

Upstate Update

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

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1. *Upstate Forever* Announces Comprehensive Water Quality Initiative

Upstate Forever is undertaking an ambitious and innovative set of strategies for protecting and improving water quality in our region. A public presentation on May 6 provided the details of our \$1.1 million Targeted Watershed Implementation Grant (TWG) project, funded by an \$800,000 award from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and a \$300,000 match from the V. Kann Rasmussen Foundation. Other partners in the project are the City of Greenville, the County of Greenville, Clemson University, and Furman University. The EPA award is one of only fifteen projects funded nationwide -- and the only one in the Southeast -- this year.

The partners will work over the next four years to design and test strategies for minimizing the impacts of development on our rivers and streams. The project, titled "Market Based Mechanisms for Promoting Low-Impact Development, Mitigating Legacy Stormwater Discharges, and Restoring Urban Floodplains in the Saluda-Reedy Watershed, SC," includes three main components: an LID Decision-Making Tool, a Stormwater Mitigation Bank, and a Floodplain Restoration Bank. The driving force behind each of these components is making them *market based*: taking advantage of the incredible growth and economic investment that are predicted for our region, and using funds from these new developments to pay for projects to fix our past mistakes.

The first project component is a **Low Impact Development (LID) Decision-Making Tool** that will be developed by Clemson University and Greenville County. The Clemson University group is already leading the nation in developing these sorts of innovative tools and includes Dr. Stephen Klaine, Dr. John Hayes, Dr. Gene Eidson, Dr. John Smink, and Ph.D. candidate Katie Sciera. The LID Decision-Making Tool allows developers to quickly assess the effectiveness and cost of various LID techniques, from reducing impervious surfaces to using dispersed stormwater management. It then "scores" the development based on the specific techniques selected. If a development scores high enough, the developer will be eligible to participate in the second grant component: the Stormwater Mitigation Bank.

Participation in the **Stormwater Mitigation Bank** will involve the purchase of credits that will allow developers a variance from the construction of a required final detention pond. A developer determined eligible for the Bank will have already done a good job of reducing and managing the stormwater runoff from the development site. The system rewards the developer by eliminating the construction costs associated with the detention pond and by enabling development on the portion of the site that would have been taken up by the pond. Our primary partner on the Stormwater Mitigation Bank, the County of Greenville, will use the funds generated by the purchase of credits to retrofit "legacy sites." Legacy sites are places that were developed before any stormwater treatment requirements were instituted, meaning that all of their stormwater is discharged directly into streams. Retrofitting these sites means

Promoting sensible growth and protecting special places in the Upstate

that the stormwater treatment system will capture the very important “first flush” of stormwater -- the first rain water to run off a site -- which carries with it most of the pollutants that collect on streets, parking lots and other impervious surfaces.

Essentially, the Stormwater Mitigation Bank trades clean water for dirty by forgoing the treatment of the last percentage of relatively clean stormwater from a new development but capturing the dirtiest runoff from older sites. Under the current system, the best we can hope for is that our water quality doesn't get any worse. With the Stormwater Mitigation Bank, we will effect widespread *improvements* in water quality. Although stormwater mitigation banking is a new and innovative concept, some have already predicted that it will become one of the largest trading markets -- second perhaps only to carbon credit trading.

The third grant component is the **Floodplain Restoration Bank**. We are excited to be partnering with both Furman University and the City of Greenville on this project. *Upstate Forever* is working with the City to develop an innovative overlay district that will guide development in the Reedy River corridor. This overlay district will be a hybridized approach combining the best aspects of a river buffer with the best aspects of transect form-based zoning. This approach will protect and enhance the Reedy River, while also allowing for the desired development in each “transect” zone -- which range from urban to rural uses (for more information about the transect model, see www.upstateforever.org/programs_traMod.html). As part of the overlay, a funding mechanism will be created that will allow developers additional flexibility by purchasing credits from the Floodplain Restoration Bank.

The City of Greenville will use the funds generated by the bank to complete restoration projects within the Reedy River watershed that will improve the quality of the Reedy and ensure that it will continue to be an asset to our community. Furman University will provide the expertise necessary to make the Floodplain Restoration Bank work. Dr. Ken Peterson and Dr. Suresh Muthukrishnan will work to find solutions to issues ranging from the economics behind credit pricing to the GIS evaluation needed for determining which sites to restore.

Successfully designing and implementing these three projects will not be easy. One of the obstacles we will have to overcome is that water often crosses municipality boundaries -- so optimal success of both banks will require the cooperation of many city and county governments. But with the combined strength of our project team, we are confident that we will be successful.

2. Coalition of Conservation Groups Challenges DHEC's Approval of Cliffs' Golf Course

As reported in [UU 91](#) and [UU 89](#), there is a heated, ongoing controversy over the proposed plans for the Cliffs at Mountain Park development in northern Greenville County. In the latest chapter, a coalition of six conservation organizations (including *Upstate Forever*), representing over 20,000 citizens, has challenged the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control's (DHEC's) approval of the development's golf course. In addition, during DHEC's administrative process, more than 3,000 citizens signed petitions or sent letters opposing the golf course.

The proposed 18-hole golf course, designed by the Gary Player Group, would be built along both sides of the North Saluda River for a distance of 2.5 miles, almost the entire reach from Highway 25 to Highway 11. Player and the Cliffs plan to build 16 bridges across the river -- 15 for golfers to use as they play back and forth across the river and one vehicular bridge that will connect the Mountain Park residential community to the golf course. The conservation organizations -- Save Our Saluda, *Upstate Forever*, Sierra Club, South Carolina Native Plant Society, Trout Unlimited, and the South Carolina Wildlife Federation -- argue that the North Saluda is an extraordinary resource that should be protected from development that will potentially degrade buffers and harm fish and wildlife. In addition, the Cliffs failed to adequately evaluate alternative sites for the golf course. DHEC regulations clearly state that all feasible alternatives must be studied and that the alternative with the least environmental impact

must be used. The 5,000-acre Mountain Park development contains other feasible golf course sites that would not impact the North Saluda. *Upstate Forever* Executive Director Brad Wyche summarized the coalition's position: "No one is saying that the Cliffs shouldn't have a golf course. It just shouldn't be built along the river."

In the appeal, the conservation groups are also contesting several aspects relating to the golf course design itself, such as the width and nature of the buffer along the river, the number and height of the bridges, and the extent of channel alteration work. Other issues include impairment of navigation on the river due to the design of the 16 bridges, loss of public access for trout fishing, and the vague language and lack of enforceability of several of the other permit conditions. "There shouldn't be a golf course wrapped around this river, but if that is permitted, additional measures and practices must be imposed to reduce impacts," said Dianne Anastos, Chair of Save Our Saluda. "This is not an environmentally sensitive design. DHEC is letting us all down in approving it."

3. Federal Tax Incentives for Conservation Extended

For many years there have been tax incentives for conservation. Congress dramatically improved these incentives for transactions completed in 2006 and 2007. It increased the amount of the federal income tax deduction from 30% to 50% (100% for farming and forestry) and allowed the deduction to be carried forward from 5 to 15 years.

A national coalition of land trust organizations has been working hard to convince Congress to make these incentives permanent or at least extend them. Those efforts paid off last month when the Farm Bill, which includes a provision extending the incentives through the end of 2009, became law after President Bush's veto was overridden.

For more information about conservation agreements, visit www.upstateforever.org/programs/landPres.html or call (864) 250-0500 and ask for our Land Trust Program staff.

4. Breaking Through the Myths About LID

More than 100 engineers, developers, citizens, and local officials packed the Innovate Building's conference room on May 22 to hear a presentation by Jennifer Bitting of the Low Impact Development Center in Washington, DC. Part of the Low Impact Development (LID) Breakfast Series co-sponsored by *Upstate Forever* and the Home Builders Association of Greenville, the presentation used case studies to debunk **five common misconceptions** about LID:

- High-density development is contrary to LID
- LID costs more than conventional development
- Smaller street widths and fewer sidewalks are unsafe for the public
- LID requires too much maintenance
- You can't do LID in clay soils

If you missed the breakfast, Bitting's PowerPoint presentation is available on our website: www.upstateforever.org/Breaking_LID_Myths.pps. The next event in the LID Breakfast Series will take place on June 26, when Jeff Randolph will discuss "No-Cost Strategies for Reducing Runoff" (see *Upcoming Upstate Forever Events*, below).

5. The Economic Case for Smart Growth

Development professionals, planners, local leaders, and citizens from throughout the Upstate converged in Spartanburg on May 9 to hear Parris Glendening, former Governor of Maryland and current President of the Smart Growth Leadership Institute, speak at the final 2008 event of the Building Our Future breakfast series, sponsored by *Upstate Forever*, the Spartanburg Chamber of Commerce, and

Partners for Active Living. Glendening explained that cities across the United States are facing the reality of a new economic framework, with long-term success based largely on the ability to attract and retain talent. “Place is the greatest asset localities have to offer businesses and their workers,” said Glendening as he discussed the “logic of location.” Glendening emphasized walkability, which promotes community vitality and is essential to attracting today’s young adults. He also pointed out that, with an aging population and rising fuel prices, pedestrian-friendliness and the availability of transit are not luxuries but necessities. To change direction toward a more sustainable future, we must develop our schools, hospitals, office buildings, restaurants, retail facilities, and industry in a way that gets people out of their cars and wastes less travel time and energy. To read an article about the presentation from the *Spartanburg Herald-Journal*, visit www.upstateforever.org/newsviews_ufnews/UFN_2008/ufn080510SHJ_SustCommSpeaker.pdf.

6. Upstate Forever Co-hosts Candidate Forum

On June 1, *Upstate Forever* coordinated with the League of Women Voters of Spartanburg County, Cox Radio/107.3 JAMZ, and News Channel 7 WSPA to host a Spartanburg County Candidates Forum in Leonard Auditorium on the Wofford College campus. Sixteen candidates running in contested primary races presented their platforms and answered a series of questions focused on environmental issues, growth, transportation, and education. Another Spartanburg County forum is planned for October.

7. Upcoming Upstate Forever Events

Tuesday, June 10

Climate Change Speaker Series:

“Working Smarter, Working Greener: How Addressing Climate Change is Good for Business”

Speaker: Dan Gerst, QS/1

Carolina First Center, Greenville, SC, 6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Businesses of all sizes have begun to realize that investing in energy efficiency and conservation reduces general operating expenses and improves the bottom line, in addition to providing unique public relations opportunities. This free presentation will feature QS/1, a Spartanburg-based data systems firm whose commitment to technology is driving their efforts to reduce energy consumption. Dan Gerst, Marketing Operations Manager at QS/1, will outline some of the resource savings from the company’s green building in Spartanburg and will detail some of the policies the company has implemented to encourage conservation. For more information, contact John Tynan at (864) 250-0500x31 or jtynan@upstateforever.org.

Thursday, June 19

3rd Annual Upstate Forever Charity Golf Tournament

Carolina Springs Golf Club, Fountain Inn, SC, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Don’t miss a great afternoon of golf at the third annual *Upstate Forever* Golf Tournament! Join us once again at Carolina Springs Golf Club for friendly competition, an even better silent auction, and a locally-made, collectible piece of pottery for each player. A hole-in-one could even get you a new Subaru PZEV (partial zero-emissions vehicle)! Our presenting sponsor this year is Carpenter Investors; our other great sponsors include Fairway Ford, Phillips Staffing, Eagle Zone, and Capita Employer Resources. For more information or to register, contact Kirbie Crowe at kcrowe@upstateforever.org or (864) 250-0500x21.

Thursday, June 19

Flicks for Thought: A Film Series About Sustainable Solutions

“A Convenient Truth”

Upcountry History Museum, Greenville, SC, 7:30 p.m.

The fourth film in the film series presented by *Upstate Forever*, Greenville Organic Foods Organization, and the Upcountry History Museum takes viewers to parts south -- specifically, Curitiba, Brazil. This progressive, forward-thinking city has successfully balanced the needs of an urban population with an

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environmentally-friendly, high quality of life. Additionally, many of the “urban solutions” practiced by Curitiba are ultimately more cost-effective than less sustainable processes. The museum will re-open at 6:00 p.m. so that filmgoers can explore the museum’s exhibits. Snacks and drinks are generously provided by Whole Foods Market. Admission to the film is included in the museum entrance fee (adults: \$5, students and seniors: \$4, children 4-12: \$3, children under 4: free). Contact Kirbie Crowe at kcrowe@upstateforever.org or (864) 250-0500x21 for more information.

Thursday, June 26

Low Impact Development Breakfast Series: “No-Cost Strategies to Reducing Runoff”

Speaker: Jeff Randolph, President, The Randolph Group

Innovate Building, 148 River Street, Greenville, SC, 7:45 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.

One of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to manage stormwater at its source and reduce runoff is to decrease the surfaces on development sites through which water cannot infiltrate. Jeff Randolph of The Randolph Group will highlight ways that developers can reduce impervious surfaces while reducing costs. Coffee and breakfast will be provided. The event is free, but reservations are requested. For more information or to register, contact Lisa Hallo at lhalla@upstateforever.org or (864) 250-0500x33.

Saturday, June 28

10th Anniversary Field Trip

American Chestnut Trip

Chestnut Return Farm, Seneca, SC, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Upstate Forever Board member Joe James will open his Oconee County farm, Chestnut Return, for this educational field trip. Since retiring from medical practice, Joe has focused on the restoration of the American chestnut. He is past president of the Carolinas Chapter and current member of the national board of the American Chestnut Foundation, which named him their 2007 Honoree of the Year. Thirty *Upstate Forever* members will get a tour of Joe’s farm, information about the American chestnut tree, and a barbecue lunch. Rides will be available from *Upstate Forever’s* Greenville office at 8:00 a.m. Cost: \$15 per person, limited to *Upstate Forever* members--only a few spaces remain! For more information or to register, contact Gretchen Wilson at gwilson@upstateforever.org or (864) 250-0500.

Thursday, August 28

Building Green While Saving Green

Spartanburg, SC, 1:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Save the date for our upcoming green building conference—complete details coming soon!

8. Lots o’ Links

[Take the Two Mile Challenge.](#) 40% of U.S. urban travel is two miles or less. Clif Bar’s website provides a tool to map your two miles and encourage you to start biking.

[Spartanburg to Revitalize Brownfields.](#) The EPA has awarded a \$400,000 brownfields grant to the City of Spartanburg to redevelop contaminated former industrial and commercial sites.

[Greenville Spares the Air.](#) Meanwhile, Greenville County’s “Spare the Air in Greenville County” campaign has won the EPA’s Clean Air Excellence Award in the Education/Outreach category.

[SCDOT Unveils Environmental Stewardship Policy.](#) The state Department of Transportation has a new website devoted to its environmental stewardship efforts.

[What’s Your Neighborhood’s WalkScore?](#) Punch in an address, and walkscore.com will calculate the neighborhood’s walkability.

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Stuck in Traffic? Fine-tuning controls on the nation's traffic signals would cut U.S. road congestion by as much as 10 percent, but three out of four of the nation's 300,000 traffic signals need replacement or timing adjustments for optimum performance, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Wireless Technology for Social Change: Trends in Mobile Use by NGOs. A new report by the UN Foundation-Vodafone Group includes chapters such as "Text Messaging to Save Trees."

What Makes a Good Tree Ordinance? An assessment of the effectiveness of tree protection ordinances in the Charlotte region by *The Charlotte Observer*.


Green Building a Plus for Builders in Tough Market. Green homes are a growing share of the housing market.

9. Quote of the Month

"Now, if a developer of a Class A office building doesn't have at least LEED-Silver certification, that structure could be a Class B building in five years. That's how important green has become."

--John L. Knott, Jr., President and CEO, The Noisette Company, and member of *Upstate Forever's* Advisory Council, quoted in *Urban Land Green*, Spring 2008, p. 91

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