



UPSTATE
FOREVER

The Upstate Advocate

2026 | SPRING/SUMMER

HAPPY DAYS

SPEND TIME IN OUR
REGION'S SPECIAL
PLACES WITH QUICK
AND EASY DAY TRIPS

IN THIS ISSUE:

"I KEPT MY PROMISE" — WHY I CHOSE A CONSERVATION EASEMENT | CITIZENS PLANNING ACADEMY
ASK AN ADVOCATE: WHAT IS A UDO? | UPSTATE LAND CONSERVATION FUND CELEBRATES FIVE YEARS

John, 7, admires his catch at Lake Greenwood. PHOTO BY MARSHALL SWAILS

ON (& OFF) THE CLOCK:

Upstate Forever at work and play



UF's Allie Martinsen, Michael Coleman, and Rebecca Wade visit the SC State House for the Conservation Coalition's Senate briefing.



During ForeverGreen video filming, Scott Park pairs a jacket and tie with muddy boots from the morning's site visit. All in a day's work at UF!



Congrats to Land Conservation Specialist Kelsi Bondy (formerly Sullivan) and her new husband Will! We all wish you the best.



Protecting Land & Water | Advocacy | Balanced Growth

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Mission

Upstate Forever is a conservation organization that protects critical lands, waters, and the unique character of the Upstate of South Carolina.

Vision

To conserve our land and water resources, resulting in an environmentally healthy and economically prosperous region, with a high quality of life now and for future generations.

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

We are surrounded by beauty and opportunity.

It's not hard to understand why the Upstate of South Carolina is attracting so many new residents. Our region has it all — scenic mountains, sparkling lakes, recreation opportunities, vibrant communities, and that famous Southern hospitality.

While we welcome our new neighbors, the rapid development to accommodate this growth is staggering, and the impacts are accelerating. These days, It's impossible to ignore the ubiquitous signs — clear cutting, traffic, wildlife displacement, erosion, water and air impacts, and loss of greenspace. Without thoughtful, deliberate action, it would be easy for these things to eat away at the Upstate we love until it's no longer recognizable.

The good news is we're also seeing an unprecedented groundswell of support for conservation and balanced growth across the region and state. I'm sure you've seen the efforts by Governor McMaster and the Legislature to protect millions more acres of land in the state by 2050.

We're seeing that conservation ethic at the local and private levels as well, as more and more people recognize the immediate need to ensure the beauty and ecological health of our region remain intact for generations to come.

Upstate Forever has partnered with dozens of organizations across the state — municipalities, nonprofit partners, regulatory staff, elected officials, business leaders, and funders — to leverage these opportunities, wisely and collaboratively.

But the greatest asset we have in this movement? You. Our supporters. You are the reason we can protect land, safeguard water, and advocate for better growth practices. Without your generosity, we couldn't do any of this critical and time-sensitive work.

I encourage you to take some time this spring and summer to explore the Upstate's special places. In this issue of the *Upstate Advocate*, our staff have compiled some quick and easy day trips to help you connect with the natural wonders that sustain our life, health, and happiness.

Thank you for being part of the solution.



Aldon Knight
Executive Director



Thank you, Katie!

After 13 years at Upstate Forever, Clean Water & GIS Manager



Katie Hottel

has accepted an incredible opportunity to work as a GIS (Geographic Information System) and Demographics Analyst with Greenville County Schools.

Katie's unique skill set has shaped our Clean Water program work, which has been recognized by numerous partners — including the SC Department of Environmental Services and the US Environmental Protection Agency — as innovative and exemplary. While we are sorry to see her depart the UF team, we are excited for her as she takes this next step in her professional career path.

Please join us in wishing Katie well and thanking her for her great service during her time at Upstate Forever!

Welcome, Boone Ruston

Boone Ruston recently joined Upstate Forever as Stewardship Manager. In his



role, Boone focuses on building relationships with landowners and supporting the sustainable management of conservation areas. He brings a strong technical skillset, attention to detail, and a collaborative approach to advancing conservation goals. When off work, Boone enjoys biking, fly fishing, reading and writing, traveling, trail running, and backpacking.

Full bio at upstateforever.org/team

IN MEMORIAM

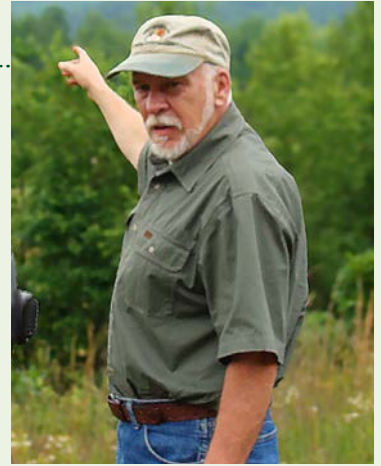
Upstate Forever mourns the passing of several dedicated and passionate Upstate figures — local “powerhouses” who lived lives in service to conservation, education, and community well-being. May we all aspire to leave such a legacy.

Dennis Chastain *October 4, 1952 - November 21, 2025*

A naturalist, historian, storyteller, and so much more, Dennis dedicated his life to discovering, documenting, and sharing the unique majesty of South Carolina’s mountains and foothills.

Through his work, he helped reveal the extraordinary character of this region — from rare wildflowers and ancient Native American trails to prehistoric rock carvings long hidden from view.

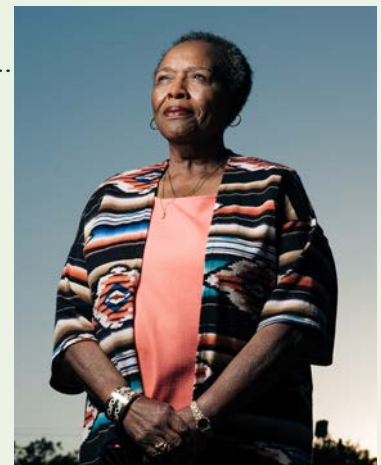
The legacy of Dennis Chastain endures in the landscapes he interpreted, the stories he brought forward, and the countless people he inspired to explore and care for this place. May his example continue to encourage curiosity, stewardship, and a deeper appreciation for the places we call home.



Mary Duckett *September 21, 1940 - November 16, 2025*

A pillar of Greenville, Mary Duckett dedicated her life to serving the Southernside neighborhood and the greater Greenville area, especially its underserved and marginalized communities. She was a steadfast leader, advocate for her neighbors, and a model of justice.

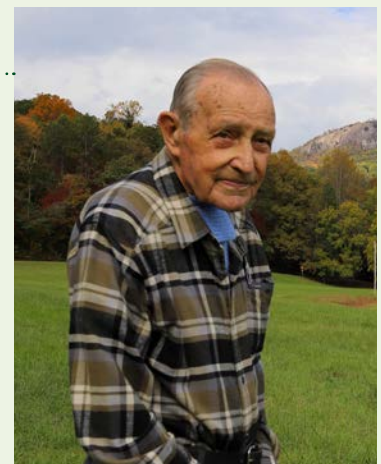
Ms. Duckett belonged to the Southernside community but was an activist for many communities in the city. For decades, as the Southernside community sought remediation for a contaminated site impacting their neighborhood, Ms. Duckett helped mobilize residents and allies to action. Her influence empowered community members to voice their concerns about issues that impact Greenville. She will be greatly missed, but her legacy lives on in efforts to advocate, unify, and uplift underserved areas.



Hoyt Grant *December 11, 1931 - December 8, 2025*

Dedicated landowner Hoyt Grant’s passion helped protect one of South Carolina’s most cherished landscapes: Grant Meadow in Pickens County. Hoyt valued the Upstate’s open spaces that offer peace, reflection, and a chance to slow down in an often hectic world.

His commitment to protecting this landscape was guided by quiet determination and a genuine love for the land. Through a conservation easement completed with his wife Laura and Upstate Forever, Hoyt ensured that his 57 acres would remain intact forever — a lasting testament to his care and foresight, and an inspiration to others who want to preserve the Upstate’s most meaningful places. May his memory continue to encourage all of us to honor the lands that shape our communities and our lives.



Another successful Conservation Lobby Day on the books

Thank you to everyone who joined us for the SC Conservation Coalition's 23rd Annual Lobby Day. We were thrilled to join over 100 partners and advocates from across the state to help advance the Coalition's 2026 legislative priorities during a full day of engagement with legislators. The Coalition closed out the evening with the highly anticipated Oyster Roast — always a highlight of the day! Your voices matter—and they're making a difference at the State House. *To learn about the next Lobby Day and other statewide advocacy issues, sign up for Legislative Updates at upstateforever.org/email.*



PHOTOS BY ELIZABETH SWAILS

Recent land conservation

UF's nationally accredited land trust recently worked with landowners and partners to close on more than 2,100 additional acres of conservation easements across seven counties. The protected properties include mostly active agricultural land as well as forested and mixed landscapes that safeguard waterways, wildlife habitat, and rural character throughout the Upstate and beyond.

Echols Farm

ANDERSON COUNTY | 72 ACRES

Echols Farm includes open fields, a small timber stand, and mixed forests, helping preserve agricultural lands and natural habitats in an area facing development pressure. The property protects more than 2,500 linear feet of streams and approximately 15 acres of wetlands associated with Three and Twenty Creek, which flows into Lake Hartwell. *Project funders include a US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Section 319 Grant through the South Carolina Department of Environmental Services (SCDES), the South Carolina Conservation Bank (SCCB), and the Upstate Land Conservation Fund (ULCF).*

Big Garvin Creek Farm

ANDERSON COUNTY | 253 ACRES

A family-owned cattle farm, this easement protects rolling pastureland, a 32-acre pond, and forested riparian buffers along Big Garvin Creek. The property safeguards farmland and water resources in the Three and Twenty Creek watershed while maintaining the long-term sustainability of a true Upstate family farm. *Project funders include an EPA Section 319 Grant through SCDES, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program, SCCB, and ULCF.*



“We’re pleased to see such incredible land protection momentum in this fast-growing corner of the state. From farms to forests, these places define the character of the Upcountry.”

— **RALEIGH WEST**, director of the SC Conservation Bank

Stevenson Century Farm

ANDERSON/OCONEE COUNTIES | 132 ACRES

Straddling the Anderson-Oconee County line, this fourth-generation cattle and poultry farm contains approximately 75% prime farmland soils and over 4,000 feet of tributary streams feeding into Lake Hartwell. The tract is near three properties under conservation easement with Upstate Forever and helps conserve agricultural production, open fields, and riparian habitats. *Project funders include SCCB, the Oconee County Conservation Bank, and ULCF.*

Moore Farm at Horsepen Creek

GREENVILLE COUNTY | 110 ACRES

This rural property in rapidly growing Greenville County spans nearly 70 acres of prime farmland. It plays a significant role in buffering Horsepen Creek from nearby suburban development and stormwater runoff, preserving important riparian habitat. The conservation easement has short- and long-term impacts for water quality and native species preservation in Greenville County. *Project funders include the Greenville County Historic & Natural Resources Trust, SCCB, and ULCF.*

Mountain Bridge Passage Amendment

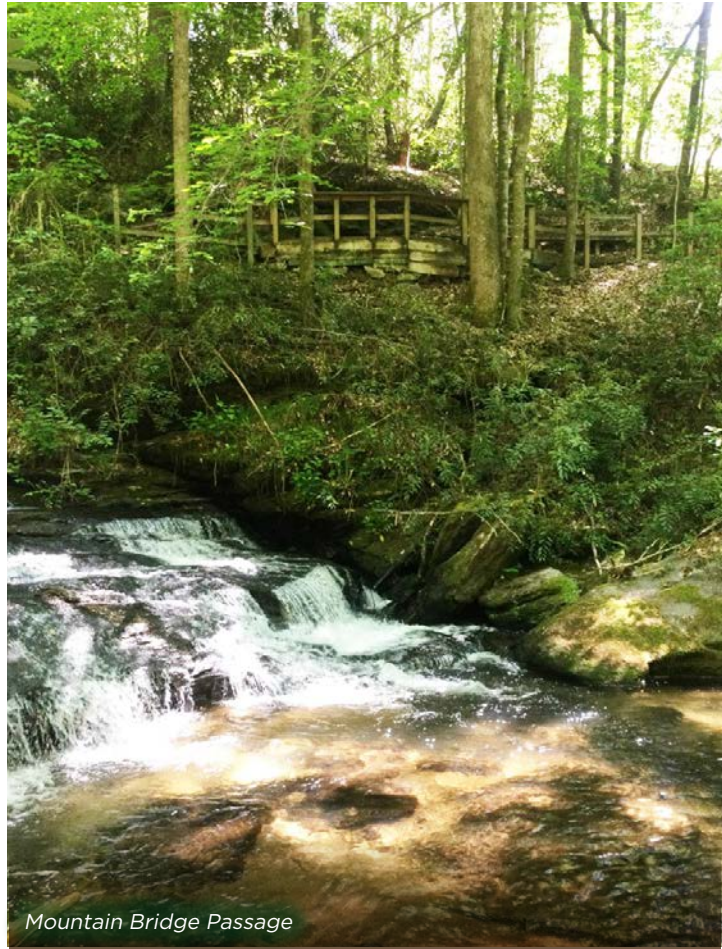
GREENVILLE COUNTY | 24 ACRES

An addition to a previously conserved property of 179 acres, this tract sits in the South Saluda River valley and fronts Scenic Highway 11. The property adjoins the state-owned Ashmore Heritage Preserve, home to several SC species of concern, including the federally listed Mountain Sweet Pitcher Plant. The entire property has been transferred to SC Parks, Recreation, and Tourism. This project was a full donation from the previous landowner, conservation nonprofit Naturaland Trust.

Continued on page 8 >>



Big Garvin Creek Farm



Mountain Bridge Passage



Echols Farm



Long Lane Farm

Continued from page 7

RML Timber

LAURENS COUNTY | 1,219 ACRES

This is Upstate Forever’s second largest conservation easement to date. RML Timber is a prime example of working lands in the Little River-Saluda River Watershed. Biodiversity thrives on the property, where timber is sustainably managed, allowing its forests, ponds, and shrublands to support native wildlife. *This project was supported by SCCB, Sustain SC, and ULCF.*

Warrior Mountain Amendment 2

LAURENS COUNTY | 57 ACRES

This project is an amendment adding more than 57 acres to an already protected 376-acre property, further preserving hardwood forests, a pond, riparian areas, and a rocky ridge habitat associated with a monadnock known as Little Knob (historically called Warrior Mountain). The expanded conservation area ensures the protection of additional natural habitats and was a full donation by the landowner.

Duck Haven

PICKENS COUNTY | 146 ACRES

A former peach orchard and cattle farm, Duck Haven features open fields, wetlands, and deciduous and evergreen forests along the Saluda River. This easement helps safeguard habitat for threatened and endangered species while maintaining the property’s agricultural and recreational character. *Project funders include Easley Combined Utilities, Pickens County Conservation Bank, SCCB, Sustain SC, ULCF, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Upstate Forever.*

Foster Fields

SPARTANBURG COUNTY | 85 ACRES

Foster Fields boasts areas of pasture, mixed hardwoods, and stream frontage along Black Branch, Whitestone Spring Branch, and unnamed tributaries that all flow into Fairforest Creek. The conservation easement preserves working farmland, wildlife habitat, and a pond for migratory waterfowl, while maintaining the property’s rural character amid growing development pressures near Croft State Park. *Project funding came from ULCF.*

Long Lane Farm

POLK COUNTY, NC | 73 ACRES

An equestrian farm in Polk County, NC, this property features rolling hills, managed pasture, hardwood forest, riparian areas, and scenic views of the Appalachian Mountains. Located just over the South Carolina state line and adjacent to another Upstate Forever conservation easement, the property protects more than 2,300 feet of Still Creek — a tributary of the North Pacolet River — while also providing habitat for federally protected species. This easement was a full donation by the landowner. 🌿

A conservation easement is a voluntary contract between a landowner and a qualified land trust like Upstate Forever. It allows the landowner to legally restrict certain undesirable land uses from occurring on their property. This agreement is permanent and remains with the land even after it has been sold or willed to heirs. For more information about partnering with UF to place a conservation easement on your property, contact landtrust@upstateforever.org.

"I kept my promise."

WHY MY FAMILY CHOSE A CONSERVATION EASEMENT TO PROTECT OUR LAND

ALICE SMITH, *Duck Haven landowner*

Shortly before we lost Mother to COVID in late 2021, I promised her I would find a way to keep our land together. Our conservation easement honors many generations of our family for their hard work and sacrifices. While Mother didn't live to see the easement in her lifetime, her children have. Young, third cousins will never witness developers and heavy equipment move in. Wildlife will keep their homes.

It's my home too. I love this place! It's special the way it is, and with Upstate Forever's help, it's together, forever, and protected. I kept my promise. **I'm sharing our story publicly to just maybe plant a seed: If I can do it, so can you.**



Alice Smith



Alice Smith and UF Land Conservation Manager Chris Starker at Duck Haven in Pickens County.

How are UDOs critical tools for growing communities?



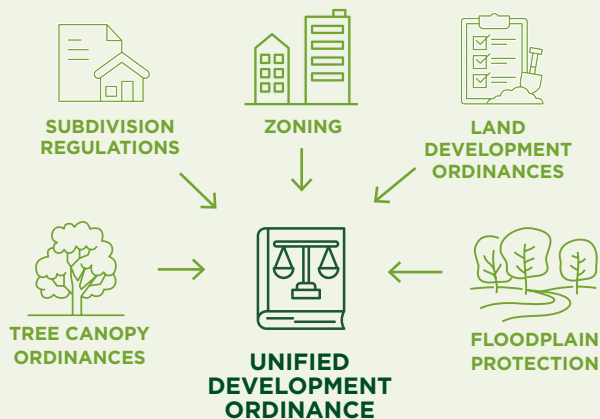
Allie Martinsen

LAND POLICY MANAGER
amartinsen@upstateforever.org

Dear Ask an Advocate,

As my community grows, I keep hearing the term "UDO" in conversations around land use planning. I'm not exactly sure what it means, and how it's related to all the growth and development I'm seeing — can you help me out?

Sincerely, Unsure in the Upstate



Hi Unsure,

Counties and cities across the Upstate have been working around the clock to update land use ordinances to better guide growth and address community concerns related to open space, tree preservation, mobility, and housing choice.

Even if you haven't followed these efforts closely, you may have noticed a similar acronym coming up at council meetings or displayed in the news: UDO.

A Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) — also sometimes known as a Unified Development Code — is a planning tool that combines zoning, land development regulations, subdivision regulations, and ordinances protecting floodplains and tree canopy into a single unifying document.

Although often lengthy, UDOs make it easier for residents, developers, and local government to access important land use rules, regulations, and procedures.

In South Carolina, many municipalities and counties have been operating under outdated land use ordinances. Over time, documents regulating land use and zoning stop working in sync as new ordinances are adopted and existing ordinances are amended in ways that can create overlap, conflict, and confusion.

UDO's are a better planning framework to address this concern by compiling land use regulations in a cohesive document, which helps ensure development decisions are fair, predictable, and consistent for all stakeholders.

Since community needs, challenges, and development pressures are always evolving, UDOs are intended to function as living documents that are reviewed and updated periodically. Local government can and should have an ongoing structured UDO review process to ensure land use rules, regulations, and procedures are working as intended to achieve community goals.

Lastly, it's important to remember that UDOs vary widely based on the community priorities and aspirations outlined in local comprehensive plans. UDOs are generally created with extensive outreach to the public to ensure that residents, developers, planners, engineers, and businesses have input on land use changes that will directly impact future growth and redevelopment. Coupled with the comprehensive planning process, this makes it one of the best opportunities to shape the future of land use in your community.

Interested in learning more about important community planning and policy processes? The best way to stay up to date on issues we're tracking is to join our Land Planning & Policy email lists. Currently, we have three dedicated e-lists: Greenville, Spartanburg, and Anderson. Visit upstateforever.org/email to sign up.

You can also view our organizational advocacy priorities at upstateforever.org/advocacy. These are updated annually and offer a snapshot of the issues and municipalities we're following most closely right now. 🌱



PHOTOS BY ELIZABETH SWAILS

2026 Citizens Planning Academy celebrates new graduates

Recently, 31 participants completed the 2026 Citizens Planning Academy, our introductory land use planning course for Greenville-area residents. Participants heard from presenters and participated in hands-on activities about community development, sustainable growth, and equity in planning. Thank you to ReWa for hosting UF's six-week session, and to all presenters and participants! UF has graduated 289 people from its Citizens Planning Academy since the course was started in 2019.

Interested in the course? Scan the code or visit upstateforever.org/citizens-planning-academy to learn more and sign up for our email updates to receive the latest news on future academies.



Scan to learn more!

HAPPY DAYS

SPEND TIME IN OUR REGION'S SPECIAL PLACES WITH QUICK AND EASY DAY TRIPS

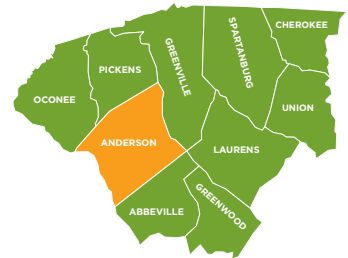
- 12 RELAX BY THE WATER IN ANDERSON COUNTY
- 14 CHASE MOUNTAIN BIKE ADVENTURE IN OCONEE
- 16 EXPLORE SPARTANBURG'S URBAN GREENWAYS
- 18 TAKE IN MOUNTAIN VIEWS IN PICKENS COUNTY
- 20 SPEND A LEISURELY DAY AT LAKE GREENWOOD

Relax by the water in Anderson County

If you're looking for a restorative, slow-paced outdoor day, cast a line or take a peaceful walk where forest trails meet the water.

Tucked along the banks of a gentle river, Rocky River Nature Park protects scenic stretches of forest and wetlands where the river winds its way toward Lake Hartwell, creating excellent habitat for birds and other wildlife. Bring binoculars and you might spot herons, turtles, or deer along the shoreline. Anderson University worked with Upstate Forever to place a conservation easement on 131 acres of the park, ensuring sensitive lands and wildlife habitat will remain undeveloped. Find more info at rockyriverconservancy.org.

If you're in the mood to spend more time on the water, consider visiting Broadway Lake instead. This smaller, quieter cousin to Lake Hartwell is popular with local anglers and paddlers. Its calm water and scenic shoreline make it a relaxing place to spend the day.



STAFF TIPS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Split Creek Farm: If you're looking for a fun and low-key stop after time outdoors, head across I-85 and see Split Creek Farm. A stop at this working goat dairy is equal parts farm visit and artisan cheese run! Plan to spend a little time wandering the property and meeting the resident goats — they're curious, photogenic, and not shy about saying hello. The farm store is the real danger zone, though. We recommend showing up with an empty cooler, because once you start sampling the award-winning cheeses, yogurts, and other local treats, you'll almost certainly want to bring a few home. Check online before visiting to see what tours, tastings, or seasonal happenings might be going on. splitcreek.com

Gardeners and native plant enthusiasts may enjoy stopping by Carolina Wild Native Plant Nursery, which specializes in plants native to the Southeast and supports habitat-friendly landscaping. It's a great place to pick up ideas — and plants — for bringing a little more biodiversity home. Visit carolinawild.com for more information.

Looking for live music or festival vibes? Head into downtown Anderson to visit Carolina Wren Park, a lively public gathering space that frequently hosts concerts, festivals, and community events. Check online to see what might be happening during your visit at visitanderson.com.

Seeking volunteer opportunities? Upstate Forever's Land Management program hosts several workdays each year on conservation easements like Rocky River Nature Park. Help enhance habitat by removing invasives, planting native species, picking up trash, and completing habitat restoration. Learn more at upstateforever.org/volunteer.



Rocky River Nature Park MAC STONE



Carolina Wild Native Plant Nursery



Catch largemouth bass, crappie, catfish, and bream at Broadway Lake

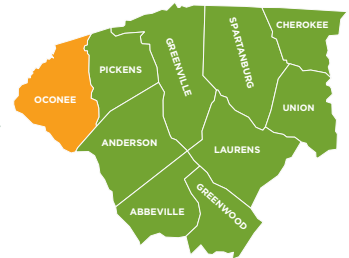
Chase waterfalls and mountain bike adventure

Oconee County offers some of the most dramatic landscapes in the Upstate. Lace up your hiking boots or bring a kayak — this corner of SC rewards those willing to explore.

Did you know Oconee comes from a Cherokee word meaning “land beside the water?” The area has certainly earned this moniker — there are more than 300 recorded waterfalls in the county!

Start your trip with a visit to one of the area’s most beloved waterfalls: Issaqueena Falls, a dramatic 100-foot cascade tucked into the foothills of the Blue Ridge mountains. A viewing platform offers an easy way to take in the waterfall’s beauty and the legend behind its name, which tells the story of a Cherokee woman who hid along the falls to escape capture. The iconic Stumphouse Tunnel is nearby as well, beckoning visitors into its cool, eerie interior.

From the same park entrance, adventure seekers can explore Stumphouse Mountain Bike Park where 14 miles of trails wind through lush forests and along ephemeral streams on the Blue Ridge Escarpment.



Riders and hikers pass through tunnels of mountain laurel and landscapes dotted with ferns, wild ginger, and seasonal wildflowers — a constantly changing tapestry of plant life that makes this trail network an exceedingly rewarding experience. Upstate Forever holds the conservation easement on this property and is proud to protect it in perpetuity from residential or commercial development. Find more info at stumphousepark.com

For those looking to cram even more adventure into their day, see how many of Oconee County’s waterfalls you can visit in a one-day waterfall challenge. Find options, maps, and more info on the Visit Oconee SC website at visitoconeesc.com

If you’d rather be on the rushing water than watching it go by, bring your own kayak or raft — or connect with a local outfitter on your way — to the Chattooga River. You can plan your paddle along the beginner- and family-friendly Section III, or the exhilaration of Section IV, ahead of time at gopaddlesc.com. As the only blueway in SC designated a National Wild and Scenic River, the Chattooga River is certainly a spectacle each Upstate resident should behold.

STAFF TIPS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Are you a local history buff? Plan a stop at one or more of these educational sites to explore the rich history that has shaped the area.

Museum of the Cherokee in South Carolina: Located in Walhalla, this museum shares the deep history and cultural legacy of the Cherokee people in the Upstate through exhibits, artifacts, and educational programs. cherokeemuseumsc.org

Oconee History Museum: Just across Tugaloo Street from the Museum of the Cherokee and housed in a historic jail building, this museum highlights the people, industries, and everyday life that shaped Oconee County from its early settlement to modern times. oconeehistorymuseum.org

Oconee Station State Historic Site: This preserved 18th-century frontier outpost along a historic Cherokee trading path offers a glimpse into early backcountry life, with a stone trading station, interpretive trails, and nearby waterfall hikes. southcarolinaparks.com

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Upstate Forever is committed to keeping Oconee County’s pristine natural places intact for future generations. Our nationally accredited Land Trust has partnered with landowners and conservation partners to protect more than 6,800 acres in Oconee County. Learn more at upstateforever.org/land-conservation.



Issaqueena Falls



Stumphouse Tunnel



*Stumphouse Mountain
Bike Park features 14
miles of trails*

Explore cool urban greenways in Spartanburg

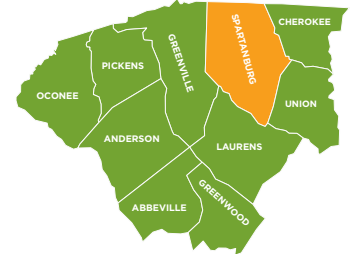
Whether you want to stick to paved paths, take a historical and cultural tour, or immerse yourself in nature, the downtown Spartanburg area has something for everyone.

Spartanburg is the second fastest growing metro area in South Carolina. With significant recent investment in revitalizing downtown and conserving greenspace, it's an excellent place to have an accessible urban adventure.

In the heart of the city, there are some convenient stops that you can fit into a one-day excursion. The burgeoning Northside District, Spartanburg County Public Library Planetarium, Southside Cultural Monument, and Mary Black Rail Trail are all within a few miles of each other and easy to find if you are coming from I-85 or I-26.

Start your adventure with a hearty breakfast at McClellan's at Monarch Café, then take a leisurely creekside walk on the Butterfly Branch Greenway to see how the city is creating walkability on the Northside. After that, check out one of the many programs offered at the new Planetarium where you can learn about the birth of planet Earth, the unsolved mysteries of Saturn's moons, and even living on the International Space Station. More info on the planetarium is available at spartanburglibraries.org.

Then make your way to the Southside Cultural Monument where you can take a deep dive into stories about Spartanburg's historically Black communities. The monument panels promote contemplative strolling as you take in the artistic and celebratory presentation of the city's Black experience.



If you want to keep your body in motion, then check out the Mary Black Foundation Rail Trail. This popular trail offers two miles of paved pathway for walking and cycling, the appropriately named "Rail Tail" dog park for your furry friends, and even a bike park if you're interested in getting your heart rate up. Learn more about the Mary Black Trail and other urban greenways managed by Spartanburg nonprofit PAL: Play. Advocate. Live Well. at their website palspartanburg.org.

From any of these locations, you can take a slight detour south and check out the ten-acre public garden at Hatcher Garden and Woodland Preserve. The Preserve is an excellent example of urban greenspace where you can attend a variety of seasonal events or visit the garden "rooms" that feature a wide array of native and exotic flora. Visit hatchergarden.org for details.

Another optional detour would take you slightly further afield to the Spartanburg Area Conservancy's 29-acre Glendale Shoals Preserve, which boasts nature trails, community greenspace, and scenic views of a beautiful waterfall that cascades over a dam under the Glendale Bridge. The property also includes the old Glendale Mill site, which was saved from the brink of becoming a planned high-density development in 2022. These iconic ruins remind us that Spartanburg was once a bustling mill town. Find more information at spartanburgconservation.org.

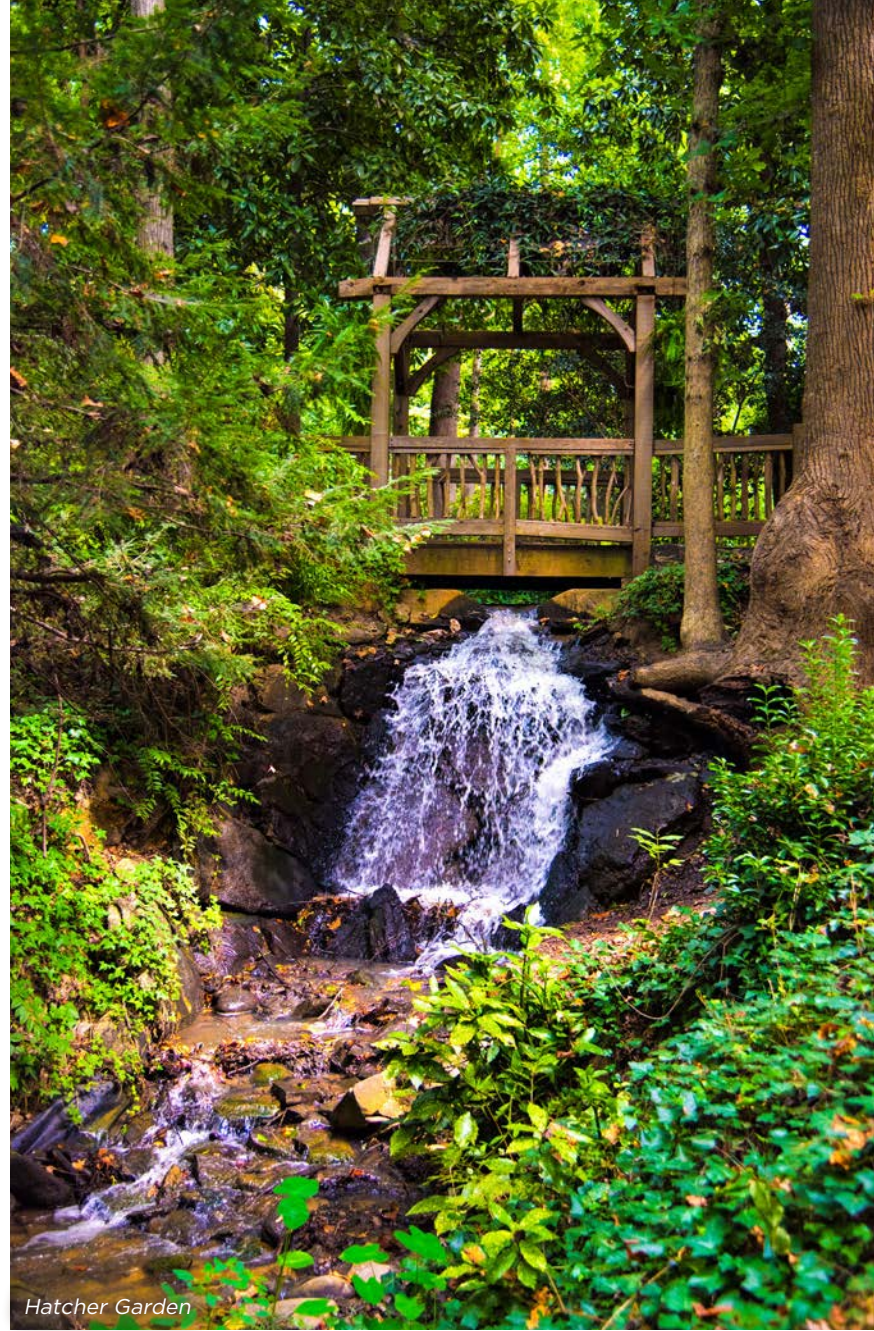
STAFF TIPS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Do you want to make a multiple-day trip out of your Spartanburg adventure? Try staying off the beaten path in Croft State Park where you can camp, fish, boat, hike, bike, and more! This 7,000-acre park offers over 20 miles of trails, including equestrian access. It is a great place to observe the night sky without light pollution — you might even get to apply some of the knowledge you learn at the Planetarium. southcarolinaparks.com

Vibrant downtowns and urban greenspaces don't happen by accident — they are the intentional result of thoughtful land planning & policy. Upstate Forever's team works hard every day to advocate for sensible, community-led solutions that help balance economic development with other priorities like mobility options, housing choices, access to clean water, and safe green spaces. To learn more, sign up for our Land Planning & Policy e-newsletters at upstateforever.org/email.



Plenty of multi-use trails



Hatcher Garden



Downtown Spartanburg



Glendale Shoals

Take in mountain views in Pickens County

Pack a picnic basket and hop in your car for a drive along the Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway. Your destination? One of the most iconic sights in South Carolina.

Nestled at the base of Table Rock and hugging scenic Highway 11, Grant Meadow is considered one of SC’s most-photographed spots. Upstate Forever is honored to have worked with late landowners Hoyt and Laura Grant to place conservation easements on the 57-acre meadow below the iconic granite rockface, ensuring this cherished view will remain undeveloped for future generations.

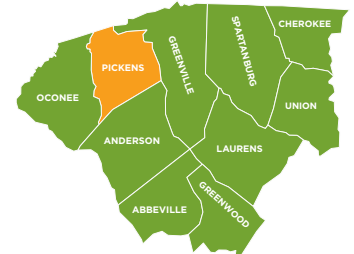
A paved overlook and seating were added by Pickens County in 2022 to offer travelers a place to park and enjoy Grant Meadow’s idyllic beauty. If you need to stretch your legs a bit more, continue on to Table Rock State Park. An often overlooked spot within the park is Lake Oolenoy, a prime destination for paddling and fishing.

Got more time to spend? Pickens is packed with easy add-on destinations to enrich your day trip. Nearby Keowee-Toxaway State Park offers something for thrill-seekers, anglers, boaters, bird watchers, and hikers (tip: for beautiful sunset views, try the Raven Rock hike). In short, there’s a little something for everyone! Learn more at southcarolinaparks.com.

You can find farm-fresh produce at roadside stands throughout the area (typically open from late spring through fall) or support one of many local agritourism

destinations like The Happy Berry (thehappyberry.com), a small farm near the shore of Lake Keowee that offers pick-your-own and pre-picked fruits from June through September. Upstate Forever was proud to work with the Miller family to place a conservation easement on the 22-acre farm in 2023.

Another option: step into local history at the Hagood Mill Historic Site. Special programming and heritage events are offered throughout the year — check online at visithagoodmill.com before visiting.



Pristine natural land and clean waterways are essential for outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism. In addition to our conservation work in Pickens, Upstate Forever has supported efforts to safeguard Scenic Highway 11’s character through land use policy, participated on the Lake Keowee Source Water Protection Team, and advocated with partners and residents for a stronger riparian buffer ordinance.

STAFF TIPS & RECOMMENDATIONS

If you’re looking for a family-friendly hike, Katie Hottel, former UF Clean Water & GIS Manager, recommends Carrick Creek Trail at Table Rock State Park:

Our family recently completed this 2-mile loop with three kids in tow (ages 7, 5, and 2)! This hike was pretty easy for the adults, doable for the older kids, and the youngest hitched a ride on my back in a carrier for the majority of the hike. It took about 2 hours, and approximately 20 cookies, 6 applesauce pouches, 3 trail mixes, 2 fruit & nut bars, and a bag of Goldfish. We were big fans of the waterfall views and stream crossings, and seeing the snakes in the trailhead office where we signed in!
southcarolinaparks.com





Table Rock



Pickens is a great place to spot wildlife



Pick your own fruit at The Happy Berry

Spend a leisurely day on the lake in Greenwood

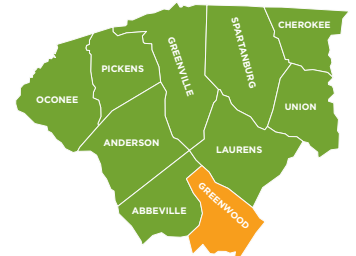
Looking for a change of pace? Located a little over an hour from Greenville or Spartanburg, Lake Greenwood is the perfect place to boat, fish, and explore with the family.

Lake Greenwood is a magnet for beating the summer heat whether you want to explore the lake by boat, kayak, or paddleboard. Multiple marinas along the lake offer a variety of boat rentals ranging from kayaks to pontoon boats. Taking a pontoon is a popular choice, and you can stop off at restaurants, fishing spots, or join the locals on sandbars and islands around the lake. We recommend water shoes if you plan to try the sandbar!

Before you hit the water, make sure you stock up on the many flavors of boiled peanuts offered by seasonal stands. No boat ride is complete without the classic Southern delicacy of boiled goobers. Try Cajun, original, salt and vinegar and more! Grab your bait while you're at it and try

your hand at fishing for a variety of bass, catfish, and crappie.

Taking a nature tour of the lake is highly recommended. Spot the turtles sunning on the shore and logs, look for osprey and bald eagle nests in the trees, watch waterfowl hunting for freshwater snails and clams, or get up close to the docks to find dragonfly larvae. If you're up early to fish with the sunrise, you'll catch a glimpse of resident bats returning to their roosts.



If you're really in the mood for a scavenger hunt, see if you can find the fascinating bryozoans attached to submerged docks, rocks, and branches. These brain-like colonies are made of thousands of small, individual animals known as zooids, and they are great indicators of clean water.

The presence of bryozoans shows just how far Lake Greenwood has come since an algal bloom appeared in 1999, caused by pollutants in the Saluda-Reedy watershed. The blooms, reportedly thick enough for turtles and ducks to walk across, threatened aquatic life and water quality.

One of Upstate Forever's earliest projects was forming a coalition to learn about the health of the watershed and ways to address threats to Lake Greenwood. These efforts led to a significant improvement in water quality — good news for today's wildlife, local residents, and visitors seeking a day on the lake. 🌿

STAFF TIPS & RECOMMENDATIONS

While the lake is one of Greenwood's main attractions, there are many fun and family-friendly activities on the way and in Greenwood's Uptown area. Here are a few!

If you're taking 385 south to Greenwood, then take a slight detour on Metric Road to catch a glimpse of monadnock known as Little Knob. This isolated, rock hill forms rocky ridge habitat on the UF protected property Warrior Mountain.

Or, take 25 from Greenville, and stop at Happy Cow Creamery, which is right on the way without any real detour. Take a tour of the farm or visit their fully stocked store to stock up on their delicious offerings.

Don't forget to check out the Festival of Flowers in the heart of Uptown in early June, and take in all 57 signature topiary sculptures on display all June in the outdoor gallery. See what else the Festival offers at scfestivalofflowers.org.

Upstate Forever's Clean Water team advocates for smart policies, safeguards critical watersheds, and empowers communities to take action, so we can continue protecting and restoring the Upstate's rivers, lakes, and streams. Stay informed through our quarterly Clean Water newsletter: The Water Log. Sign up at upstateforever.org/the-water-log.



Lake Greenwood at sunset. JON HOLLIDAY



Calling all bass fishermen!



Don't miss out on this Southern delicacy



Wildlife abounds at Lake Greenwood

The Upstate Land Conservation Fund

The first of its kind in South Carolina, the Upstate Land Conservation Fund (ULCF) unites the missions and expertise of local conservation groups to accelerate the protection of our most special natural places. Each dollar is leveraged with other gifts to create tremendous and immediate impact.

The ULCF was established in 2021 through the efforts of Upstate Forever, which provides administrative support. It is governed by a committee of volunteers who are dedicated to conservation and live in the Upstate. Current committee members are listed at UpstateLandConservationFund.org.

The ULCF has contributed more than a million dollars to protect some of Upstate South Carolina's most important and iconic properties — and many more projects are in the works.

The ULCF may be used by nonprofit organizations or government agencies to:

- Buy more fee simple land for public access and outdoor recreation. The ULCF may be used as a source of funding to acquire the title of certain properties.
- Fund easements to protect iconic lands and historic farms for generations to come. ULCF funds can be used to pay the landowner for the diminished value that the restrictions of the easement place on the property and/or associated closing costs.
- Match federal, state, and private grants for conservation.

As the ULCF celebrates five years of successful conservation work, we hope you'll be inspired to scan the code below, check out the website, and learn more about this unique and effective fund.



Scan to view funded projects
and learn more about the ULCF at
UpstateLandConservationFund.org

50+

PROJECTS FUNDED,
ENCOMPASSING ALL 10
UPSTATE COUNTIES

**MORE THAN
\$1 MILLION**

IN FUNDS DISBURSED
FOR LAND PROTECTION

“Every acre saved begins with a willing landowner — but success depends on funding. Funders like the Upstate Land Conservation Fund often provide flexible funds necessary to fill gaps that cannot be addressed from public sources like the Greenville County Historic & Natural Resources Trust and the SC Conservation Bank. When all come together, they turn opportunity into permanent conservation.”

— **CARLTON OWEN**

Former Chair, Greenville County
Historic and Natural Resources Trust

Featured Funded Projects | [View more at UpstateLandConservationFund.org](http://UpstateLandConservationFund.org)



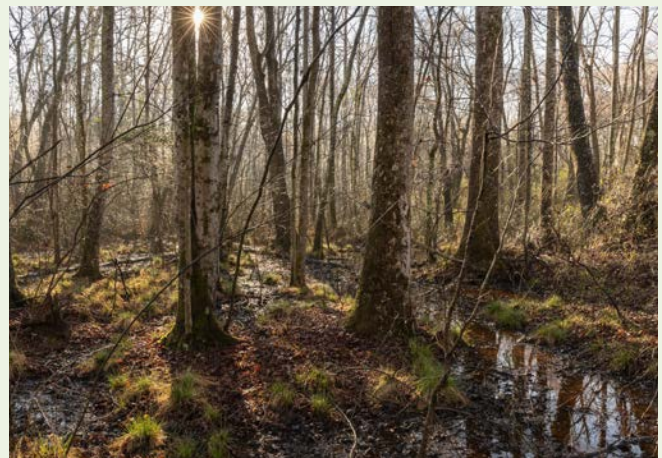
BISHOP BRANCH PASTURES | ANDERSON
Beautiful farmland in rapidly developing Clemson area



CINDER BRANCH | SPARTANBURG
Mature hardwood forest protects a Pacolet River tributary



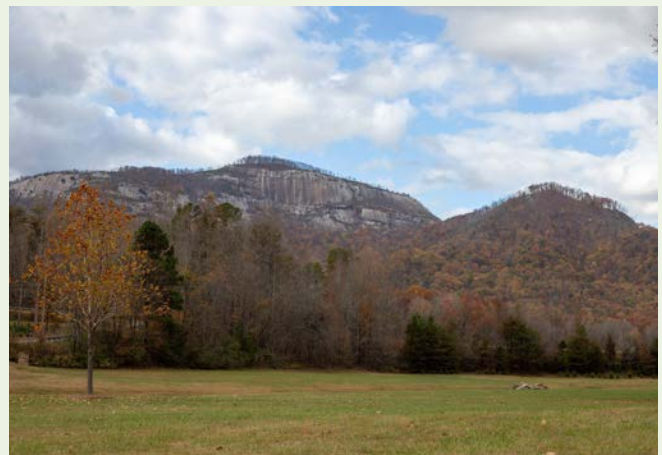
SALUDA GRADE | SPARTANBURG, GREENVILLE
Historic rail corridor to be converted to a recreational trail



WOODCOCK WOODS | GREENVILLE
Prime habitat for the ultra-rare bunched arrowhead plant



FALL CREEK HEADWATERS | OCONEE
Peaceful forested cove protects a tributary of the Chattooga



REEDS RUN | PICKENS
Stunning Table Rock views & prime wildlife habitat off Hwy 11

**MOUNTAIN BRIDGE**

\$1,000,000 & above

South Carolina
Conservation Bank

BLUE RIDGE

\$250,000 - \$999,999

Anonymous

Greenville County Historic and
Natural Resources Trust

South Carolina Department of
Environmental Services

PIEDMONT

\$100,000 - \$249,999

Balmer Foundation

Andrea & Edwin Cooper

Hollingsworth Funds

Jolley Foundation

Pete & Sally Smith Foundation

Stephanie Schmidt

GREENBELT

\$50,000 - \$99,999

Anonymous

Nate & Anna Bax

James & Margaret Bruce

Renewable Water Resources

Diane Smock & Brad Wyche

Sustain SC

VISIONARY

\$25,000 - \$49,999

Anonymous

Mike & Laura Baur

John Bissell & Jane Chambers

Conserving Carolina

Easley Combined Utility System

Energy Foundation

Clark & Katie Gallivan

Allen & Nikki Grumbine

Douglass Harper

Glenn & Heather Hilliard

Linda Ketelaar

Life's Rich Pageant Fund

Erwin & Nancy Maddrey

McCall Foundation

Pickens County Conservation Bank

Cindy Plating

US Fish & Wildlife Service

GUARDIAN

\$10,000-\$24,999

Jim & Karen Akerhielm

Anderson County Watershed
Protection Council

Anderson Regional
Joint Water System

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John & Laura Bauknight

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Judy Cromwell

Howland & Mary Crosswell

Energy Action Fund

Foothills Community
Foundation

William & Beth Fuller

Gina Hartness

Howard Engineering

Ann Jaedicke

Carson & Andrea Johnson

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Martha Keys

Mast General Store

John & Stacy McBride

Milliken & Company
Community Relations

Bobby & Christie Nachman

Newman's Own

Kathryn & Ben Norwood

Donald & Jane Pilzer

Robert & Lou Rainey

Rita & Robert Rao

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Minor & Hal Shaw

Tye Smith

US Department of Agriculture

STEWARD

\$5,000 - \$9,999

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Chadwick & Kari Carson

Community Foundation
of Greenville

David & Elizabeth Cross

Gary Davis

Kent & Lynn Davis

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Bogue & Bonnie Wallin

Steven & Teri Zahn

CONSERVATOR

\$2,500 - \$4,999

Dennis & Judith Allen

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Betti Bell

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Pamela Weekes

.....

Membership in the Wyche Society is open to all who support Upstate Forever annually at a level of \$2,500 or above. Wyche Society members enjoy special events (see facing page), field trips, and recognition in Upstate Forever materials. To join, email Morgan Martin, Director of Development, at mmartin@upstateforever.org.

..... **SUSTAINER (\$1,000 - \$2,499)**

- | | | |
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WYCHE SOCIETY LUNCH & LEARN: Upstate Forever recently hosted "From Wildfires to Resilience," a lunch and learn event for members of the Wyche Society — donors who support UF annually at a level of \$2,500 and above. At the event, SCDNR Jocassee Land Manager Ken Forrester and UF Director of Stewardship & Land Management Lauren Ulich shared active land management strategies related to the 2025 Table Rock Complex fires. Thank you to our fantastic presenters and attendees! upstateforever.org/wyche-society

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UPSTATE FOREVER NEWS

Funding secured for water quality projects to reduce pollution

Congratulations to our Clean Water team, who recently secured funding to continue work in the Three & Twenty Creek Watershed in Anderson & Pickens Counties!

This funding includes a Section 319 Grant, funded in part by the US EPA under a Nonpoint Source Implementation Grant through the SC Department of Environmental Services (SCDES), which will be used to implement water quality improvement projects and land protection in the watershed.

Commonly known as a "319 grant," this funding can be used to assist landowners via cost-sharing on

projects within a target watershed that reduce bacteria, nutrients, sediment, and other contaminants.

The work funded by these grants helps prevent millions of pounds of sediment and bacteria from entering Upstate waterways each year.

In addition, the team was awarded funding from the Anderson County Watershed Council and from the Anderson Regional Joint Water System to support this work.

This next project phase will involve the repair of 30 failing septic systems, seven agricultural projects, and the permanent protection of 300 acres.



Funding will go towards projects that improve local water quality, such as fencing livestock out of waterways.

To learn more, visit our website at upstateforever.org/319-grants



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Why we've included Upstate Forever in our estate plans:

“For decades, we’ve admired Upstate Forever’s efforts to preserve and protect the landscapes of the region. But we were never more grateful than we were in 2025 — during our recent efforts to prevent the construction of a large hotel near our home on Paris Mountain. Upstate Forever was an invaluable ally in our resistance to unwanted, irresponsible development in this environmentally sensitive area.

We’re proud to include Upstate Forever in our estate plans.”

— BARBARA & GILBERT ALLEN,
Legacy Society Members

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For more information, contact Morgan Martin, Director of Development, at 864-203-1930 or mmartin@upstateforever.org.