

GENERATIONS

THE FUTURE IS IN OUR HANDS



A CAMPAIGN FOR

UF | UPSTATE
FOREVER



This is a story about
the power of place,
people, and preservation.

When Hoyt Grant placed his family's 36-acre Grant Meadow property under conservation easement with Upstate Forever, not only did he protect this iconic vista in perpetuity, but he also inspired Pickens County to make this remarkable site more accessible for everyone to enjoy.

Today, Grant Meadow features an overlook of Table Rock with parking, picnic benches, and a historical marker so that passersby can take all the time they need to appreciate the natural wonder that rises before them.

**This is why we do what
we do every day.**



**UPSTATE
FOREVER**

We love the Upstate. We know you do, too.

Big places like Table Rock. Little places like Soapstone Church. Urban parks, state parks, trails, farmlands, rivers, forests, ponds, and lakes.

These places are our lifeblood, and for 25 years, protecting them has been our passion.

Our approach is top-down and bottom-up. And it works. By working with landowners to place legally binding conservation easements on critical lands and waters; helping residents across the Upstate take action to protect the places they love; and advocating for land-use, water, and energy policies that honor the value of our landscapes, we preserve our sense of place and sustain our remarkable quality of life.

**We are excited to announce *Generations:*
A Campaign for Upstate Forever.**

This campaign isn't about changing what we do. It's about doing more of it. Because that's what it's going to take if we want Upstate communities and the remarkable natural assets that define them to thrive for generations to come.

We hope you'll join us on this journey. Together we can leave our children, grandchildren, and future generations a great Upstate legacy: healthy lands and waters and the tools and skills they need to keep protecting the places they love long into the future.



Success Stories

We work in Abbeville, Anderson, Cherokee, Greenville, Greenwood, Laurens, Oconee, Pickens, Spartanburg, and Union Counties. Thanks to investments from donors like you, we have achieved great success over the last 25 years, including:

- Permanently protecting over 30,000 acres of land.
- Securing significant funding at the local, county, and state level to accelerate protection of the Upstate's lands and waters.
- Successfully advocating for dozens of local land-use policies that expand transportation options, housing choices, and access to clean water and safe green spaces.
- Improving water quality across all our major watersheds.
- Engaging hundreds of citizens in advocacy training that helps residents navigate the policy-making process and gives them the tools to influence it.



IRREPLACEABLE CULTURAL SITES

At just six acres, Soapstone Baptist Church is one of the smallest properties we've protected, but it has played an outsized role in the Upstate's culture and history. Established by formerly enslaved African Americans, the church has served the community as a place of worship and education for well over 150 years. It continues to play an important role in the community under the guidance of sixth-generation steward and conservation partner Mable Owens Clarke, pictured above.

Funders and Partners: South Carolina Conservation Bank, Upstate Land Conservation Fund



A BIGGER STATE PARK

When The Nature Conservancy donated a 935-acre parcel to South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism, and placed it under conservation easement with Upstate Forever, Jones Gap State Park became 25 percent bigger overnight. The park's expansion will result in new recreation opportunities and the protection of some of South Carolina's most rare and iconic species, including Rafinesque's big-eared bat, green salamander, black bear, and a newly discovered species of trillium.

Funders and Partners: The Nature Conservancy, SCPRT, South Carolina Conservation Bank, and Open Space Institute



IMPROVED WATER QUALITY

When we placed Five Oaks Farm, a 401-acre property with over a mile of frontage along the Saluda River, under conservation easement, we did more than ensure the permanence of its forests and pastures. We took a big step forward to protect and improve water resources in the Upstate and downstream.



POLICIES THAT BALANCE CONSERVATION AND GROWTH

From the beginning, Upstate Forever has recognized that conservation and land-use policy go hand in hand. While advocacy may be seen as slow-moving, it is essential to balancing growth with other community priorities. A few key policies we have successfully advocated for include:

SPARTANBURG:

The County's 2019 establishment of Performance Zoning for the Southwest Planning Area, which encourages thoughtful growth by enabling mixed-use development for the first time in unincorporated areas of the county while providing protections for compatibility with residential and other uses.

GREENVILLE:

City Council's 2021 adoption of a substantially revised and strengthened tree ordinance to protect the remaining tree canopy within the city limits; the County's establishment of an Agricultural Preservation District, which provides citizens with an important voluntary tool to preserve remaining farmlands; and the County's establishment of Rural Conservation Subdivision Design Guidelines, which apply to all unzoned properties in the unincorporated area, strengthening protection for riparian buffers and open space, and maintaining protections for endangered and threatened species.

Opportunities




SALUDA GRADE RAIL TRAIL

The Saluda Grade Trail Conservancy, which includes Upstate Forever and our nonprofit partners Conserving Carolina and PAL: Play, Advocate, Live Well, is working to acquire Norfolk Southern's 31-mile Saluda Grade rail line for use as a recreational trail. The Saluda Grade Rail Trail will connect Upstate South Carolina and Western North Carolina so that more people can experience the area's rural scenery, vibrant small towns, historic landmarks, nature preserves, lakes, and waterfalls.



TYGER RIVER CONFLUENCE PARK & BLUEWAY

Alongside the Tyger River Foundation and other partners, Upstate Forever is working to protect four beautiful parcels along the Tyger River, totaling 201 acres with 2.5 miles of river frontage. These parcels include a 136-acre confluence property, Tyger-10 Nature Park, Nesbitt Farm, and the future location of the Tyger River Nature Center. This interconnected system of properties and facilities will promote recreation opportunities for the community.



More and more people are discovering what we've always known: the Upstate is beautiful, and the places that define our unique quality of life are accessible.

While our natural environment and livability are drawing people to the Upstate, the sheer number of people we are attracting—and the development and sprawl that accompany them—are putting more and more pressure on our natural resources. Every day we pave over an area equal to the size of Haywood Mall, including all its parking lots, and studies project over 340,000 more people will move to the Upstate by 2040, most to the Greenville/Spartanburg area.

The threats to the health of our natural environment and our quality of life are real, and they are growing.

“Once you fill in land with asphalt, you can’t go back. If we don’t want to become the new Charlotte or the new Atlanta, we’ve all got to get on board. We’ve got to safeguard our water, protect our natural environments, and preserve our green spaces so that our children and grandchildren will still be able to enjoy them.”

— JOHN KEITH, Chair, Board of Directors

Upstate Forever has identified **three key initiatives** to meet the challenges our region is experiencing, amplify our impact, and exponentially grow protections for the Upstate's lands and waters in the years ahead.

①

We must **broaden, deepen, and accelerate our core work** to protect and improve the health of critical lands and waters.

②

We must **grow our capacity for effective advocacy** at the municipal, regional, and state level.

③

We must **expand our outreach and further activate our base of support** — residents like you who care deeply for the place we call home.

But we need **your support** to put these plans into action.

By making a gift to *Generations*, **you will be the reason** we are better able to keep pace with our region's growth and development.

You will be the reason we advance common-sense solutions to the issues most affecting our growing, diverse population.

You will be the reason our wild places, green spaces, and unique communities are protected, healthy, and accessible decades from now.

Generations is your greatest opportunity yet to do right by the place we call home and the natural landscapes that define our quality of life.

"You need organizations that not only help you understand what you have and what you are in danger of losing, but that also have the ability to create and execute plans to preserve what matters most. For the entire Upstate, that organization is Upstate Forever."

— **SAM ERWIN**, Board of Directors

Accelerate Our Core Work to Protect and Improve the Health of Critical Lands and Waters

Safeguarding the Upstate's land and water through land conservation, watershed protection, land-use planning, policy, and energy initiatives has always been at the heart of what we do. Over the last five years, our efforts have resulted in the permanent protection of thousands of high-priority acres, in addition to the passage of policies across Upstate jurisdictions and in Columbia that will benefit our natural resources for decades to come.

As part of *Generations*, we have identified five objectives to help us make the biggest impact possible over the next five years across the ten counties where we work, with an increased focus on equitable outcomes for all Upstate residents.

"Broadening our work to include smaller tracts is not only important because these tracts help protect water sources and preserve farmland, but also because doing so will help us reach more people of color. We've got to get more minority communities involved because it's going to take everyone if we are going to be successful."

— **MARGARET HARRISON**,
Board of Directors, Chair of
Land Trust Committee



Reach 50,000 acres of permanently protected land.

Conservation easements remain one of the most effective tools to protect and maintain the health of our lands and waters. With a clear set of high-priority objectives, we will strive to reach our next milestone—50,000 acres of permanently protected land.

Protect smaller, high-quality properties.

Through this campaign, we will extend our conservation efforts to include smaller parcels that make an outsized contribution to the region's conservation footprint and quality of life with a focus on places of historic and cultural value, places that offer scenic vistas or opportunities for recreation, and places that provide more equitable access to greenspace for underserved communities.

Develop a land management program.

Designed to enhance the land conservation work we already do, our new land management program will focus on communicating techniques, impacts, and lessons learned to landowners and the larger community; it will promote the resiliency of conserved lands by restoring their ecosystem function through streambank restoration, the removal of invasive species and the addition of native plantings, and instituting best land management practices.

Safeguard water quality and quantity.

To ensure every Upstate community has access to clean, safe, and reliable water, we will play a lead in the development of a state water plan that balances growth with conservation needs. We will also implement the next steps of our watershed protection plans by protecting 1,500 acres of land in areas containing drinking water sources and partnering with landowners to install 175 water quality improvement projects on their land.

Strengthen the Upstate Land Conservation Fund.

Increasing reserves of accessible capital will ensure we can compete more effectively against developers, close easements more quickly, and create stronger applications for government-matching grants by leading with a robust local match.

*By making a gift to **Generations**, you will play a pivotal role in the preservation of the landscapes that are most important to you. With your investment, we will be able to accelerate our efforts, advance a broad range of strategic land conservation initiatives, and reach our next milestone: 50,000 acres of permanently protected land.*

Expand Our Advocacy Capacity

If we've got to save the Upstate one acre at a time, there isn't enough time.

While land protection is the single best way to permanently protect the Upstate's most critical lands and waters, land-use policies are equally vital. Once a land-use policy is adopted, it impacts how land gets used and developed across entire cities, counties, and our region for decades. Land-use policies act as guardians for the natural resources we don't protect via conservation easements.

This is why Upstate Forever must step up our advocacy game.

Effective advocacy is about more than stopping harmful policies, and for us, it's not about standing in front of a bulldozer.

It's about becoming a trusted resource to elected officials so that they understand the value of our landscapes; adopt policies that support smart, balanced growth; and allocate funding for conservation efforts.

"Without investing in advocacy staff who consistently cultivate relationships with the elected officials who develop long-range plans and craft policies that impact land-use on a large scale, it will get harder and harder for Upstate Forever to achieve their goals and preserve the feel and beauty of our Upstate community."

— ALLEN JACOBY,
Vice-Chair, Board of Directors



Build relationships with local officials to advance policy change.

By developing relationships with elected and appointed officials in communities throughout the Upstate, we will build support for policy change related to smart growth, access to greenspace, the protection of water, and land preservation.

Support meaningful water policy.

By collaborating with government agencies, elected officials, partner organizations, and utilities, we will support the development and adoption of scientifically sound and effective water laws and policies at the local and state level.

Advocate for the Upstate's natural resources and clean energy at the state level.

With statewide partners, we will act as a voice for Upstate communities as we develop and advocate for effective legislation that expands clean energy options and protects and improves the quality of watershed lands and water resources, the resilience of Upstate ecosystems, and the health of Upstate communities.

Secure additional funding for conservation.

We will work with elected officials, business partners, and residents to secure additional private and public funding for conservation, including county conservation banks, to protect the places that sustain the Upstate's high quality of life, safeguard water quality, and offer residents access to green space.

Mobilize partners and residents when Goliath-like threats arise.

When projects pose a grave threat to water quality, critical conservation lands, endangered species, or natural assets of unique community significance, we will mobilize partners and citizens to improve project outcomes, or fight them if we must.

*With your gift to **Generations**, you will ensure Upstate Forever has a seat at the table with decisionmakers at the local, regional, and state level. Your investment will result in policies that protect the places you love and sustain our region's quality of life.*

Strengthen Our Base of Support

Ultimately, if Upstate Forever wants to achieve our vision, we cannot be the only ones working to achieve it. We need residents across the Upstate to amplify our efforts by taking steps to advocate for places in their own backyard and the policies that will help protect them. After more than doubling our base of support over the past five years, we have a unique opportunity to turn residents' interest in balanced growth and resource protection into action.

“Our base of support is about more than fundraising. It’s about having more advocates who are willing to write to their council members, sign letters, and show up and speak at county council meetings. It’s about creating the next generation of leaders of the conservation movement.”

— **ANDREA COOPER**, Executive Director



Expand resident advocacy training.

We will increase opportunities for residents to participate in training that equips them to be powerful advocates to support our mission and demand more of the leaders elected to represent them, with an intentional focus on ensuring diverse participation.

Develop partnerships with diverse communities.

We will embrace opportunities to support community-led initiatives, especially in racially and ethnically diverse communities, with a focus on environmental justice and equitable participation in local decision making.

*Your gift to **Generations** will ensure we have the capacity to work in communities all across the Upstate so that we can connect with residents—especially younger demographics and people of color who have often been left out of the conservation conversation—and equip them with tools to advocate, organize, and engage with elected officials to protect the places they value. You will be the reason a new generation of leaders is ready to carry forward the important conservation work we are doing today.*

*“Every neighborhood has places they value. Maybe it’s a historic site. Maybe it’s greenspace. Maybe it’s the place where the community gathers. **Generations** is an opportunity for Upstate Forever to better engage with communities of color—to go into neighborhoods and listen to the people who live there so that they can successfully advocate for and protect these properties.”*

— **JEFF TILLERSON**, Board of Directors





Impacting generations.

Our Upstate lands and waters need us now more than ever. Growth and development are here to stay. Threats to the health of our natural environments are increasing. It is no exaggeration to say we are working against the clock.

But this is not a time for despair. Our track record is mighty. For 25 years, Upstate Forever has worked to protect the natural assets that make the Upstate so special and ensure our communities retain their health, vibrancy, and character.

We have the experience, the know-how, and the passion to step up to the plate, amplify our impact, and become the solution our community needs.

But we cannot achieve success without you.

Your investment in *Generations* will be transformative for Upstate Forever and for our entire region. Your generosity will make it possible for us to:

- Broaden and deepen our core conservation efforts as we strive to reach our next milestone of 50,000 protected acres.
- Advocate for policies that support balanced growth and conservation at the municipal, regional, and state level, and increase funding for conservation across the Upstate.
- Reach more residents—especially younger residents and people of color—and equip them with the tools they need to become our “boots on the ground” and protect the places they love.

Your gift is an investment in the Upstate’s future. By making a gift, you will ensure the Upstate is a wonderful place to live, work, and play ten, twenty, even fifty years from now. You will ensure that your children and grandchildren continue to benefit from the unique quality of life made possible by our lands and waters. You will make an impact on the people and places you love that will last for generations.

“When we are making decisions about where our donation will make the biggest impact, we ask ourselves a question: ‘Is it possible to support our entire Upstate community through one gift?’ The answer is ‘yes,’ because a gift to Upstate Forever helps create a healthier and happier place for every single person living here—no matter their age, race, or socio-economic level—and for all living things in our community.”

— MARY TAYLOR HAQUE, Board of Directors



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