to an abundance of wildlife, including reptiles, amphibians, rare bird species, native brook trout, and game species. In a 2005 botanical study of the area, Dr. Patrick McMillan of Clemson University found 134 species of native wildflowers in a 1,000-square meter plot. What a win for Pickens County and the Upstate!

### 3. Asbury Hills Preserved

A third key Upstate property was protected in 2007. For over 30 years, one of the most sought-after conservation projects in the nation has been the 1,900-acre Asbury Hills Methodist Camp in northern Greenville County. With funding provided by the SC Conservation Bank, that goal was achieved in September with the signing of a conservation agreement between the Camp and The Nature Conservancy. *Upstate Forever* is honored to be the back-up land trust organization in the agreement. This tract was one of the last large forest blocks remaining unprotected in South Carolina's Southern Blue Ridge and connects with other protected lands at Table Rock Reservoir and Caesars Head State Park, where thousands of annual visitors gaze upon it from the viewing platform. Asbury Hills is also a biological hotspot, home to several rare and endangered plant and animal species and a pristine freshwater stream, Matthews Creek. Now it will remain undeveloped forever.

### 4. SC Takes Action on Climate Change

2007 saw many positive developments in the effort to combat climate change. In February, Governor Mark Sanford issued an executive order establishing a Climate, Energy and Commerce Advisory Committee, charged with submitting an action plan by March 2008. *Upstate Forever* Executive Director Brad Wyche was named to the panel. In his announcement, the Governor took a strong stance on the conservative's duty to address climate change.

A bipartisan coalition of mayors came 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 February press conference, 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.

In April, in anticipation of South Carolina's upcoming "first in the South" presidential primary, a bipartisan group of legislators – 90 House members and 23 Senators – released an open letter to the 2008 presidential candidates urging them to make climate change solutions a priority in their campaigns. The letter recognized the importance of energy independence and climate change to South Carolina residents, and called on all 2008 presidential candidates, regardless of party, to make these issues a priority in their conversations with Palmetto State voters.

Then in November, another bipartisan group, this time composed of more than 100 mayors representing more than one million South Carolina residents released a similar open letter to the

presidential candidates. 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.

## 5. Low Impact Development Has High Impact

Sprawling development patterns are not only bad for air quality, fitness levels, fiscal solvency, and wildlife habitats, but also adversely affect our waterways. Low impact development (LID) refers to practices that reduce the negative impacts of both the development process and the developed land on the environment, particularly rivers and streams. A related topic, stormwater management, refers to practices to control nonpoint source pollution and prevent flooding. Both LID and stormwater management, major focuses of *Upstate Forever's* Clean Air and Water Program in 2007, saw great advances in the past year.

In the first half of 2007, the Saluda-Reedy Watershed Consortium (SRWC), led by *Upstate Forever*, held a series of roundtable meeting with local government officials and developers to build consensus around needed changes to pavement-related standards. Later in the year, the City of Travelers Rest implemented the roundtable recommendation of incorporating parking *maximums* in addition to parking minimums in their revised parking lot ordinance. In fact, the maximum number of spaces (based on the number of square feet of building space) allowed in Travelers Rest parking lots is now *less* than the minimum number used to be!

In May, *Upstate Forever* and Greenville County presented a daylong symposium entitled "*Stormwater Management in Greenville County: Where it's Going and Why it Matters*," with more than 100 development and community leaders in attendance. The County is currently evaluating its stormwater management practices and is likely to incorporate LID recommendations. Meanwhile, the City of Greenville, under the leadership of Assistant City Engineer Bill Brown, completely rewrote and upgraded their stormwater ordinance in 2007 to encourage – and in some cases require – LID.

In addition, work by *Upstate Forever/SRWC* on LID has been shared around the country by the US EPA as a model for research that supports decision making. For example, the state of Maine's Department of Environmental Protection is studying SRWC's Pavement Standards Audit, which identifies ways to add flexibility to development standards and enable a reduction of impervious surfaces.

## 6. Spartanburg Passes Hospitality Tax

For many years, *Upstate Forever* has been a strong advocate for increased local funding for parks, greenways, trails and natural areas. We were an active member of the coalition that convinced Greenville County Council in 2006 to approve a hospitality tax that will fund the "TRAC" plan for new and expanded parks in the county.

In Spartanburg, we released a study in 2006 documenting the severe shortage of parks in the county. Total parkland acreage in Spartanburg County is 2.44 acres per 1,000 residents; the national average is 6.25 acres. We made sure that Spartanburg County leaders knew what Greenville County had done and urged them to follow suit.

And they did! On October 15, Spartanburg County Council unanimously approved a 2 percent hospitality tax that will provide a dedicated and recurring stream of funding for parks and recreation projects. This revenue will fund the improvement and expansion of the County's regional parks and trail system. What great news for the citizens of Spartanburg County!

## 7. Green Building Builds Momentum

Green building has become a very hot topic in the Upstate. When *Upstate Forever* and the Home Builders Association of Greenville partnered in the construction of Upstate House in 2005-06, it was the first EarthCraft house project in South Carolina. Now, EarthCraft and other green building programs and techniques have taken root in our region. In Spartanburg, for example, there has been so much activity that last year we established a “Building Spartanburg Green” section of our website ([www.upstateforever.org/ufs\\_ECHMain.html](http://www.upstateforever.org/ufs_ECHMain.html)), which profiles EarthCraft houses and provides extensive information on the EarthCraft House program, energy efficiency and green building tax incentives. It also includes lists of EarthCraft trained homebuilders working in Spartanburg, local vendors, and home energy raters. It also links to Spartanburg resident Curt McPhail’s blog “[Building Green on a Budget.](#)”

And green building is not only for the affluent. In Greenville County last year, Habitat for Humanity and several partners built an EarthCraft home for a low-income family.

At the state level, a bill requiring all major state-funded facilities to meet green building standards survived Governor Sanford’s veto to pass overwhelmingly in the House and unanimously in the Senate. Sen. Jim Ritchie of Spartanburg deserves special praise for his leadership on this issue. Look for more green legislation in the General Assembly in 2008!

## 8. DOT Reformed

After months of high drama and on the very last day of an extended legislative session, the state House and Senate finally agreed on a compromise bill to reform the SC Department of Transportation. This is a statewide issue that has obvious impacts for the Upstate, where we suffer from increased congestion, poorly-maintained roads, and a lack of transportation alternatives.

The DOT controls a massive budget (more than \$1 billion in FY06-07) and had been roundly criticized for allowing politics to influence its decisions of which roads to build, which roads to widen, and which congestion to fix. *Upstate Forever* was part of a diverse 36-member coalition of organizations promoting a reform bill, which was opposed by many powerful interests. The bill signed into law in June included four of the DOT Reform Coalition’s five priorities: transportation projects will be objectively analyzed and prioritized; alternative transportation solutions will be considered prior to moving forward with new projects; real public hearings will be held on large projects; and regulations will be promulgated to ensure the criteria to rank projects are applied correctly and objectively. (Not included was a provision requiring maintenance and repair of existing infrastructure to take precedence over new construction and to be included in budgetary considerations for new projects, otherwise known as a “fix it first” policy.) This represents a great victory over a dysfunctional but long-entrenched system!

## 9. Priority Investment Areas Passed

Another key piece of legislation to come out of Columbia last year was the Priority Investment Areas (PIA) Act, which represent a big step toward improved planning for quality growth in our state. South Carolina law requires counties and municipalities to draft comprehensive plans and to revise these plans every ten years. The plans must include elements addressing population, economic development, natural resources, cultural resources, community facilities, housing, and land use. The new legislation, signed into law in May after five years of effort, mandates the inclusion of transportation, priority infrastructure investment areas, and revised housing elements as well.

This somewhat technical-sounding new law will have the effect of requiring all counties to put some thought and effort into infrastructure planning. The placement of infrastructure – which includes roads, water lines, sewer lines, schools, and more – is a huge driver of development. Think about the subdivisions that pop up all over a formerly rural landscape after a new school is constructed, or about the shopping centers that seem to appear the instant a new highway interchange is built. The decisions of where to

put new infrastructure and where to repair or expand existing infrastructure are often made haphazardly. In addition, there has been little coordination among the agencies responsible: sewer authorities; water authorities; school districts; fire districts; utilities; and city, county, and state governments. So the new PIA requirement will encourage coordinated planning between agencies, a necessary step on the road to sensible growth.

## 10. Vision Plans Completed in Pickens and Anderson

Speaking of planning, 2007 saw some bright spots at the local level. Community leaders and elected officials in Anderson and Pickens Counties completed vision plans for their counties' futures. Both counties are seeing rapid changes: Anderson County's population grew by 14% from 1990-2000, each day adding almost 6 new residents and developing about 5 acres of land; in Pickens County, the figures show 18% growth, 4.6 new residents per day, and 3 acres developed per day.

In April of last year, a community celebration marked the publication of the completed "Imagine Anderson" Vision Plan, which includes 102 objectives in five goal areas: growth management, education, economic development, health and human services, and leisure and recreation. An eighteen-member "Implementation Board" has been charged with seeing these goals to fruition. The entire plan is available at [www.imagineanderson.com](http://www.imagineanderson.com).

In September, Pickens County unveiled its "Vision 2025" long-range plan. The plan, available at [www.pickensvision2025.org](http://www.pickensvision2025.org), is divided into five sections: Planned Community, Working Community, Healthy and Safe Community, Sense of Place, and Educated Community. Specific goals include a land use plan accommodating smart growth, intergovernmental coordination, a "vigorous" public transportation plan, downtown revitalization, adaptive reuse of mills and other vacant buildings, expansion of land conservation programs, the preservation of natural and historic treasures, and the expansion of land conservation programs.

Good planning helps to avoid haphazard growth, retaining the character and attributes of a community while improving economic well-being and quality of life. We applaud the steering committees and all citizens involved in creating these plans, and encourage them continue with the hard work of implementation.

We are pleased to see that Oconee County is following suit and recently started its own visioning process. Visit "Oconee by Choice" at <http://oconeebychoice.com> for more information.

## Upcoming Upstate Forever Events

**Tuesday, March 4**

**Upstate Forever Lobby Day 2008**

**South Carolina Statehouse, Columbia, SC 11:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.**

Join us at the State House to speak to your legislators about conservation issues. Staff from *Upstate Forever* and Conservation Voters of South Carolina will be on hand to brief you on current issues and explain the lobbying process. **You're not expected to be an expert**—all you need is a willingness to learn and a desire to bring about change. We will even provide transportation, with vans leaving from both Greenville and Spartanburg at 9:00 a.m. and returning by 5:30 p.m. Contact Nancy Fitzer at [nfitzer@upstateforever.org](mailto:nfitzer@upstateforever.org) or (864) 250-0500x30 if you are interested in participating. Another Lobby Day, this time with organizations from around the state, will take place on April 29.

**Saturday, March 8**

**Birding Field Trip**

**Croft State Park, Spartanburg, SC, 8:00 a.m.**

Join *Upstate Forever* and the Spartanburg chapter of the Audubon Society for this winter birding expedition in Croft State Park, a 7,000-acre multi-use park in the heart of Spartanburg County. Space is limited to

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20 participants, so register now by calling *Upstate Forever's* Spartanburg office at (864) 327-0090 or emailing Ned Barrett at [nbarrett@upstateforever.org](mailto:nbarrett@upstateforever.org).

Friday, March 14

**Building Our Future Speaker Series: Moving Our Transportation System Forward**  
Spartanburg Marriott at Renaissance Park, Spartanburg, SC, 7:30 a.m.

The next event in our free breakfast series will feature renowned scholar Dr. Robert Burchell, Co-Director of the Center for Urban Policy Research at Rutgers University. Dr. Burchell will discuss national trends in transportation and infrastructure spending, the case for alternative transportation, and implementation strategies. 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.

### Quote of the Year

"Most of all, I am thankful for the beauty, majesty and glory of the South Carolina Blue Ridge Mountains, a precious gift from the creator to us, our ancestors, and our children and grandchildren. Let us hope and pray that we will follow the example of Stumphouse and protect other of our precious mountain gifts for future generations."

-Frank Holleman, Oconee native and *Upstate Forever's* 2007 Volunteer of the Year, in a guest column for the *Anderson Independent-Mail*, 11/30/07.

