

Upstate Update

NUMBER 92

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

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1. EPA to Strengthen Ozone Standard

In [UU 88](#), we reported on the US EPA's proposal to strengthen the nation's air quality standards for ground-level ozone, the primary component of smog. The proposal was based on recent scientific evidence about the impacts of ozone on public health and the environment. *Upstate Forever* supported changing the primary standard from 80 parts per billion (ppb) to between 70 and 75 ppb, as well as establishing a new secondary standard for protecting crops and trees. On March 12, the agency announced that new primary and secondary standards of 75 ppb will take effect in 2010 (see this [article](#) from *The Greenville News*).

Some local government and industry representatives are concerned about the new standards' impact on economic development. We believe, however, that by managing growth in smart and effective ways, the Upstate can meet the new standards without much difficulty and continue to prosper economically. See our website (www.upstateforever.org) for information about the recent Strom Thurmond Institute study which shows how a "smart growth future" for our region can be achieved.

We applaud the tougher standards but are concerned about reports (see this [article](#) in *The Washington Post*) that the White House interfered in the EPA's decision-making process. We can't play politics when it comes to public health.

2. Imagining Greenville County

Greenville County is updating its comprehensive plan this year, and seeks extensive community input. Kickoff meetings for the "Imagine Greenville County" effort were held at the Carolina First Center on March 13, and the next step is to establish citizen committees to establish priorities in the following areas: population, land use, housing, economic development, natural resources, cultural resources, community facilities, transportation, and priority investment areas. Greenville County members: please apply to join a committee. Applications are available at www.greenvilleplanning.com/comprehensive_planning/Citizen%20Committee%20Interest%20Application%202.pdf or by calling the Greenville County Planning Commission at (864) 467-7055. A website for the project (not live at press time) will be accessible at www.imaginegreenville.com.

In addition, a series of community meetings will be held throughout the county as a part of the planning process. The purpose of these community meetings is to "familiarize the public with the

Promoting sensible growth and protecting special places in the Upstate

Comprehensive Plan and the upcoming planning process, and to receive comments from the public regarding any issues, concerns, and ideas about growth in their part of the County.” The meetings are scheduled for the following dates and locations:

- Tuesday, March 25 Blue Ridge High School
- Thursday, April 3 Eastside High School
- Monday, April 7 Mauldin High School
- Tuesday, April 8 Berea High School
- Thursday, April 10 Carolina High School
- Thursday, April 17 Hillcrest High School
- Tuesday, April 22 Travelers Rest High School
- Thursday, April 24 Woodmont High School

All meetings will begin at 6:30 pm and end approximately 8:00 pm.

And for those in the City of Greenville, the comprehensive planning process (“Plan-it Greenville”) is already underway. Citizen advisory committees are being established to discuss goals and recommendations for the following themes: neighborhood/corridor identity and stability, housing, transportation, healthy living and pedestrian-friendly environment, economic development, and green/environment. If you are interested in participating on one of these committees, please email planit@greatergreenville.com or call (864) 467-4476.

3. Oconee Moves Toward Planning

The Oconee County Planning Commission has been considering implementing a citizen-initiated zoning program. Anderson County has already established citizen-initiated zoning, whereby citizens in each voting precinct may petition for zoning; Oconee County is considering using larger areas, such as fire districts. The Commission continues to review a draft zoning enabling ordinance and is currently working on the procedural details of how citizens could petition for and give input on a zoning program in their districts. For updates on this effort, visit the website of Advocates for Quality Development, a local group working to preserve the Golden Corner’s environment, ecology, watershed and quality of life, at www.keowee4quality.com/.

The Oconee County Planning Department will hold meetings this year in each of its 17 planning districts that will focus on updating the County’s comprehensive plan and the associated future long-term land use map. We urge our Oconee County members to attend these meetings and help plan for the county’s future growth. For more information, visit www.oconeesc.com/planning/default.htm.

4. DHEC Considering Rule Changes for Landfills

Upstate Forever has been monitoring recent developments regarding construction-and-demolition (C&D) landfills and determination-of-need (DON) rule changes. At the state level, DHEC has proposed changes to an early part of the landfill permitting process, the DON. During this process, DHEC determines whether a proposed landfill 1) is consistent with local plans and ordinances and 2) serves a need in the area. Staff prepared comments and presented them at an informational meeting in Columbia on February 25. **Upstate Forever** will attend the DHEC hearing on these rule revisions on April 10 and will present additional comments if needed. **Upstate Forever** encourages every county to look closely at its Solid Waste Management Plan and update it if necessary with respect to both commercial/municipal and C&D landfills. The local SWMP is the tool DHEC uses most often (especially when zoning or applicable ordinances are not in place) to determine whether a proposed project is consistent and whether or not to move forward

with the permitting process. If the proposed rules are enacted as written, then the SWMP on file when an applicant first seeks a consistency determination from DHEC will be the one used by the agency and later changes cannot be considered. *Upstate Forever* is opposing such a policy.

Anderson County is now struggling with the C&D landfill issue. A proposed project called Greenpointe, located on 196 acres on Hamlin Road, includes 0.2 acres of wetlands and its building footprint sits 200 feet from Pickens Creek (which flows through the buffer area). DHEC originally found the project inconsistent and denied the permit, but the agency was overruled by the Administrative Law Court. A draft permit has now been issued and the public comment period extends until April 7. In the meantime, Anderson County Council has been working to revise their SWMP in time for DHEC to revisit the consistency decision as part of the permitting process. If the proposed DON rule changes take effect, counties would no longer have this option.

In Laurens County, a similar scenario is taking place involving a C&D landfill near Beaverdam Creek and Lake Martin, proposed by MRR Southern, LLC. After the proposed project was found consistent, Laurens County revised its SWMP but was sued by MRR. Laurens County is continuing to oppose the permit.

It is critical that counties take a good look at their Solid Waste Management Plans, zoning, and ordinances *now*. If the proposed change in DHEC rules is approved, counties will have only one opportunity, very early in the process, to control the location of landfills in their area.

5. *Upstate Forever* Launches Tenth Anniversary Celebration

Can you believe it's been ten years? *Upstate Forever* began in 1998 with one employee, a handful of members, and an "office" in Brad Wyche's home. A decade later, we now have 18 employees, two offices, and over 2,600 members. We have protected over 10,000 acres of the Upstate's "special places" and made great progress in promoting sensible growth, sustainable development, and environmental protection in our region. What an amazing ride it has been!

To celebrate, we are launching a series of events, region-wide field trips, and publications. See the *Upcoming Upstate Forever Events* section below for information about the first four field trips: a paddle on beautiful Saluda Lake on March 22; a birding expedition to Croft State Park in Spartanburg County on April 5; a wildflower hike on April 12 with ETV's Patrick McMillan at the Nine Times tract in Pickens County, which *Upstate Forever* recently acquired; and a chance to view a rare and spectacular insect show at Firefly Forest in Greenville County, tentatively scheduled for April 24. These trips are limited to *Upstate Forever* members only, and spaces are limited. Contact Gretchen Wilson at gwilson@upstateforever.org or (864) 250-0500 for more information or to reserve your spot!

Look for more exciting events in the coming months. Happy Anniversary!

6. *Lobby Day* a Success!

Upstate Forever's Lobby Day on March 4 was a great success, thanks to the efforts of the 22 members, interns, and staff members who attended. A huge thank you goes out to volunteers Dianne Anastos, Dora Bikas, Jimmy Grantham, Colin Hagan, Julian Hankinson, Hans Hoogveen, Paul Jansen, Ryan Poag, and Dan Roberts, who travelled to Columbia to present our conservation concerns directly to the General Assembly. If you missed out, please plan to join us for the annual statewide Conservation Lobby Day and Legislative Oyster Roast on April 29. See *Upcoming Upstate Forever Events*, below, for more information!

7. DOT Drafts Transportation Plan

The SCDOT has posted a draft Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan on its website and is requesting public input. View the plan at www.dot.state.sc.us/inside/multimodal/multimodal_transplan.shtml. The deadline for written comments is Friday, April 11.

In addition, public participation meetings are being held in seven locations statewide, including two in the Upstate:

- Greenwood: Nisbet Education Center, March 31, 4:00 - 7:00 p.m.
- Greenville: Phillis Wheatley Center, March 27, 4:00 - 7:00 p.m.

We encourage you to submit your views on transportation alternatives, planning, and coordination. For more information about the public meetings, go to www.dot.state.sc.us/inside/multimodal/multimodal_transplan.shtml#opportunities.

8. Upcoming Upstate Forever Events

Saturday, March 22

Saluda Lake Paddle

Sunrift Adventures, Travelers Rest, SC, 10:00 a.m.

10th Anniversary Field Trip

To celebrate our 10th Anniversary year, *Upstate Forever* is launching a partnership with Sunrift Adventures to offer more adventurous outings! Our first trip will explore the northern reaches of Saluda Lake and parts of the Saluda River. Wildflowers will be in bloom during what is sure to be an unforgettable trip! The cost is \$30 and the trip is limited to *Upstate Forever* members. Canoes, kayaks, and tandem kayaks are available for rental for \$10 per person. Bring your own lunch. Space is limited to 16, so register by contacting Gretchen Wilson at gwilson@upstateforever.org or (864) 250-0500.

Saturday, April 5

Birding Field Trip

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

10th Anniversary Field Trip

Join *Upstate Forever* and the Spartanburg chapter of the Audubon Society for this rescheduled birding expedition in Croft State Park, a 7,000-acre multi-use park in the heart of Spartanburg County. Space is limited to 20 participants, so register now by calling *Upstate Forever's* Spartanburg office at (864) 327-0090 or emailing Ned Barrett at nbarrett@upstateforever.org.

Saturday, April 12

Wildflower Hike at Nine Times

Nine Times Property, Pickens County, SC 9:00 a.m.

10th Anniversary Field Trip

Join us for another exciting 10th Anniversary field trip! One of the most ecologically significant tracts in the state, the Nine Times property offers an abundance of colorful wildflowers in the spring. Patrick McMillan, host of SCETV's *Expeditions*, will point out some of the rarest and most interesting varieties. The trip is limited to 20 *Upstate Forever* members and the cost is \$25 per person. Meet at *Upstate Forever's* Greenville office parking lot at 9:00 a.m. Register by contacting Gretchen Wilson at gwilson@upstateforever.org or (864) 250-0500.

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Thursday, April 24 (date subject to change)

Visit Firefly Forest

Firefly Forest, Cleveland, SC

10th Anniversary Field Trip

Blue ghost fireflies (*Phausis reticulata*), an unusual species found in the Appalachians, make an appearance on this property for two weeks each year. Come see this special show and hear Don Lewis, property owner, speak about these rare creatures. Fifty percent of proceeds will go to Don's nonprofit, Friends of Firefly Forest. Space is limited to 25 *Upstate Forever* members, and the cost is \$25. To reserve your space, contact Gretchen Wilson at gwilson@upstateforever.org or (864) 250-0500.

Tuesday, April 29

Fifth Annual Conservation Lobby Day and Oyster Roast

Columbia, SC 9:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Join us for the conservation community's largest annual Lobby Day at the State House. Hundreds of citizens representing conservation groups from throughout South Carolina will join forces in Columbia to lobby our Senators and Representatives on issues such as Conservation Bank funding, energy efficiency, and surface water protection. The day includes briefings, lunch, and field trips, and concludes with a celebratory oyster roast and Lowcountry boil at the Seibels House, where we will shuck oysters alongside state legislators and enjoy some great live music. **You're not expected to be an expert to participate** -- all you need is a willingness to learn and a desire to bring about change. Staff from *Upstate Forever* and the Conservation Voters of South Carolina will be on hand to brief you on the issues and to guide you through the lobbying process. We will even provide transportation, with vans leaving from both Greenville and Spartanburg at 7:30 a.m. and returning at approximately 11:00 p.m. (earlier return also available). Please contact Nancy Fitzer at nfitzer@upstateforever.org or (864) 250-0500x30 to discuss the details if you are interested in participating.

Friday, May 9

Building Our Future Speaker Series: The Economic Case for Smart Growth

Spartanburg Marriott at Renaissance Park, Spartanburg, SC 7:30 a.m.

The May installment of our free breakfast series features Paris Glendening, former Governor of Maryland and current President of Smart Growth Leadership Institute. Cities across the United States are facing the reality of a new economic framework. Society has shifted from an economy based on natural resources and institutionalized structure to a knowledge-based economy that finds innovative solutions to the unique issues of the 21st century. In today's economy, a city's long-term success is largely based on its ability to attract and retain creative talent that will be inventive, entrepreneurial, and productive. To capture that resource, cities must find ways to persuade a very mobile population of modern, young professionals to "choose them." This presentation will explain the many ways that a city's quality of life and sensible growth patterns can lead to increased economic growth. For more information or to register, contact spartanburg@upstateforever.org or call (864) 327-0090.

9. Lots o' Links

[Green Office Renovation](#). Visit *Upstate Forever's* blog about the green renovation of our new main office in Greenville.

[Support the Tram Trail—Virtual Public Meeting](#). Greenville County Recreation District is applying for a \$100,000 trail grant for the GHS Swamp Rabbit Tram Trail. One of the requirements is a public meeting to show support and receive comments. Rather than have everyone drive to a meeting to support a trail that promotes people not using their cars, please attend the "meeting" by viewing the short slide show and following the directions at the end.

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[The Next Wave in Light Bulbs](#). Topping LEDs with a coating of carefully tuned nanocrystals makes their light warmer and less clinical, a new study shows.

[Don't Let the Green Grass Fool You](#). "Suburban environmentalist" is not a contradiction in terms.

10. Quote of the Month

"We are deluded in the belief that global warming, dwindling petroleum reserves, and conflicts in the Middle East will be effectively addressed with any combination of hybrid cars, windmills, better-insulated buildings, and biofuels. For a start, the planning and zoning that calls for tens of millions of new large-lot houses served by shopping malls all over America *will also have to change.*"

-- Robert Steuteville, "The Writing on the Sprawl," *New Urban News*, October-November 2007

