

1998

UPSTATE FOREVER

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF
CONSERVATION & ADVOCACY

2023

SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

25 HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PAST 25 YEARS OF UPSTATE FOREVER
BACK TO THE 90s WITH BRAD WYCHE | IMPROVING WATER QUALITY IN ANDERSON
ASK AN ADVOCATE: LEADING THE "CHARGE" AGAINST ELECTRIC VEHICLE RANGE ANXIETY

ON (& OFF) THE CLOCK:

Upstate Forever at work and play



"Pat" Cooper, a dedicated conPURRvationist, ponders nature at Caesars Head.



Congrats to Stewardship & Land Restoration Manager Lauren Ulich (formerly Muller) & her husband Austin, who got married last fall.



Impact Greenville Leadership Team members Sherry Barrett (left, UF) and Gail Peay (right, Habitat for Humanity) helped co-host Greenville's Promise: A Place for All. The event launched a movement to address the loss of Black households in our urban areas.

25 YEARS | UPSTATE FOREVER

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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Megan Chase-Muller <i>State Policy Director</i>	Erika Hollis <i>Clean Water Director</i>	Dorothy Signal <i>Land Trust Associate</i>	Brad Wyche <i>Founder & Senior Advisor</i>
	Katie Hottel <i>Clean Water & GIS Manager</i>		

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Amanda Bauknight	Dianne Culbertson	Brice Hipp	Charlie Mickel	Sue Priester
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Wes Cooler	Russell Harris	Patrick McMillan	Leon Patterson	Kris Yon

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Celebrating a quarter century

It seems like yesterday that Upstate Forever was celebrating its 20th anniversary, but here we are celebrating 25 years of success and hard work. We have grown so much since then. Our staff has increased by nine, our protected acreage has expanded by more than 40%, and our impact has stretched across the Upstate and at the State House.

Our work is more important now than ever because there is still so much of our region under threat of rapid, unbalanced growth and sprawl. We know that smart growth and land protection can lead to cleaner water, ample open space, more affordable and vibrant communities, and a higher quality of life for all of us. For those reasons, UF strives to balance growth while maintaining the natural assets that are so special about our area.

After taking a mini-sabbatical in Hawaii, I came back home with a renewed appreciation for the Upstate and all of its natural splendor. There truly is no place like the Upstate, and no matter where I am, I am always reminded of how much there is to protect and cherish here. So, in this issue of the *Upstate Advocate*, we celebrate 25 years of success by highlighting some of our proudest achievements and by looking ahead to what we have in store for the future.

Of course, we could not do any of this important work without our partners and supporters. Thank you for making our success possible and join us in celebrating all that we have accomplished! Here's to the next 25 years of balancing growth with the protection of our region's natural resources.

Andrea

Andrea Cooper, Executive Director



Mable Clarke, who was recently awarded the Order of the Palmetto, gives a big hug to Sidney, daughter of UF's Scott Park. Ms. Clarke is the matriarch & steward of Soapstone Baptist Church in Pickens, which is protected by a UF easement.



Thank you to the awesome volunteers who joined us on a wet Saturday morning to remove litter from a protected property in downtown Greenville! They removed 50+ bags of trash, a golf bag, shopping cart, two car seats, 15 tires, and these basketballs!



Chilly weather couldn't stop Comms Manager Megan Burton from visiting Table Rock State Park with her daughter Eleanor & dog Olive.

“Enough talking:” the early days of Upstate Forever



By Brad Wyche

FOUNDER & SENIOR ADVISOR
bwyche@upstateforever.org

I spent over two years agonizing and soul-searching on whether I should leave the law business and start Upstate Forever. I never doubted the urgent need for the organization, which would focus on the immense challenges associated with rapid growth and development in our region — protecting green space, managing land use, and improving water quality.

But how many people in the Upstate would agree with me? Would I be able to attract enough financial support to hire staff and be successful?

This process included endless conversations with my patient wife Diane. When I asked her to talk about it one more time, she said firmly, “No, Brad. I think we’ve done enough talking. You should do it. Everything will be fine.”

That was the push I needed, and I decided to go for it. I figured worst case, I could always return to being a lawyer.

I’ll never forget September 1, 1998. That was the first day of my new life as the Executive Director of Upstate Forever when I made the short walk from the bedroom to the office at my home.

One of my first tasks was to write and send out Upstate Forever’s first newsletter to explain the mission and ask for support. I mailed hundreds to friends, family, former clients, and even a few strangers. It included a “ten point plan for sensible growth” which still provides the foundation for much of the work we do.

Three days later, I opened our box at the post office, and it was chock full of envelopes with checks. At that moment, I knew for sure that Upstate Forever would be a success. Diane was right — everything would be fine.

More good things soon started to happen. Generous grants allowed me to hire staff, open our Spartanburg



office, and undertake important regional projects. We started closing conservation easements, and more and more people were becoming members.

Now, on this 25th anniversary, I rejoice in the progress and accomplishments of Upstate Forever. I'm honored, humbled and deeply grateful for all of the support we've received from so many—our board, advisory council, staff, members, volunteers, companies, foundations, and government agencies.

Thank you for making it possible to do our work in striving to keep the Upstate as the best region in the world...forever. 🌿

PHOTOS:

(1) Brad Wyche started Upstate Forever in 1998, working out of his house and mailing hundreds of Upstate Advocate newsletters to ask the community for support. (2) The first UF Board of Directors in 1999, left to right: Dave Hargett, Mark Taylor, Carlton Owen, Joan Peters, and Brad Wyche. (3) The very first Annual Meeting in October 2000. (4) Celebrating the first "Land Trust Day" at Mast General Store in June 2004. (5) UF's office at 507 Pettigru Street in June 2007, prior to the "greenovation" project. Turn to page 16 to see what it looks like now!

"I knew that an organization [like Upstate Forever] was desperately needed to protect the Upstate and to keep it from becoming 'Any Place, USA.'

"I decided that I wanted to try to give something back to this area because it has been very good to me and my family and it is one of the most beautiful places in the country. It's worth fighting for."

— **BRAD WYCHE**, founder of Upstate Forever, in the first-ever issue of the Upstate Advocate newsletter, written in Spring 1999



25

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 25 YEARS

Founded in 1998 by attorney Brad Wyche, Upstate Forever has spent the past 25 years forging relationships with business leaders, municipalities, elected officials, community advocates, and fellow conservation organizations. We are proud of our accomplishments, and are honored to continue to serve the Upstate by working to protect its land, water, and special character.

However, we could not do any of this important work without you — our generous supporters, funders, and advocates. You are the reason for the success stories on the following pages. These are just a few of the highlights (in no particular order) that you've made possible over the last 25 years.



1 The Prisma Health Swamp Rabbit Trail

It's safe to say the Prisma Health Swamp Rabbit Trail has been a game-changer for Greenville County, enhancing quality of life and bringing \$9.5 million to the community annually. Upstate Forever played an essential role in securing and opening the trail, as well as catalyzing an extension from downtown to CU-ICAR. We continue to actively engage in land use conversations for development around the trail corridor, including the Greenville Development Code. To further support active transit in Greenville, UF also established and operated the Greenville B-cycle program until it was transferred to another system operator in 2019.

2 More funding to accelerate protection of the Upstate's land & water while there's still time

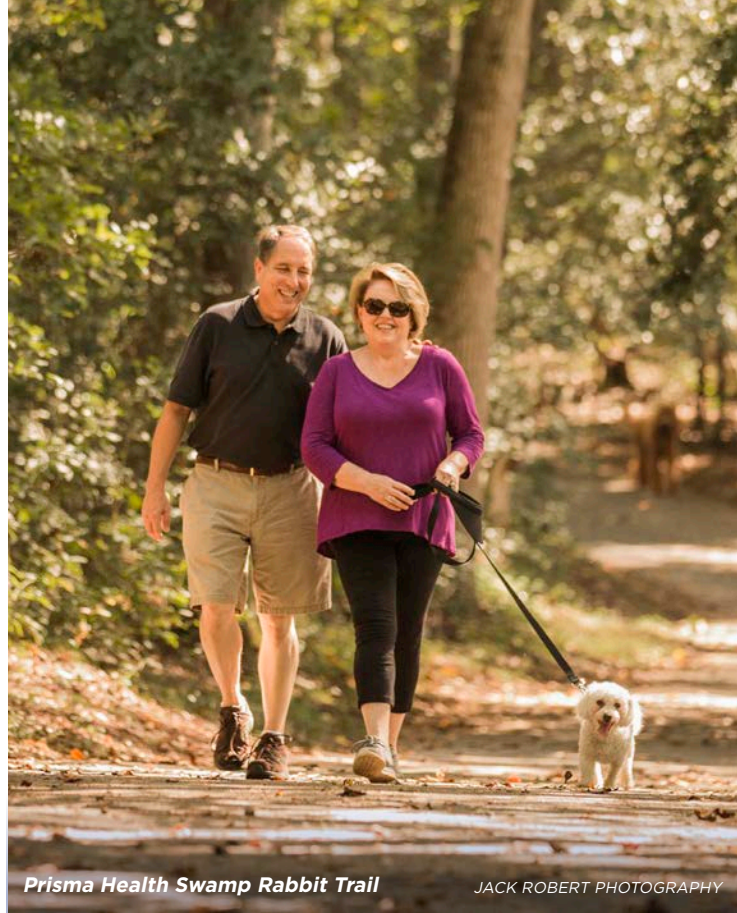
As our region grows, the key to timely and effective conservation is funding. Through the years, UF and our partners have advocated successfully for significant funding for conservation at the local, state, federal, and private giving levels. Some examples are the enactment of hospitality taxes in Greenville and Spartanburg Counties to fund parks and greenways; the Oconee County Conservation Bank, the Greenville County Historic and Natural Resources Trust, and the Upstate Land Conservation Fund — that's millions in funding that goes directly to local Upstate projects.

3 Achieving the highest standard for land trusts

In 2008, UF became the first land trust in South Carolina to receive official national recognition, a distinction granted by the Land Trust Alliance to recognize land conservation organizations that demonstrates sound finances, ethical conduct, responsible governance, and lasting stewardship. Less than 30% of land trusts have earned accreditation, so we are proud we have achieved it and continue to maintain it.

4 2,600+ visits to steward protected properties

Since Upstate Forever was founded, our team has conducted more than 2,600 monitoring visits. Stewardship allows UF to maintain the conservation agreement with landowners and ensures the permanent protection of a special property through an ongoing relationship between the land and its owners. Our expert Land Trust staff visits each property annually to ensure its conservation values — the natural resources under protection — remain intact.



Prisma Health Swamp Rabbit Trail

JACK ROBERT PHOTOGRAPHY



Greenville County Historic & Natural Resources Trust supporters



5 30K+ acres protected through conservation easements

A conservation easement is a voluntary agreement that honors a landowner's vision for their property and ensures the land is preserved in perpetuity from large-scale development. Over the years, our Land Trust has partnered with generous landowners, funders, and partner nonprofits to enact 145 conservation agreements that permanently protect more than 30,000 acres of our region's most critical lands. From the cove forests of the Blue Ridge Escarpment to the working farms of the Piedmont, these are critical properties that safeguard water quality and provide natural habitat. They are also iconic places that attract, teach, heal, and inspire. Here is a sampling of just some of these special places.

Soapstone Baptist Church

PICKENS | 6 ACRES

Historic church & grounds, founded by freed slaves in the Liberia community

Spring Park Inn

TRAVELERS REST | 20 ACRES

19th century inn and greenspace right off the Swamp Rabbit Trail

Oconee Town

OCONEE | 54 ACRES

Historic Cherokee village site with a stunning view of Tamassee Knob

Grant Meadow

PICKENS | 57 ACRES

Iconic Table Rock view off Hwy 11, one of SC's most photographed spots

Stumthouse Mountain

OCONEE | 519 ACRES

Public access land with historic, scenic, cultural, & ecological significance

Cragmoor Farms

SPARTANBURG | 121 ACRES

Farm-to-table program provides education & produce to students

Conestee Nature Preserve

GREENVILLE | 379 ACRES

13+ miles of trails offer ample chances to spot wildlife

Warrior Mountain

LAURENS | 318 ACRES

Iconic granite formation & site of significance for historic Cherokee

Paris Mountain & Jones Gap Additions

GREENVILLE | 1,946 ACRES

5 easements expanding acreage & access to popular state parks

Nesbitt Shoals

SPARTANBURG | 201 ACRES

Blueway and drinking water source at the Tyger River Confluence

Chauga Heights

OCONEE | 212 ACRES

Striking riverside tract that doubles the size of ChauRam County Park

Rocky River Nature Park

ANDERSON | 132 ACRES

Unique public wetlands filter water & offer valuable bird sanctuary

Calico Vineyard

GREENVILLE | 115 ACRES

Scenic family farm providing grapes, berries, & more to local markets

Greenbrier Farms

PICKENS | 124 ACRES

Farm & event venue practicing regenerative agriculture

Timber Creek Farm

LAURENS | 190 ACRES

Growing native grasses & pollinator-friendly plants for seed production

Nalley Brown Nature Park

PICKENS | 39 ACRES

Easy-to-access park with 2.5 miles of trails and a natural playground

With our regional conservation partners, we have also played a significant role in protecting an additional 1,500 acres across eight properties.



Stumthouse Tunnel



Calico Vineyard



Conestee Nature Preserve

JACK ROBERT PHOTOGRAPHY



Jones Gap Addition - White Tract



Grant Meadow

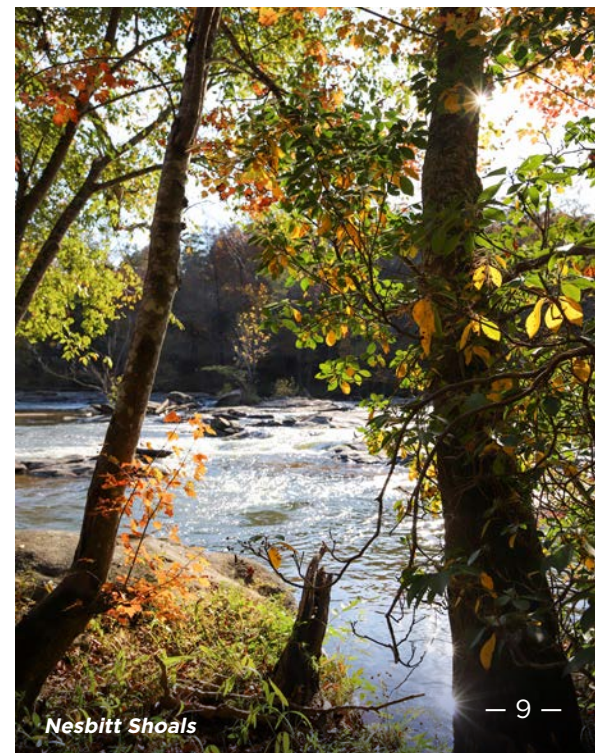


Chauga Heights

MAC STONE



Cragmoor Farms - courtesy of Spartanburg School District 6



Nesbitt Shoals



Trout habitat



Bunched Arrowhead



Lake Greenwood
JON HOLLOWAY

6 Conservation & restoration of critical habitat

The Upstate is a remarkably biodiverse area — did you know that the Blue Ridge Escarpment has more tree species than all of Europe? Unfortunately, habitat for our native plants and wildlife is often particularly sensitive to development and water quality deterioration. UF works strategically to provide healthy, intact habitat and corridors for local species:

Identifying our most critical lands

With the support of Pacolet Milliken Enterprises and in partnership with Furman University, we completed a Critical Lands mapping project to identify the region's most environmentally sensitive lands for water and habitat quality.

Trout habitat restoration on the Saluda

Native trout, once abundant in the Upstate, have been decimated by habitat degradation. As part of the Partners for Trout alliance, UF helped restore nearly 3,000 feet of trout habitat in the South Saluda River.

Threatened plant protection

Through conservation, advocacy, and consultation, we work to protect federally endangered plants like the bunched arrowhead — one of the rarest plants on Earth, found only in Greenville County and Henderson County, NC — and other rare plant species like the Oconee bell and dwarf-flowered heartleaf.

7 Stopping an unnecessary transmission line through the Blue Ridge Mountains

UF helped mobilize public opposition to stop Duke Energy's proposed substation and 45-mile-long transmission line across the Foothills and Blue Ridge Mountains of the Upstate. The project would have marred the beauty and integrity of an ecologically sensitive landscape, and better options were available to provide effective services. We were able to work with Duke on an alternative solution to install solar facilities and promote energy efficiency. It was a true win-win!

8 The Saving Lake Greenwood study

By 1999, Lake Greenwood was plagued by pollutants (causing algal blooms thick enough for turtles to walk on!) from upstream sources. UF managed one of the most comprehensive watershed studies ever undertaken in the country to find solutions, and then led implementation of those solutions throughout the Saluda-Reedy Watershed. The result? Significant water quality improvements that allow residents to continue to use and enjoy Lake Greenwood.

These are just a few of the highlights (in no particular order) that your support has made possible over the last 25 years.

9 Five strategic plans to clean up watersheds

When the lands within a watershed are protected and properly managed, it helps maintain water quality, reduce flooding, and increase property values. Thanks to funding from SCDHEC, our Clean Water Team has, over the years, analyzed data and created five strategic watershed-based plans to improve water quality in the Saluda; North/Middle, and South Tyger, 3&20 Creek, and Lake Keowee watersheds. We also implement these plans through best management practices that tackle bacteria, sediment, and nutrition pollution. To date, that includes 123 septic system repairs, 1,100 feet of streambank restored, 11,475 feet of livestock fencing, 65 acres of conservation cover crops, 8 pet waste stations, and more.

10 Holding Kinder Morgan accountable for cleaning up a massive diesel spill

In 2014, the Kinder Morgan pipeline in Belton, SC ruptured and spilled more than 369,000 gallons of gasoline into the surrounding environment. UF partnered with the Southern Environmental Law Center and Savannah Riverkeeper to file a Clean Water Act lawsuit against Kinder Morgan to ensure adequate cleanup, a process that took years and went as far as the US Supreme Court. Kinder Morgan eventually settled for \$1.5 million. The Anderson Water Council was then established to oversee the distribution of settlement funds for projects that improve watershed health and community engagement in Anderson County.

See page 20 for more information on the council.

11 Connecting people to our rivers and lakes

With support from the Callie and John Rainey Foundation and other partners, UF led coordination of blueway trail mapping throughout SC to catalyze river access across the Upstate. This project connects paddlers of all skill levels to the best water recreation sites across the state via www.PaddleSC.com. We are also proud to have worked with SCDHEC and the Clemson Center for Watershed Excellence to help establish SC Adopt-A-Stream, a citizen-science program that trains residents to monitor water quality in their local waterways.

12 Removal of contaminated dams & sediment

Between 1955 and 1977, a manufacturing plant discharged over 400,000 pounds of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), a highly toxic chemical, into a tributary of Twelve Mile River, resulting in widespread contamination in the river and Lake Hartwell. Alongside the Lake Hartwell Association and Pickens Soil and Water Conservation District, UF successfully advocated for implementation of the federal court's consent decree to remove PCB-contaminated sediment and two dams on the river.

13 Opposing an unneeded 'mega-landfill'

When an unnecessary and redundant mega-landfill was proposed in Spartanburg County in 2005, we joined efforts to successfully stop its development, in addition to promoting waste reduction and recycling through collection events for household hazardous waste and pharmaceuticals.



Connecting people to waterways



The Tyger River watershed

14 Local land use policies that encourage green space, reduce sprawl, and enhance mobility.

From the beginning, UF has recognized that conservation and land use policy go hand in hand. While this kind of advocacy can be slow-moving and incremental, it is essential to our future if we want to balance growth with other community priorities like greenspace and affordable housing. We celebrate the successful policies UF has advocated for, including:

More robust protection for vanishing tree canopy

CITY OF GREENVILLE | 2021

Greenville City Council adopted a substantially revised and strengthened tree ordinance in an effort to protect remaining tree canopy within the city limits. Urban tree canopy is critical for sequestering carbon, removing air pollutants, filtering stormwater, slowing runoff, providing cooling shade, and reducing urban heat island effects.

A more inclusive downtown development code

CITY OF SPARTANBURG | 2015

This regulatory structure implemented the vision and goals of the Downtown Master Plan by first establishing form-based regulations for the development and redevelopment of the central business district, and then expanded into the Northside Neighborhood.

Promoting sidewalks & bike paths

CITY OF CLEMSON | 2018

This was a major revision to the city's land development regulations, establishing and/or strengthening regulations related to tree canopy and requirements for developers to install sidewalks/bike paths identified in adopted plans.

Empowering rural landowners

GREENVILLE COUNTY | 2021

With input from rural landowners and local farmers, County Council established an "Agricultural Preservation" Zoning District, providing citizens with an important voluntary tool to preserve the county's remaining farmlands.

Preserving the character of Highway 11

PICKENS COUNTY | 2022

UF supported a citizen-led effort to adopt a Pickens County ordinance aimed at protecting the unique beauty of the Scenic Highway 11 Corridor through design standards and development limitations. The ordinance will ensure development along this iconic route is in keeping with its scenic and rural character.

Breakthrough ordinances encouraging thoughtful growth

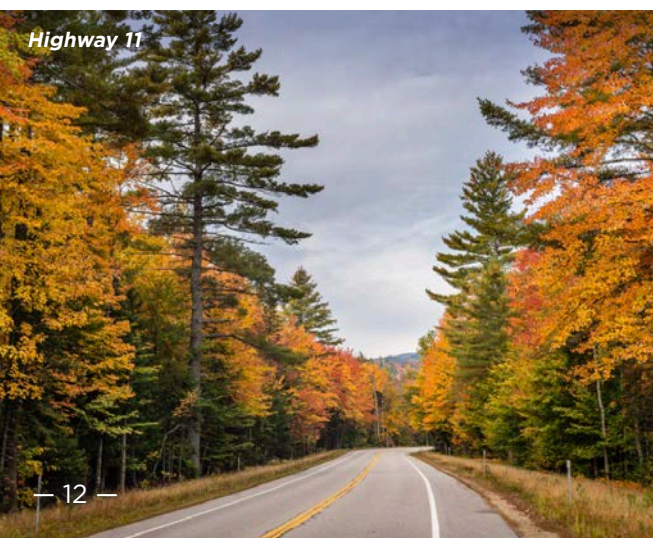
SPARTANBURG COUNTY | 2019

The Spartanburg County Performance Zoning for the southwest region enabled mixed-use development for the first time in unincorporated areas of the county while providing protections for compatibility with residential and other uses. A Road Classification Plan and new subdivision regulations laid the groundwork for future adoption of performance zoning for other unincorporated regions of the county.

Strengthened protection for unzoned rural land

GREENVILLE COUNTY | 2021

To address rapid development of rural land, County Council established Rural Conservation Subdivision Guidelines to apply to all unzoned properties in the unincorporated area, which strengthened protection for riparian buffers and open space and maintained protections for endangered and threatened species. Simultaneously, Council strengthened requirements for developers to share in the cost of needed infrastructure upgrades and mitigate traffic impacts.



Highway 11



Downtown Spartanburg

15 An eye-opening growth projection study

UF and partners released a landmark Upstate Growth Study conducted by Clemson University’s Strom Thurmond Institute in 2008, followed by another eye-opening growth alternatives analysis in 2016 – both highlighting the trade-offs of various growth choices and what our region will look like decades from now if current development patterns and policies remain unchanged. Long story short: the studies found that the Upstate is consuming land at an alarming rate, and it is imperative that we explore alternatives to this sprawling growth pattern.

16 The Impact Greenville coalition

Coalition work is an important aspect of our work, especially as part of collective advocacy. To more effectively advance better land use policies, we partnered with local stakeholders to establish Impact Greenville, a diverse coalition working to shape public policy at the intersection of housing, transportation, and land use. Impact Greenville also hosts thought-provoking community education events to advocate for policy change.

17 250+ citizens engaged in advocacy training & events

UF is dedicated to demystifying the land use planning process for local residents. Since 2019, we’ve engaged over 250 Greenville residents in Citizens Planning Academies, advocacy trainings, and postcard-writing social events. The academies help residents navigate the policy making process and give them the tools to influence it.

18 The Active Living event series

From 2012-2015, UF hosted the quarterly Active Living event series based in Spartanburg County and sponsored by the Mary Black Foundation. The series was designed to encourage community dialogue about policies and infrastructure that promote physical activity to improve public health.

Continued on page 16

Rural land conversion



Transportation



Active living infrastructure



Advocacy training

25 YEARS | UPSTATE FOREVER

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These are just a few of the success stories that your support has made possible over the last 25 years! To contribute to our important work, visit upstateforever.org/donate.



Working to protect the remaining critical lands in the **Blue Ridge Escarpment** and sensitive habitat for native plants & animals



Helping permanently protect critical property near **Glassy Mountain** in Pickens County



With partners, protecting **Stumphouse Mountain** and **Nine Times Forest** from development



First land trust in SC to receive **national accreditation**, with more than 30,000 acres protected
See page 8 for a few examples



Working alongside partners to **expand public outdoor recreation** by conserving land to add to parks like Paris Mountain, Jones Gap, ChauRam County Park, and more



Engaging over 250 Greenville residents in **Citizens Planning Academies**, advocacy trainings, and postcard-writing social events as we work to demystify local land planning and empower residents to participate



As part of a statewide coalition, successfully advocating to reauthorize and support funding for the **SC Conservation Bank**, an essential tool to protect our state's natural assets



Helping facilitate the creation of, and advocating for, local conservation funding sources, resulting in **millions of dollars for local conservation** projects, i.e. the Oconee County Conservation Bank, the Greenville County Historic and Natural Resources Trust, and the Upstate Land Conservation Fund



Advocating for initiatives to manage **stormwater** and enact progressive local ordinances **reducing sprawl, encouraging more walkable communities, tree protection, stream buffers**, and more
See page 12 for a few examples

Forming the all-volunteer grassroots outreach group **Oconee Forever**



Successfully advocating to remove PCB-contaminated sediment and two dams on the **Twelve Mile River**



Combating PCB contamination and reducing the amount of water being released from **Lake Hartwell**



Working with partners on a Clean Water Act lawsuit to ensure proper **cleanup of the 2014 Kinder Morgan gasoline spill** and establishing a water quality fund with the settlement money



Helping create the **SC Adopt A Stream** program along with many Upstate partners and SCDHEC



Restoring nearly 3,000 feet of **trout habitat** in the South Saluda River



Mobilizing public opposition against a 45-mile transmission line over the Blue Ridge Escarpment and working with Duke to find a win-win solution



Playing an essential role in catalyzing the opening and extension of the **Prisma Health Swamp Rabbit Trail**



Working with **Spartanburg County** communities to improve health through smart land use planning



Establishing the **Greenville B-cycle** bike-share program



Advancing transformational recreation initiatives like the **Saluda Grade Trail and Tyger River Confluence Park & Blueway** with local and regional partners



Stopping a proposed **coal ash landfill** in Liberty



Earning **LEED Platinum-certified renovation** of our Greenville office and introduced **EarthCraft** green building standard to SC



Leading coordination of **blueway trail mapping** throughout SC and catalyzing river access across the Upstate



Stopping a proposed mega-landfill in Spartanburg County

PERSON



Partnering with water utilities and landowners throughout the Upstate to **improve the health of our rivers** by creating watershed-based plans to reduce bacteria and nutrients



Represented by the Southern Environmental Center, securing a **voluntary agreement** from Duke Energy to remove coal ash improperly stored along the Saluda River



Releasing an eye opening study about **responsible growth** options in the 10-county region

ABBEVILLE

GREENWOOD



Managing one of the most comprehensive watershed studies in the country to improve the Saluda-Reedy basin and **water quality in Lake Greenwood**

19 Greenville Office Project

Following UF's first-ever capital campaign, we completed the LEED Platinum-certified renovation of our Greenville office meeting EarthCraft green building standards. This project set an example for the adaptation of existing structures to meet modern, environmentally-conscious standards. Our office, located at 507 Pettigru Street, features: a roof made of sustainably-harvested wood and treated with a non-toxic preservative that prevents decay, reclaimed heart pine flooring from three Upstate textile mills, solar panels that provide about a quarter of our electrical power, a "green roof," native plant landscaping, and rain barrels for irrigation.

20 Advocacy for clean energy solutions

UF works at the state level to reduce unnecessary energy infrastructure while we lay the groundwork for a regulatory and policy environment that encourages clean renewable energy, energy storage, demand side management, and energy efficiency in the most flexible and cost-effective manner possible. Some energy successes:

The 2019 Energy Freedom Act to protect rooftop solar, allow for public engagement in utility resource plans, protect customers from rising costs, preserve the ability to manage individual energy use, and promote utility adoption of clean energy resources.

The 2019 Solar on Superfund bill and 2020 Market Reform Study bills that advance the state's pro-solar actions and address utility regulation.

Intervening in Public Service Commission dockets to hold electric utilities accountable and advocate for initiatives that reduce our reliance on fossil fuels.

21 Addressing harmful coal ash storage

UF worked with the Southern Environmental Law Center to secure a voluntary agreement with Duke Energy in 2015 for the excavation of the Lee Steam Station coal ash ponds located along the Saluda River in Anderson County. We also helped with the effort to stop a proposed coal ash landfill in Pickens County.

22 Keeping a watchful eye on pipeline plans

We act as a watchdog for harmful pipeline projects and advocate for accountability between pipeline companies and local communities. UF has worked with residents to vet pipeline plans and oppose unnecessary ones, including a line proposed by Piedmont Natural Gas in 2020 and 2021 in sensitive ecosystems and working lands in Northern Greenville County.

23 State conservation and resilience funding

UF has been working with the SC Office of Resilience and other advocates on the new agency's task force to develop the State Resilience Plan, anticipated to be released in July 2023, which would apply policies that benefit Upstate communities, including nature-based solutions and strategic land conservation.

24 Working to combat toxic "forever chemicals"

Known as "forever chemicals," PFAS — toxic per and polyfluoroalkyl substances — are found widely throughout SC's water supply. In recent years, UF has been investigating PFAS contamination in Upstate drinking water systems and working with SCDHEC and advocates in recent years to develop legislation and regulations to protect citizens from exposure.





These are just a few of the highlights (in no particular order) that your support has made possible over the last 25 years.

25 Protecting Glassy Mountain

In 2017, we successfully appealed a proposed 254-home subdivision that would have forever altered the character, landscape, and hydrology of Glassy Mountain, a Pickens County icon. We worked with the landowners and community members to realize a conservation solution, and the mountain view will remain intact for all to enjoy.

25+ Looking Ahead:

We are excited about the future, and are already working on some new initiatives that will continue to transform the Upstate while protecting its natural resources and enhancing quality of life. Here are a few projects and focus areas we have in store.

Saluda Grade Rail Trail

We are hard at work facilitating, with partners, a potential rail trail following the unused Saluda Grade rail line for approximately 31 miles through Upstate South Carolina and Western North Carolina. The trail would be a transformational recreation amenity for our region.

See [page 21](#) for details and an update

Tyger River Confluence Park & Blueway

Alongside the Tyger River Foundation and other partners, UF is working to protect four beautiful parcels on the Tyger River totaling 201 acres with 2.5 miles of river frontage and prominent features, including 136-acre confluence property, Tyger 10 Nature Park, Nesbitt Farm, and the future location for the Tyger River Nature Center. This interconnected system of properties and recreational facilities will promote public recreation opportunities for the community.

Protecting high-priority small parcels

Although our Land Trust typically prioritizes protection for large properties, we realize there are many smaller properties that offer an outsized contribution to the region's conservation footprint and quality of life. This may include urban greenspaces, iconic historic/cultural grounds, and neighborhood parks. We are also seeking to address historic inequities by intentionally working to protect more properties within historically underserved communities or owned by an individual who identifies as a person of color.



"Sting 'em Dog" is a Class IV rapid on the South Tyger River.

Electric Vehicles

UF is renewing focus on making electric vehicles accessible and identifying common-sense approaches to electrification and barriers to adoption. This spring, we are hosting an "EV Equity Summit" to facilitate collaboration among Greenville communities and other stakeholders to ensure we are effectively advocating for policies that equitably increase mobility, neighborhood connectivity, and reduce pollution. See [page 25](#) for more about EVs

Enhanced Land Management

We're excited for our new Land Management Program that enhances the land conservation work we already do by communicating techniques, impacts, and lessons learned to landowners and the larger community; promoting the natural resiliency of protected properties by combating invasive plants, restoring grasslands, building trails, and installing native plantings; and engaging the community. 🌿

Recent Land Trust successes



Eastatoe Headwaters

Eastatoe Headwaters

PICKENS COUNTY | 26 ACRES

Eastatoe Headwaters is a roughly 26-acre property located in the Eastatoe Valley of Pickens County. The valley stretches along Cleo Chapman Highway in the shadow of the Wadakoe mountain range and is an area of conservation focus in part for its rare plant habitat, geologic properties, and scenic vistas. The Eastatoe Headwaters tract is part of a growing swath of protected lands in the area, including the directly adjacent Jocassee Gorges Wilderness Area managed by SCDNR, as well as nearby properties preserved by The Nature Conservancy. The conservation easement recently placed on the Eastatoe Headwaters was made possible through the generous support of the South Carolina Conservation Bank.



Five Oaks Farm

Five Oaks Farm

GREENVILLE COUNTY | 401 ACRES

Located in Southern Greenville County, Five Oaks Farm is comprised of 401 acres of forest and pastureland with more than a mile of frontage along the Saluda River. The landowners plan to maintain the property for hunting and wildlife management while encouraging native grassland habitat. Originating in the scenic valleys of Pickens and Greenville Counties, the Saluda River is the longest river flowing through the Upstate and borders six SC counties before joining the Congaree River near Columbia. For its immeasurable value to water quality both in the Upstate and downstream — as well as its rich wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities — properties like this one along the Saluda River are an area of focus for UF’s conservation efforts.



Bryson Children's Nature Walk



Beaverdam Creek Preserve

.....

Upstate Forever’s Land Trust partners with landowners to protect the special places they and their communities cherish via permanent conservation easements. Our Land Trust now protects more than 30,000 acres on 150 properties. Email Scott Park, Glenn Hilliard Director of Land Conservation, at spark@upstateforever.org for more information about protecting your property.

Beaverdam Creek Preserve

GREENVILLE COUNTY | 33 ACRES

Beaverdam Creek Preserve is located just outside of the City of Greer in Greenville County. This 33-acre property boasts significant frontage along Beaverdam Creek — a tributary of the South Tyger River — as well as wildlife habitat and 11 acres of wetlands. A conservation easement ensures this land's conservation values and scenic views are protected in an area facing extreme development pressure. Funding from the Upstate Land Conservation Fund and the US EPA under a Section 319 Grant through SCDHEC contributed to the success of this project.

Bryson Children's Nature Walk

PICKENS COUNTY | 63 ACRES

Bryson Children's Nature Walk is a 63-acre property home to an impressive network of beaver ponds and which encompasses headwaters of Six Mile Creek in Pickens County. The Town of Six Mile — which now owns and will manage the property — plans to open the land as a public park and outdoor classroom for students at the adjacent Six Mile Elementary School in the future. Amenities planned for the park include

trails, a boardwalk, pond overlook, and natural habitat preservation. This project received support from the Upstate Land Conservation Fund.

Blackwell Farm

GREENVILLE COUNTY | 50 ACRES

Blackwell Farm consists of 50 acres near Tigerville in Northern Greenville County. The property contains meadows fringed with hardwood and pine forests, diverse plant species and wildlife habitat, and tributaries of the Tyger River. The protection of Blackwell Farm will ensure the land retains its natural qualities in an unzoned part of the county experiencing intense development pressure. Funding from Greenville Women Giving, the South Carolina Conservation Bank, the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service Regional Conservation Partnership Program, and a reimbursement from the US EPA under a Section 319 Grant through SCDHEC made this project possible.

Sign up for our Land Protection email list at upstateforever.org/email to get the latest updates on initiatives that support increased funding for conservation in the Upstate.



CLEAN WATER

New fund to help clean up waterways in Anderson County



At a January event at Lake Broadway, the Anderson County Watershed Council awarded grants from \$30,000 to \$90,000 to the Rocky River Conservancy and the Anderson Soil and Water Conservation District.

The newly formed Anderson County Watershed Protection Council and its grant program are part of Upstate Forever's and Savannah Riverkeeper's efforts to spend legal settlement dollars from past polluters on long-term, community-driven projects that will safeguard Anderson's water quality.

It is exciting to jumpstart water-focused projects in communities that have experienced heavy pollution in the past. The goal is to connect children, teachers, residents and leaders to the waterways through recreation, restoration, and education.

In January, the council awarded grants from \$30,000 to \$90,000 to the Rocky River Conservancy and the Anderson Soil and Water Conservation District. The recipients are launching projects that will improve water quality and education in the county.

The Rocky River Conservancy project will engage the community in restoration efforts and water quality testing in the Rocky River Nature Park, a 148-acre public preserve in the Broadway Creek watershed. TreesUpstate is partnering with them to plant buffers while engaging the nearby community.

Also, in the Broadway Creek watershed, Anderson Soil and Water Conservation's project will provide teachers, students, and experts with Adopt-a-Stream kits and link them to the KnowYourRiver.com database to monitor local water conditions. The project will engage more than 1,000 participants in water quality activities in the first year.

The next funding opportunity will be in the summer of 2023. For more information, visit www.andersonwatercouncil.com or email info@andersonwatercouncil.com.



The Saluda Grade Trail will run along an inactive rail line that connects Upstate South Carolina to Western North Carolina.

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Saluda Grade Trail a step closer to reality

Last year, we announced Upstate Forever and nonprofit coalition partners Conserving Carolina and PAL: Play, Advocate, Live Well's intentions to purchase the inactive Saluda Grade railroad corridor for a new approximately 31-mile rail trail.

We're thrilled to share that the coalition — the Saluda Grade Trail Conservancy (SGTC) — has reached an agreement with Norfolk Southern to sell the rail line for use as a recreational trail.

Together, our nonprofits are leading efforts to repurpose the inactive rail line as a multi-use trail that will connect Upstate SC and Western NC. Along its route, the trail will feature rural scenery, vibrant small towns, historic landmarks, nature preserves, lakes, and waterfalls.

The Conservancy has a signed agreement with Norfolk Southern establishing the price and other terms of a future purchase. At the request of the railroad, the terms of the agreement are subject to a confidentiality agreement. The coalition expects to close on the rail corridor within two years and is pursuing state and federal funding opportunities.

SGTC also began the process of an economic impact and feasibility study that will shed light on how the trail will shape local economies and how to move forward with the project. This summer, the Conservancy will



**SALUDA
GRADE
T R A I L**

be reaching out to landowners and stakeholders along the trail to seek their input on the opportunities and challenges presented by the trail and approaches that will best meet the needs of the community.

In addition to being beloved community assets, trails energize economies. We've seen this play out with the Prisma Health Swamp Rabbit Trail in Greenville and the Doodle Trail in Pickens, which are resounding successes. The Saluda Grade Trail will bring new jobs and money to the area, encourage safe outdoor recreation, and improve quality of life for residents. It's a visionary project with a return that will far exceed any initial investment.

To learn more about the Saluda Grade Trail project and sign up for email updates, visit upstateforever.org/saluda-grade.

Never miss the latest Upstate Forever news!

Here's how to stay in the loop between issues of the *Upstate Advocate*.



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NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Louise Connell is

recently retired as the Section Manager for Supplier Diversity with BMW North America. She led BMW to realize their objectives for minority spending and increased the automobile company's community involvement. A graduate of USC, she also serves as the chair of the Foothills Regional Advisory Committee and is a board member of the Greater Women's Business Council, Spartanburg Chamber of Commerce Diversity Committee, and the USC Upstate Foundation Board of Directors, among others.



Mark Wesson is

the owner of MNL Land Advisors, which specializes in advising landowners regarding the acquisition of large tracts of land for long-term management, development, or conservation. He has 15 years experience in managing timberland, and is responsible for the development, implementation, and operation of multiple wetland mitigation banks in SC. He is a member of the board of directors of the Forestry Association of South Carolina and the East Edisto Conservancy. Mark also serves on the Upstate Land Conservation Fund governing committee.



NEW STAFF

Allie Martinsen

joined UF as Land Policy Manager in January 2023. Originally from Kansas City, she graduated from Saint Louis University with a degree in Philosophy, Psychology, and Gender Studies. She received a Master of Social Work from Washington University in St. Louis where she concentrated in Domestic Social and Economic Development. Allie is excited to use her expertise to advance policies that prevent sprawl, protect green spaces, and preserve the distinct character of communities.



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How do I deal with electric vehicle ‘range anxiety’?



By Michael Coleman
 ENERGY ADVOCATE
mcoleman@upstateforever.org

Dear Ask An Advocate,

I've noticed that electric vehicles (EV) are on the road a lot more lately, and I'm interested in getting one for my family. But how are they staying charged in our state? I don't see very many charging stations around, and I'm not finding a lot of helpful information. What is being done to ensure there's appropriate infrastructure in place so I don't get stranded?

Sincerely, Overwhelmed in Oconee

Dear Overwhelmed,

You are right – electric vehicles are on the rise with major brands like Ford, GM, BMW, and Chevrolet announcing plans to roll out fully electric lineups. Like you, many South Carolinians have concerns about their widespread adoption and wonder how far EVs can go on a single charge, or how long it will take to reach a full charge while on a long-distance trip. There is actually a term for these concerns: range anxiety.

What is EV Range Anxiety?

Range anxiety is a legitimate concern and particularly high among those who travel frequently and for longer distances. This fear comes from comparing insufficient charging stations to abundant traditional gas stations.

Since the first modernized EVs were introduced in 2008, substantial advancements in battery technology have increased the range of a single charge to around 250 miles. Recent investments from both the public and private sectors will also help facilitate a buildup of charging stations to support the projected increase in demand from EV users.

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How will SC address EV Range Anxiety?

The Investment in Infrastructure and Jobs Act (IIJA), passed in 2021, sets aside \$5 billion dollars to establish a National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Program (NEVI). The program provides funding to states for charging station infrastructure and establishing an interconnected nationwide network that ensures consistent access and reliability for users.

South Carolina’s plan prioritizes charging equipment located along the interstate highway system to complement completion of the national network. The NEVI plan for SC has been approved by the U.S. Department of Transportation, and we are currently awaiting final rules before implementation.

Automakers and battery manufacturers are aware of widespread range anxiety and are developing technologies that provide more range. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, the number of EVs on the market offering at least 300 miles of range tripled in 2022. Proterra Inc. is seizing the moment and recently announced production of the first Proterra powered EV battery at its new Powered 1 battery facility in Greer. Redwood materials also plans to recycle batteries here in SC, which will help address concerns of sustainability.

What can you do to help promote EVs?

Continue to urge our lawmakers at the local and state levels to implement policies and incentives that help expand access to electric vehicles and infrastructure. There is undoubtedly more work to be done, but there is reason to breathe easy because of historic investments in electric vehicles and charging stations. Alleviating range anxiety among consumers will move us toward solidifying equitable transportation electrification in South Carolina for years to come.

Find them: Not sure who represents you? For guidance on finding your local, state, and federal officials, visit upstateforever.org/local-officials or scan this QR code.



Upstate Forever advocates at the state and local level on issues related to conservation, water, clean energy, and smart growth. View our 2023 advocacy priorities at upstateforever.org/2023priorities.

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BACKYARD BINGO

Set a timer for 10 minutes and see what natural wonders you can spot in your backyard, local park, or just out the window. Share your completed bingo card on social media, tag @upstateforever and we'll mail you a packet of native wildflower seeds while supplies last!

 <p>SPROUTING PLANT</p>	 <p>PINE CONE</p>	 <p>FERN</p>	 <p>SQUIRREL</p>	 <p>EARTH WORM</p>
 <p>MUSHROOM</p>	 <p>YELLOW FLOWER</p>	 <p>CATERPILLAR</p>	 <p>WHITE FLOWER</p>	 <p>FLOWERING TREE</p>
 <p>BUTTERFLY</p>	 <p>FEATHER</p>	<p>FREE SPACE</p>	 <p>CLOUDS</p>	 <p>CHIPMUNK</p>
 <p>GREEN LEAVES</p>	 <p>PERCHED BIRD</p>	 <p>ACORN</p>	 <p>BERRIES</p>	 <p>BODY OF WATER</p>
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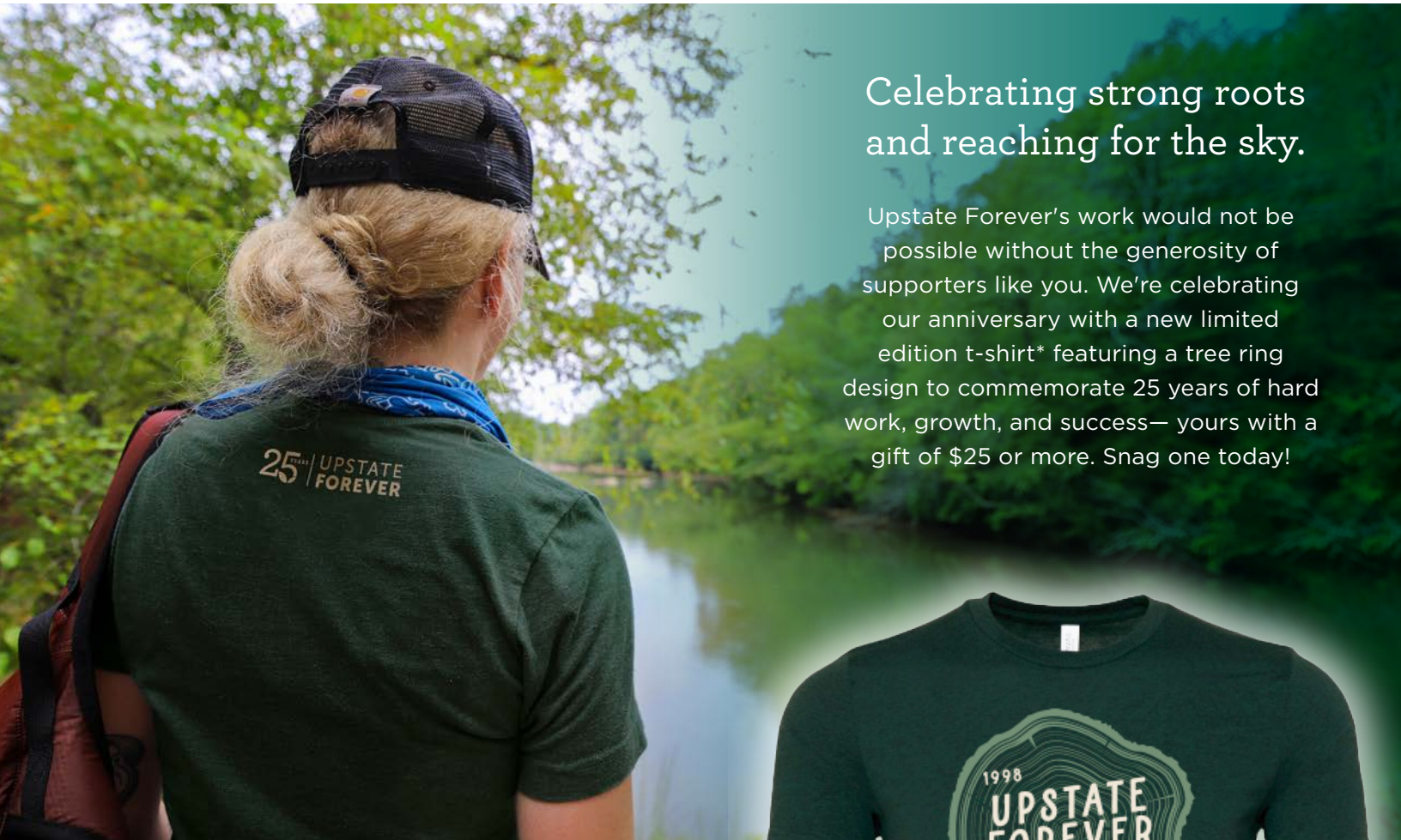
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