

Sharing news, stories, and insight about the land we love



Red Fox Farm, a recently protected property in Spartanburg, SC

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Speak for the Trees:
Forest Stewardship

by Caitlyn Gendusa,
Land Conservation Specialist

Hunting brings people and land together. Forestland can conjure memories of taking grandkids on their first hunting trip or watching the forest mature as animals make their home amongst the canopy. It's clear: forestland is vital to retain the Upstate's rich landscapes and traditions. >>



Many of our easements, such as Paw Paw Farm (pictured), engage in timber harvesting with a Forest Management Plan.



>> Similarly, timber production is often incorporated on hunting land to provide not only outdoor recreation, but also economic incentives. Timber harvesting is an important land use strategy that enables landowners to retain property ownership while providing economic incentives to improve forest health. In South Carolina alone, the forestry industry generates \$876 million a year, making timber the largest harvested crop in the state.

A healthy forest is critical for deer and other hunting game populations to flourish, as well as ensuring timber production grows at a sustainable rate. Forests provide important habitat for wildlife, help to clean our air and water, offer scenic beauty, and provide a place for people to unwind and recreate.

It is no wonder that conservation easements held by Upstate Forever contain provisions to protect forests and trees. If you own land that has forested areas or trees, make sure to check the provisions of your conservation easement before cutting or clearing any trees. There are likely special restrictions around water bodies and only limited situations where tree removal can occur without first seeking approval from Upstate Forever. For properties that allow timber harvesting, a detailed forest management plan (FMP) that satisfies specific requirements is usually required.

However, for those looking to improve forest health and wildlife habitat while harvesting timber, there is an alternative program known as the Forest Stewardship Program (FSP). Administered in South Carolina by the SC Forestry Commission (SCFC), the FSP provides landowners with a free customized forest stewardship management plan based on the landowner's goals for their property. For example, if a property is being used for hunting, a forest stewardship plan can be created to include a landowner's goal of "habitat management for hunting opportunities."

Other possible goals listed on the SCFC application include cultural/historic preservation, biodiversity, recreation, forest health, soil and water conservation, maintaining a scenic forest, and timber management. The program is available to landowners with at least 10 acres of private, non-industrial forestland.

To see if you qualify for the program and for more information, visit the SC Forestry Commission's website: state.sc.us/forest 🌿

Know Your Snake



by Christina Sprecher,
Land Stewardship Manager

The black rat snake is one of the most common snakes seen in yards in Upstate SC. Growing up to six feet long, it can be a startling sight — sunning on top of a wall, laying in the grass, or hanging on a tree branch. But fear not, the black rat snake is a non-venomous snake that benefits humans by eating mice, rats and other rodents. They also will eat birds, eggs, frogs and lizards.

Adult black rat snakes are solid black with some white under the chin. Juvenile rat snakes are quite different — gray with a dark pattern along their back and sides. Unfortunately, this pattern may lead them to be mistaken for a venomous species.

A female snake generally lays 10-14 eggs in places like mulch, manure piles, and the undersides of logs and rocks. The eggs usually hatch in August or September, so you will most likely come across juvenile snakes in late summer and fall.

At our home in Greenville, we have a black rat snake that faithfully leaves its molted skin hanging from a light in our carport every spring. Yet in all the years we have lived here, we have seen the snake only three times. (My husband falls into the category of people who believe that is three times too many, while I would prefer to see more of our reptilian friend.)

Whichever category you fall into, the black rat snake is not a bad reptile to have around, and is perhaps a sign that your yard is a nice place for native animals to call home.

For more information about snakes native to South Carolina, see the SC Department of Natural Resources website: dnr.sc.gov/wildlife/herps/snakes.html or visit the snake exhibits at the Greenville Zoo or Table Rock State Park. 🌱



Juvenile black rat snake



Adult black rat snake

Conquering Kudzu with a Little Help from Our Four-Legged Friends



by Caitlyn Gendusa,
Land Conservation Specialist

“The vine that ate the South.” This sounds more like the title for a science fiction movie about plant monsters and less like a description of the infamous kudzu, a species so prolific that over fifty million acres is occupied by this plant globally.

Kudzu, originally touted as a “wonder plant” by the United States government, was first introduced from China in the late 1800’s. The issue with kudzu stems from the plant’s ability to climb trees and blanket plants and shrubs, thereby suffocating them and preventing absorption of nutrients. Even power lines and homes are damaged by the noxious weed.

Luckily, management resources are available that just might keep this pesky weed from taking over your own property. A few organizations exist that aid landowners with kudzu control. One is Trees Coalition, located in Spartanburg County. Trees Coalition is a non-profit organization dedicated to the care and maintenance of trees.



“Goatscaping” can be an effective, natural, and affordable way to eradicate kudzu.



Kudzu leaves
Photo by Martin LaBar, CC BY-NC 2.0

This organization is an expansion of the Kudzu Coalition, which focuses on herbicide-free kudzu control. In addition to providing community members with assistance in kudzu control, Trees Coalition offers volunteer workdays that are a fun outdoor activity for friends and family to enjoy.

Before resorting to synthetic herbicides (which can negatively affect beneficial plant and animal species) for weed control, consider utilizing goats for weed removal.

What makes goats exceptional at weed removal? They are able to reach steep terrain and their narrow mouths can crush even the smallest of seeds that would have otherwise been able to germinate using machinery. An increasing number of businesses in the Upstate offer landowners “goat rentals” to complete their weed work.

Surprisingly enough, this is touted as an incredibly cost effective solution that on average costs 50% less than using machines or labor for weed removal. This is an advantage considering that not all terrain can be accessed by machinery safely and human removal is labor intensive.

For more information on kudzu management, contact Upstate Goatscapes or Trees Coalition. 🌿



Properties protected in 2020 include additional acreage of the iconic Grant Meadow in Pickens County.

Upstate Forever protected more than 2,000 acres in 2020



by Scott Park,
Glenn Hilliard Director of Land Conservation

The i's have been dotted, the t's crossed, and the numbers crunched... Our nationally-accredited land trust permanently protected 2,176 acres of private and public farmlands, forests, and greenspace across the 10-county Upstate South Carolina region in 2020. Additionally, partner projects where Upstate Forever was integral to the effort's success comprise an additional 713 acres. Now, Upstate Forever protects approximately 25,800 acres across more than 130 properties across the region.

We are immensely proud of the successes our team accomplished last year, despite facing the significant challenges the ongoing pandemic created in meeting with landowners, conducting stewardship site visits, and other critical facets of our land protection processes. And, of course, this success would not be possible without the support of landowners like you. Thank you for trusting our team to work with you to protect your land and your legacy.

Conservation projects completed in 2020 include:

- Kings Mountain Preserve in Cherokee County, a 36-acre forested oasis that will be home to a green burial cemetery.
- Cedar Rock in Greenville County. The Nature Conservancy of South Carolina transferred the conservation easement on a 497-acre property known as Cedar Rock to Upstate Forever. The property has been under a conservation easement with The Nature Conservancy since 1995, and part of the property is owned by Naturaland Trust. Upstate Forever has assumed the responsibility of conducting yearly stewardship visits to ensure the terms of the conservation agreement are being upheld.
- Paw Paw Farm in Laurens County, a 241-acre farm that includes the protection of a rural scenic view along Milam Road and natural habitat of fish and wildlife. >>

Looking to Sell a Conservation Easement Property?



by Christina Sprecher,
Land Stewardship
Manager

Sometimes the owners of property on which Upstate Forever holds a conservation easement decide to sell their property. Upstate Forever is here to support them in this process. For interested landowners, Upstate Forever now provides information about such properties on our website at upstateforever.org/listings, including a photograph and link to the real estate listing.

Properties for sale also may be included in digital communications with our members. If you would like to include your listing on our website, contact me at csprecher@upstateforever.org.

Additionally, we are happy to speak with potential buyers about the conservation easement and to work with the closing attorney to assure that the terms of the conservation easement are satisfied through the closing process.

Contacting us about a potential sale before it happens can avoid having to go back and correct a deed after the closing.



Friendfield Farm in Union County

(2020 Protected Land, continued)

- Morris Property in Oconee County, a 25-acre property boasting significant environmental features including a mature hardwood forest, dense wetlands, and native plant habitat.
- Grant Meadow in Pickens County, which permanently protects an iconic view of Table Rock from Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway 11. The recent addition of 21 protected acres on the property known as Grant Meadow joins a 36-acre property that was placed under a conservation easement in 2013. A grant from the South Carolina Conservation Bank made this conservation success possible.
- Red Fox Farm in Spartanburg County, 120 acres of forestland that protect significant natural areas and scenic views from Highway 417.
- Friendfield Farm, Gregorys Creek mitigation site, and Sandy Run Forest in Union County. Friendfield Farm is 383 acres of prime farmland, timber, and hunting land. With more than a mile of land along the banks of Fairforest Creek, its protection will also play a significant role in safeguarding the creek's water quality. The 532-acre Gregorys Creek mitigation site will safeguard water quality and better protect Gregorys Creek as it flows into the Broad River. Sandy Run Forest is comprised of 237 acres of forests, farmland, and open fields. Located less than a mile from the Lower Pacolet River, this property is also critical to water quality, in addition to serving as important wildlife habitat.

Also protected were 81 acres in Pickens County that are part of a nearly 800-acre property purchased by Naturaland Trust with the support of the South Carolina Conservation Bank and the USDA Community Forest Program. 🌱

Help us protect more Upstate land

Do you know someone who owns land in the 10-county Upstate SC region who would like to learn more about permanently protecting their land through a voluntary conservation easement? Is that someone you? We would love to share more information on the benefits of conserving land. Funding and tax incentives are available.

Contact landtrust@upstateforever.org | (864) 250-0500



New team member

**Please join us in welcoming
Land Conservation Specialist,
Richard Carr!**

Richard joined Upstate Forever after serving two previous careers in the textile industry and in ministry with the Presbyterian Church (USA).

A lifelong resident of Spartanburg, Richard has spent most of his life in the outdoors of the Upstate hunting, fishing, canoeing, and camping. Much of that time centered on his family's ancestral farm located on the Broad River near Lockhart. A graduate of the Outward Bound School, he also enjoys backpacking in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

After graduating from Presbyterian College, Richard spent a number of years in sales and marketing working for traditional and niche textile manufacturers. In 2008, he transitioned to seminary and obtained his Masters of Divinity before serving churches in Southwest Georgia and York County, SC.

Eventually, it was Richard's love of the land and his concern for our stewardship of it that led him to Upstate Forever, and he is excited to put his talents in building relationships towards Upstate Forever's mission.

Contact Upstate Forever FIRST

If you own property with a conservation easement held by Upstate Forever, there are certain activities that are restricted or require notice to and/or pre-approval from our Land Trust.

Please contact us FIRST at csprecher@upstateforever.org or (864) 250-0500 if you are planning any of the following:



**Tree cutting
or removal**



**Any activities
near water
bodies**



**New
structures**



**New agricultural
activities**



New ponds



**New roads,
bridges or trails**



**Digging or
alteration of
soil/land**



**New patios,
walkways,
docks or decks**



**Upcoming sale
or lease of
property**

Add acreage to your existing easement

Considering putting more of your property under a conservation easement? Sometimes an existing easement can be amended to add more acreage without the need for an entirely new easement process. Adding acreage to an existing conservation easement may offer additional tax benefits beyond those provided by the initial easement. Funding may also be available to offset the costs to landowners. If you are interested in adding acreage to your easement, contact Caitlyn Gendusa at cgendusa@upstateforever.org.



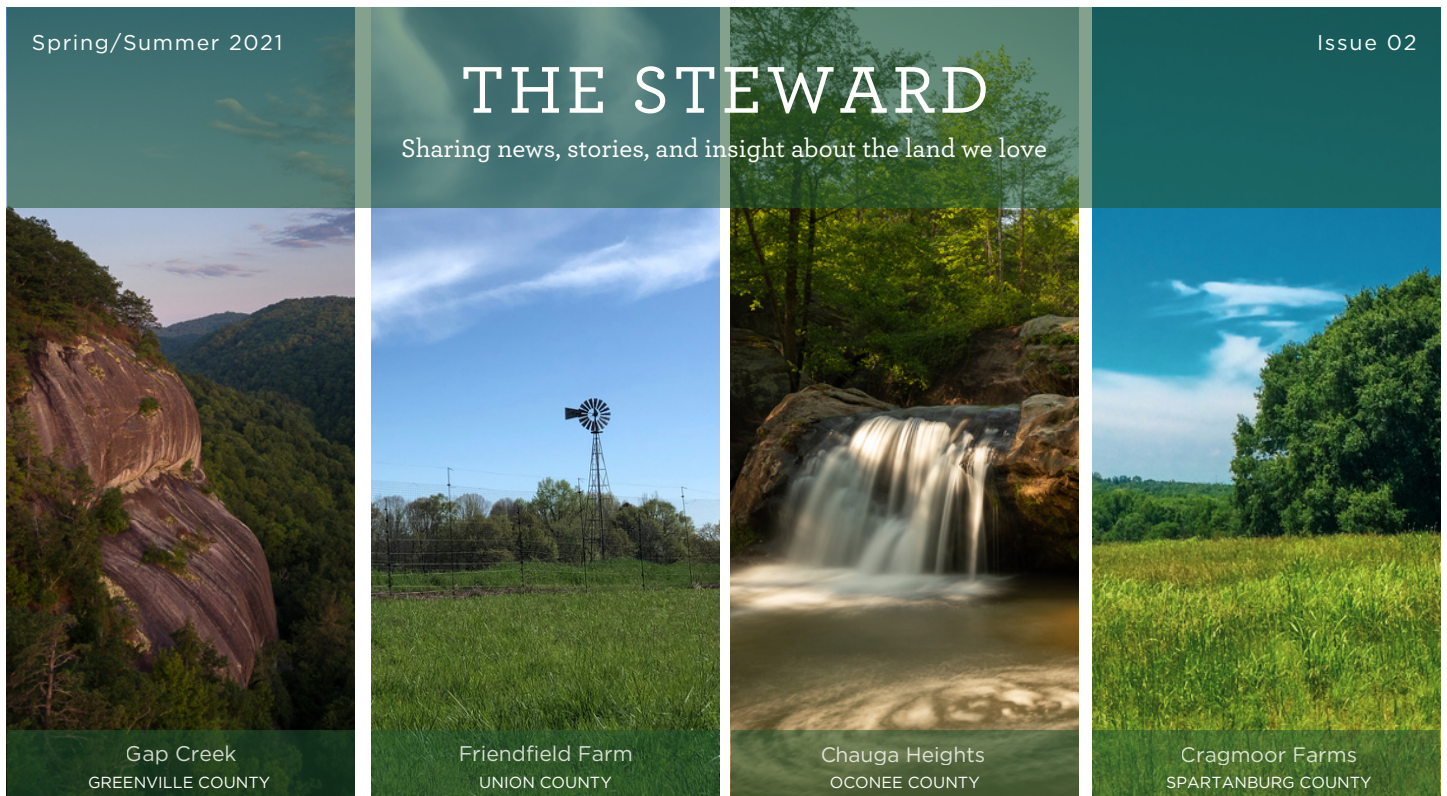
Stay in touch

Follow @UpstateForever on social media and sign up for our email lists at upstateforever.org/email



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A few of the many scenes from Upstate Forever's conservation easements. Through our Land Conservation program, we have protected over 25,800 acres in our Upstate.