

# Upstate Advocate

# FINDING BALANCE

BETWEEN CONSERVATION + ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

PHOTO BY BRITTANY SNELLER @BUCKETLISTBRI



## ON (& OFF) THE CLOCK:

Upstate Forever staff at work and play



Scott Park & Richard Carr of the UF Land Conservation team visit a soon-to-be protected property in Greenville County.



Congrats to State Policy Director Megan Chase-Muller & her husband Sam Muller, who got married in Beaufort this spring.



Communications Coordinator Elizabeth Swails shows her son John, 3, a fish she caught in Lake Greenwood. He sure looks impressed!



Protecting Land & Water | Advocacy | Balanced Growth

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[www.upstateforever.org](http://www.upstateforever.org)



### 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

# Conservation and economic development go hand in hand.

People are sometimes surprised by my background in business and commercial real estate. Conservationists and business leaders are frequently portrayed as at odds with one another. However, leaders in business are often also leaders in conservation.

My background provides a basis to understand the motivations and incentives that drive business, as well as the understanding that conservation and sound land planning policies have high returns for communities. The economic impacts of conservation are huge, lasting, and sustainable, and they contribute to the overall quality of life that draws tourists and new residents alike.

As we all know, the Upstate is growing. Unfortunately, the same growth that brings new neighbors, jobs, and opportunities is also leading to sprawl, water quality issues, loss of open space and prime farmland, and gentrification. There is a better way to grow, and it means finding balance.

We must work collaboratively to balance economic development with other community priorities, such as ample greenspace and trees, clean water, working farmlands, affordable housing, mobility options, and more equitable outcomes for all Upstate residents. When we strike that balance, great things happen. Health outcomes, property values, economic mobility, and general quality of life improve.

Working with private landowners and public funding sources to improve the quality of life in the Upstate requires UF to have a foot in both the conservation and business worlds. In this issue of the *Upstate Advocate*, we're looking at ways that conservation and economic development go hand in hand — from watershed protection and smart land policy to clean energy and innovative funding.

We have stories from landowners who run successful businesses on their conserved properties, and perspectives from leaders who understand the importance of natural resources and greenspace when it comes to attracting and retaining talented employees.

We cannot do any of our important work alone. It will take the entire community — business leaders, elected officials, farmers, neighborhood groups, nonprofits, and more — to strike a balance that protects what is so special about the Upstate.

Your support is essential to this critical work, and we thank you!



**Andrea Cooper**, Executive Director



## IN MEMORIAM



**THOMAS MOORE CRAIG, JR.**

October 8, 1944 - June 2, 2022

.....

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Tom Moore Craig. Along with his late sister, Susan Craig Murphy, Mr. Craig was a passionate and generous conservationist.

The Craig family worked with our team to protect through a conservation easement their 120-acre farm in Spartanburg County, which dates back to the 18th century. Today, Cragmoor Farms is the site of an award-winning Farm to School Program that provides Spartanburg County School District Six schools with organically grown fruits and vegetables.

Upstate Forever mourns the loss of this beloved conservation partner and community figure, and is humbled to play our small role in ensuring the legacy of Tom Moore Craig's love of the land lives on.

.....

"As my father said to me when I was a child, 'They're not making any more land, Tommy.' So we must preserve the land that we have."

— TOM MOORE CRAIG

# FINDING BALANCE

BETWEEN CONSERVATION + ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT IN THE UPSTATE

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## LAND PROTECTION

### Local funding is a key to conservation success



**By Scott Park**

GLENN HILLIARD DIRECTOR  
OF LAND CONSERVATION  
[spark@upstateforever.org](mailto:spark@upstateforever.org)

You've probably heard this so often it goes in one ear and out the other, but I'll say it again: the Upstate is growing.

There are certainly upsides to the region's popularity: jobs, opportunities, economic development. However, the negative impacts from rapid growth — overcrowded parks and trails, impacts to waterways, and vanishing farmland as a result of sprawl, to name a few — are already here.

Upstate Forever and our many conservation partners are already hard at work to protect special places that are best left undeveloped. However, the need is urgent, and time is not on our side. We must be proactive about land conservation right now. The key to accelerating land protection in our rapidly growing region is robust local funding opportunities.

#### What is "local funding?"

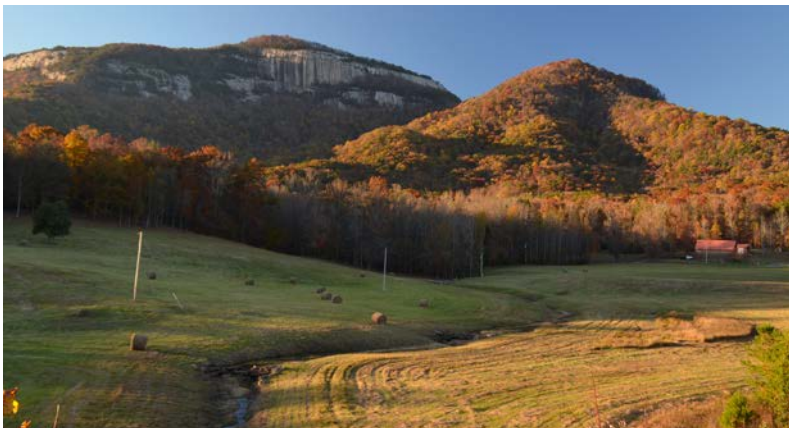
Local funding is just what it sounds like: local governments and groups designating dollars for local land conservation projects. Successfully applied local funds go directly to supporting land conservation projects and are typically separate from organizational operating budgets that include staff time and overhead. (See some examples of funded projects on the opposite page.)

The major difference with local funding is the ability to attract greater attention from federal, state, and other large funders to support the protection of our special places. In a word: leverage.

Local funds are very versatile. Each fund is different because they may focus on different priorities or geography, but throughout the Upstate, these existing competitive funds can be used to provide matching funds to attract national and statewide grants, purchase or offset the costs of conservation easements, and/or buy fee-simple land outright.

*Continued on page 6*





**EXAMPLES OF FUNDED PROJECTS** (top to bottom)

**Grant Meadow, Pickens County:** A grant from the South Carolina Conservation Bank enabled the protection of this iconic view of Table Rock.

**Upper Shoals at Glendale, Spartanburg County:** Funding from the Upstate Land Conservation Fund contributed to the protection of 88 acres owned by the Tyger River Foundation. The property is adjacent to Wofford College’s Goodall Environmental Center and the Spartanburg Area Conservancy’s Glendale Shoals Preserve.

**Chauga Heights, Oconee County:** A South Carolina Conservation Bank grant to Naturaland Trust and an investment from Oconee County provided for the purchase of more than 200 acres adjacent to Chau Ram County Park.

**“ScanSource has been headquartered in Greenville for 30 years. Throughout this time, we have seen the incredible growth of business and industry; the amazing development of new communities; and the influx of talent, residents and much national attention.”**

*I believe a key factor in the Upstate’s success is our continued focus on driving sustainability and protecting the beautiful resources we are so fortunate to have access to in the Upstate. Striking that delicate balance between the creation of new jobs, innovation, and a higher standard of living, while also safeguarding our natural resources and the beauty of the region, makes the Upstate unique and a highly desirable region in which to live and work.*

— **MIKE BAUR**, CEO OF SCANSOURCE



*“Sustain SC connects sustainability leaders from South Carolina-based companies together with leaders from the government, conservation and business sectors. Collaboration is crucial in order to make meaningful progress as it relates to sustainability goals. Real change happens at the local level and building relationships makes it possible.”*

*There are over 1,200 international companies in the Palmetto State, and many of these companies are committed to admirable goals — including net-zero, water positive, and zero waste ambitions. There’s a wealth of information to leverage, but when it comes to aligning priorities, it boils down to getting people in the same room. We help set the table for conversations between businesses and local stakeholders so that sustainability investments stay in SC — benefiting both our economic and natural resource infrastructures.*

— **ETHEL BUNCH,**  
FOUNDER AND CEO OF SUSTAIN SC



**Local funding sources can be used to:**



**Provide matching funds for grants**



**Fund conservation easements**



**Buy fee simple land outright**

*Continued from page 4*

Examples of local conservation funding sources in the Upstate include the Greenville County Historic & Natural Resources Trust, the Oconee County Conservation Bank, and the Upstate Land Conservation Fund. Additionally, in their most recent budget, Spartanburg County Council included substantial funding for land protection that provides public access. Upstate Forever applauds these counties for their commitment to preserving special places and quality of life for their residents while there’s still time.

Creating dedicated funds for local conservation increases the likelihood that land protection can happen more quickly, closer to home, and on a larger scale.

**Granting organizations increasingly require local funding matches.**

Most importantly, local funds can be used as matching funds to help leverage conservation grants from federal, state, and private sources. Many of these conservation grantors increasingly prioritize applicants that can bring money to the table in the form of matching funds.

As an example, the South Carolina Conservation Bank (SCCB), an important and effective partner in preserving the natural resources in the Upstate and across the state, often requires a local match to leverage state dollars.

“As a statewide conservation funder, partnering with counties and other local funding sources validates conservation projects and allows state dollars to go further,” said Raleigh West, Executive Director of the SCCB. “When counties participate financially in land protection projects, they are showing the Bank that it’s a priority. Local skin



**RALEIGH WEST**



in the game accelerates the Bank’s financial leverage, giving those projects an automatic leg up”.

The availability of local funding for these matches makes Upstate conservation partners and their projects more competitive and more likely to attract additional grants from federal, state, and private sources.

Collaborative funding partnerships among multiple sources and conservation partners are also increasingly common (see graphic below for a fictional example).

**Local funds can pay for conservation easement value or offset closing costs.**

A conservation easement is a voluntary, permanent legal agreement that retains the original property owner’s ownership but with restrictions — typically restrictions on development — that protect the property’s conservation values. A conservation easement is transferred

much like a real estate closing. After a conservation easement is in place, the property is monitored annually to ensure the conservation values are maintained according to the owner’s easement terms.

In these cases, funding can be used to meet the need for landowners who may be interested in protecting their property but need incentives greater than potential tax benefits.

Local funds can help compensate the landowner for the diminished value that the conservation easement’s restrictions place on the property. Some monies may also be used to offset associated closing costs, such as appraisals, surveys, and legal fees.

**Funds can be used to buy fee simple land outright.**

A “fee simple” transaction is how property is sold to the next landowner, much like when you sell your home.

Conservation organizations are

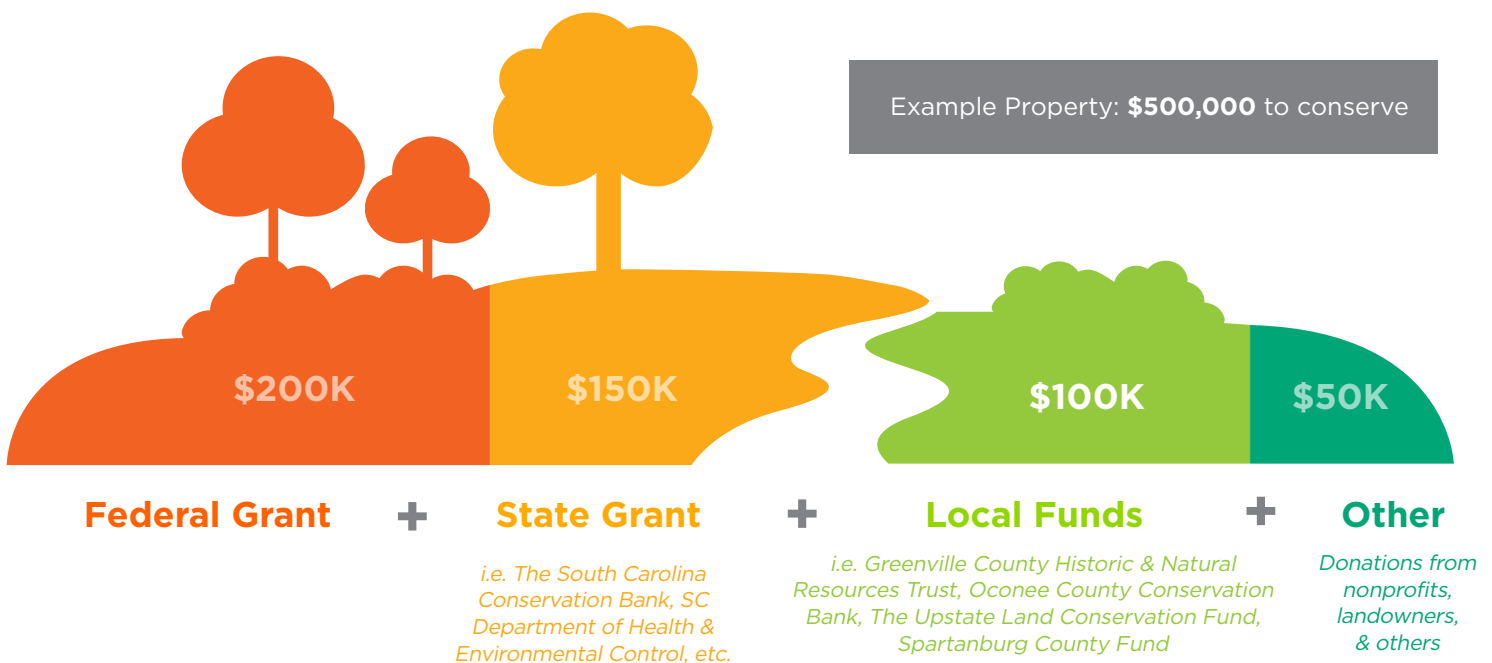
limited to paying up to the appraised value of a property. The value is determined by a certified appraiser. In these cases, successful applications to funding sources may help pay for the land and the associated closing costs.

Upstate Forever typically does not purchase land fee simple, but many of our partners like Naturaland Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Conserving Carolina, and the Spartanburg Area Conservancy do. It’s a straightforward and effective way to acquire special properties that include high-priority natural resources.

The growing local funding landscape is a great conservation model in a region well known for innovative public-private partnerships and other trailblazing capacity building.

*If you, or an organization you represent, is interested in learning more about direct conservation funding, contact me at [spark@upstateforever.org](mailto:spark@upstateforever.org).*

**Local funds can be used as matching funds to help leverage conservation grants from federal, state, and private sources — making applications from Upstate organizations more competitive in the grant-seeking process.**



# How to safeguard water — naturally and cost-effectively



**By Erika Hollis**

CLEAN WATER DIRECTOR  
[ehollis@upstateforever.org](mailto:ehollis@upstateforever.org)

Part of our work at Upstate Forever is communicating the pivotal relationships between our natural resources and our daily lives. We strive to show how important access to green space is for quality of life, how smart land use practices prevent sprawl, how land conservation protects our most precious natural assets, and — perhaps the one facet of our work taken most for granted — how clean water drives every aspect of our lives.

Clean water is not only crucial to sustaining our bodies and environment, it is also fundamental in a successful economy, which could not function without water. As our region grows and develops, it is even more critical to use water in a sustainable way, and we can do that by

protecting our precious watersheds.

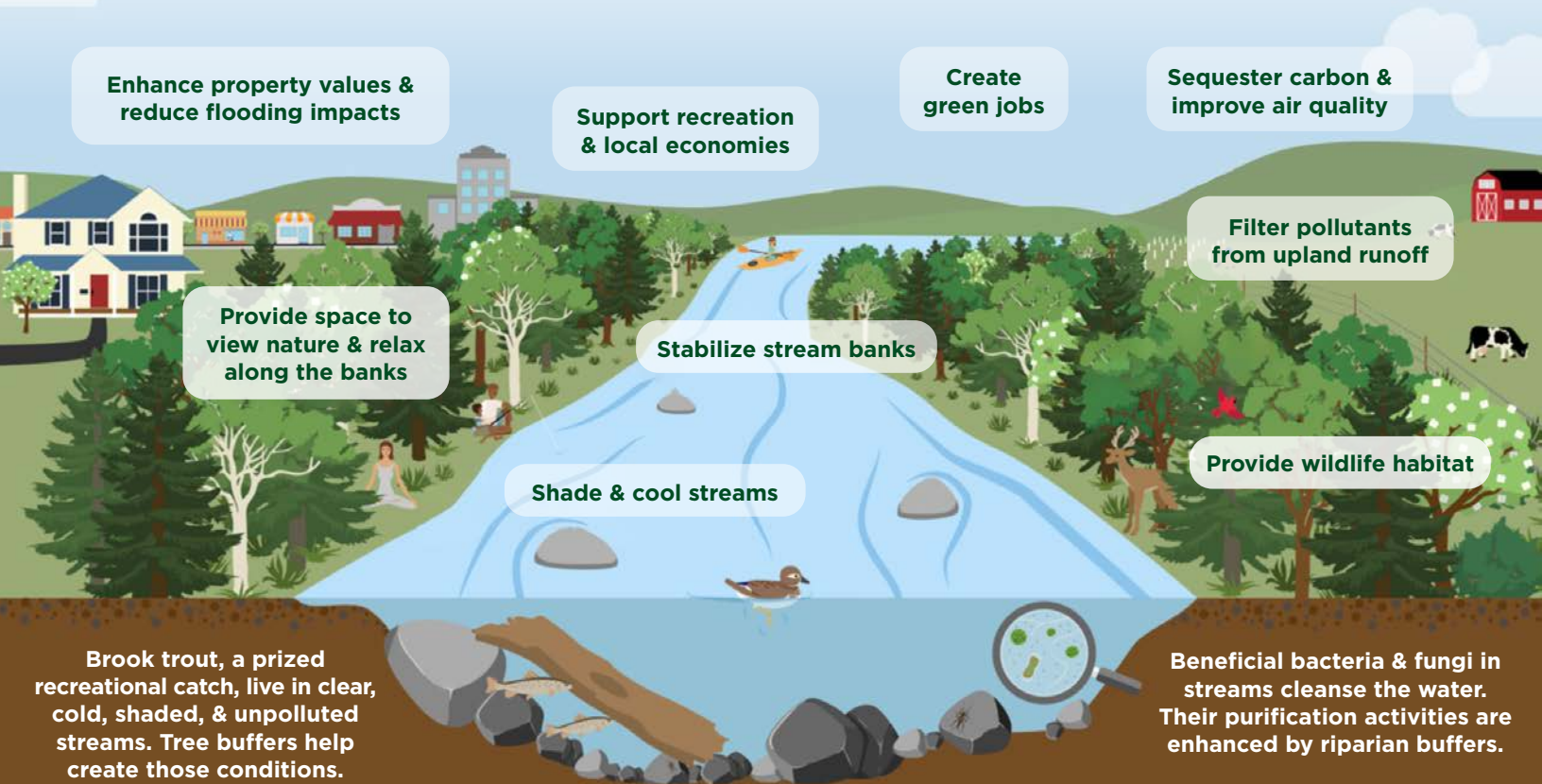
## Protecting Watersheds

A watershed is an area of land in which all rivers, lakes, and streams drain to a single common point. In the Upstate, all of our small rivers, creeks, and streams, which function as mini watersheds, drain to our larger watersheds in one of three river basins: the Broad, Saluda, and Savannah (see map above).

When the lands within a watershed are protected and properly managed, it helps maintain water quality, and that quality supports nearly everything in our economy. If we invest in protecting and maintaining watersheds,



## WATERSHED HEALTH: Natural, undeveloped riparian buffers — corridors of vegetation along creeks and rivers — provide a variety of benefits to water quality and our communities.





then costs for water treatment and flooding drop dramatically and recreation income, property values, and business profits increase.

### Preventing Flooding

Every year in the United States, floods cause an average of \$8 billion in damage. The SC Emergency Management Division reported that after the historic floods that impacted Columbia in 2015, South Carolinian taxpayers absorbed \$114 million of the \$1 billion worth of property and infrastructure damage and clean-up.

The most effective way to combat these costs is to increase protection of ecosystems, meaning water sources and their surrounding forests, so they can help mitigate a flood's impact. A study by The Nature Conservancy found that the benefits of protecting ecosystems to avoid future flood damages were at least five times the cost, meaning every \$1 invested in protections returned at least \$5 in savings.

### Lowering Costs

Similar savings are possible with water treatment costs when we protect our watersheds. In the Upstate, every \$1 spent on land protection — those forests that surround rivers and streams in a watershed — saves \$27 on water treatment costs, according to a study conducted by The Trust for Public Land. These tracts of forest around waterways are called riparian buffers, and they are the most cost-effective way to protect drinking water quality.

When lands around waterways are threatened or irresponsibly developed, storm runoff increases, giving it more opportunity to pick up natural and man-made pollutants that flow into the nearest waterway. This, in turn, means more costs for water treatment. But, according to the EPA, if 50% of a forested watershed is protected, then the annual cost to treat 22 million gallons of water per day is around \$370,000. When that forested watershed is reduced to only 10%, the cost for that same 22 million gallons per day soars to over \$923,450.

### Supporting the local economy

All that money saved through watershed protection can be funneled into the economy through sustainable means as well. We know that people like to live near healthy, clean water sources. In the Upstate, we have an abundance of lakes and rivers at our disposal, and property values around these bodies of water increase when the water is clean and properly maintained. In addition to increasing property values, revenues for adjacent retail and commercial businesses increase, too.

Outdoor recreation on and around bodies of water in South Carolina accounts for much of the economic benefits we see thanks to clean water from protected watersheds. The Outdoor Industry Association reports that the recreation sector generates \$16.3

***"My mama always said 'children need to get their peck of dirt,' which means they need to get out and get dirty and play, enjoy the fresh air, learn about nature, dig for worms, and play with butterflies."***

*Children like to explore, and they need to have that opportunity to explore for their development. This December, the Self Family Foundation will celebrate 80 years of grant making in Greenwood. The funding has extended to all areas of life in the community — from health care to parks to trails to education. As we grow, the foundation continues to be at the center of what's happening in Greenwood to help make it better.*

— MAMIE NICHOLSON

PRESIDENT OF SELF FAMILY FOUNDATION



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*“A key component of economic development is quality of life, and the Upstate’s incredible natural beauty and outdoor recreational assets make us a destination that companies and people want to move to and experience.”*

*Regions that exhibit a balance between growth and protection of natural resources are more competitive. Talent attraction and retention are vital for our region’s economic future, and we need to ensure that we are a place that values and preserves our natural resources and assets for future generations if we are to secure our long term economic vitality.*

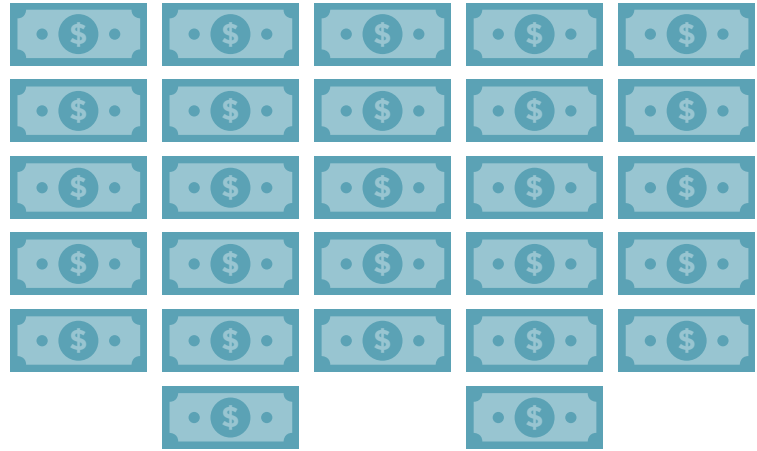
— JOHN LUMMUS

PRESIDENT & CEO, UPSTATE SC ALLIANCE



**EVERY \$1 SPENT ON LAND PROTECTION SAVES \$27 ON WATER TREATMENT COSTS.**

*Source: The Trust for Public Land*



*Continued from page 9*

billion in consumer spending annually. The outdoor infrastructure that accompanies recreation attracts employers and active workforces to the region, which encourages the community to thrive economically and socially.

In fact, without clean, reliable water sources, 20% of the US economy would grind to a halt, and that would jeopardize \$33.4 billion and 218,719 jobs contributed by the natural resource-based sections of South Carolina’s economy (as calculated by the SC Department of Natural Resources).

**How to help**

The economic contributions made by healthy watersheds cannot be overstated. They provide local economic benefits and maintain quality of life for generations to come. As a private citizen, you can help safeguard our water by monitoring your local waterways through SC’s Adopt-a-Stream program or by keeping a log of what’s happening in your local creek, river, wetland, or lake.

You can also contact your state and local officials to let them know you care about the watersheds in your area. Pay close attention to other local city and county council issues, too, because what happens to land in your area inevitably impacts the water where you live.

*Want to stay in the loop? Sign up for our water-related e-newsletter, The Water Log, at [upstateforever.org/email](http://upstateforever.org/email).*



# The intersection of conservation & smart growth



**By Sherry Barrett**

LAND POLICY DIRECTOR  
[sbarrett@upstateforever.org](mailto:sbarrett@upstateforever.org)

“Oh, I thought Upstate Forever was a land protection organization.” If I had a nickel for every time I’ve introduced myself and received this reply or overheard this sentiment at an event — well, I’d have quite a few nickels.

Of course, this idea isn’t wrong. Protecting land is a key aspect of Upstate Forever’s mission. Over the past 24 years, our stellar Land Conservation team has worked with landowners across the Upstate to permanently protect nearly 30,000 acres of forests, farmland, and green space.

So, where does my work as Land Policy Director come in? Upstate Forever is somewhat unique as a land conservation organization that also works in advocacy, including land use planning & policy advocacy.

We believe that vibrant communities exist at the

intersection of land and water conservation and smart growth. To envision a future for the Upstate that is greener, brighter, more prosperous and equitable, is to embrace the symbiotic relationship between “traditional” conservation and land use planning and policy.

## Conservation and smart growth go hand-in-hand

It’s no secret that the Upstate is growing rapidly. By 2040, our region’s population is projected to reach nearly 1.75 million – an increase of 64% since 1990. Growth itself is not inherently bad — in fact, it can be a great thing — but where and how we accommodate new residents is critical to the health and future of our communities.

Most of us want mobility options, housing choices, and access to clean water and safe green spaces. We want local farms to thrive and to preserve important natural resources. We also want economic development, but not at the expense of all other community priorities. Unfortunately, many of our existing land development policies fail to strike a balance among all of these important goals.

*Continued on page 13*



Spartanburg’s Daniel Morgan Trail System (aka “The Dan”) links residents to educational opportunities, jobs, transit, and recreation.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PLAY. ADVOCATE. LIVE WELL. (PAL)

# What do we mean by 'Smart Growth?'

It may sound like a nebulous concept, but "smart growth" has actually been defined. The Smart Growth Network — a partnership of government, business, and civic organizations including the American Farmland Trust, American Planning Association, Trust for Public Land, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and many others — has identified 10 guiding principles of smart growth. *To learn more about each of them, visit [upstateforever.org/smart-growth](http://upstateforever.org/smart-growth).*



**Embrace mixed land use**, the practice of placing a combination of residential, commercial, and recreational properties within close proximity. This is critical to the development of healthy, vibrant, and equitable communities.



**Preserve open space.** Protecting undeveloped land helps people, wildlife, and even economies thrive. It's important to prioritize greenspace protection not only in rural areas, but urban as well.



**Take advantage of compact building design.** The Upstate's current sprawling growth pattern is not fiscally or environmentally sustainable. Building with a smaller footprint — growing up rather than out — preserves more greenspace, protects water resources, supports a wider variety of transportation choices, and leads to lower infrastructure costs.



**Direct development toward existing communities.** Infill and redevelopment in existing communities is a smart way to mitigate sprawl, especially when implemented with an eye toward improving the quality of life for existing and new residents.



**Create a range of housing opportunities & types.** Local communities are abundant with single-family homes and clusters of high-density apartments. Housing types that fall somewhere between these two are often called the "missing middle." Missing middle housing can satisfy demand for walkable urban living while simultaneously providing product types that are more affordable by design.



**Provide a variety of transportation choices.** Successful planning for the Upstate must couple a multi-modal approach — embracing diverse transportation options like walking, bicycling, public transit, and driving — with supportive development patterns to create a variety of transportation options for all residents.



**Create walkable neighborhoods** within a reasonable distance (approximately 1/4 mile) of a variety of amenities within a network of streets designed to make walking practical, safe, and convenient.



**Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost-effective.** Local governments can help make it easier for private investors and developers to create compact, mixed-use development and missing middle housing types.

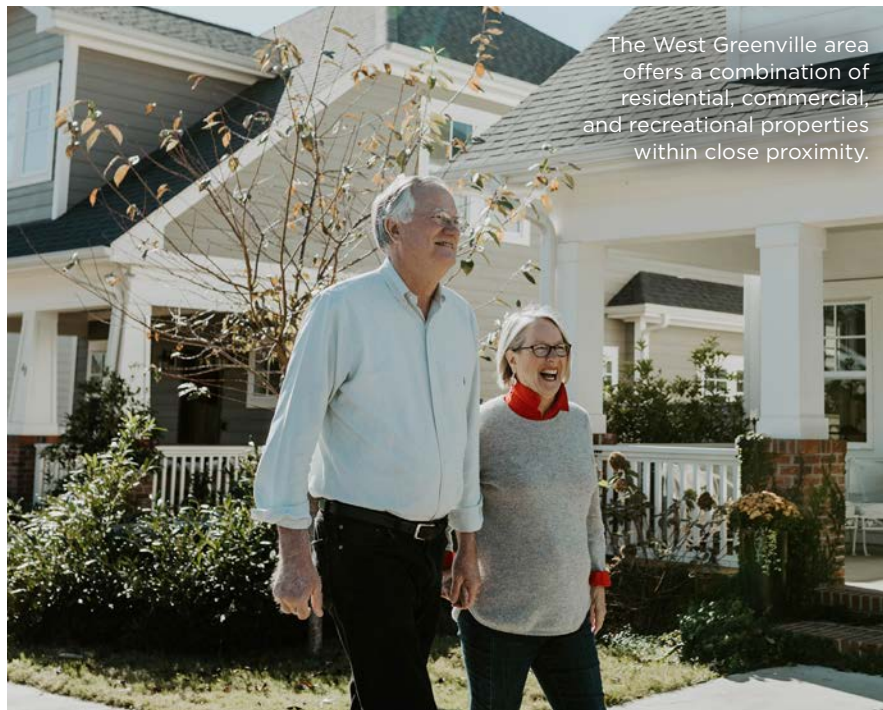


**Foster distinct communities with a strong sense of place.** Smart growth encourages planners to craft a vision of a unique community, set standards for development that respect and reflect the values and cultures of the people who call them home, and foster physical environments that support a more cohesive community fabric.



**Encourage community & stakeholder collaboration.** The needs of every growing community — and the developments necessary to address those needs — are best defined by the people who live, work, and play there. Opportunities for citizens to provide feedback through public meetings and workshops help pave the way for equitable development.





The West Greenville area offers a combination of residential, commercial, and recreational properties within close proximity.

*Continued from page 11*

If we want to protect the Upstate's natural resources while minimizing sprawl and growing equitably and responsibly, then we have to say goodbye to business-as-usual when it comes to the development of new subdivisions. Our communities and local leaders must embrace smarter ways to welcome the thousands of new residents relocating to the Upstate each year.

### **Smart growth is better for individuals**

Communities that embrace forward-thinking development and responsible growth benefit residents at an individual level. One's physical, mental, and in some cases, economic health can all be improved by living in a neighborhood that empowers a more active lifestyle, offers a closer proximity to jobs and services, and allows equitable access to green spaces.

I have personally experienced the life-changing difference between living in a car-dependent neighborhood and in a community that is navigable by bicycle and foot. In December of 2019 (which we later came to know as very fortunate timing!), my family relocated from the suburban Greenville County area we had lived in for nearly two decades to a new home at the western edge of downtown. For the first time in my adult life, whether I wanted to pick up coffee or dinner, grab a few household essentials or a gift for a friend, I could walk out my front door and arrive at my destination without starting the car.

The onset of the pandemic, of course, elevated my gratitude for the people-friendly (i.e. walkable, bikeable, and otherwise navigable without a car) community I call home. When gyms shut down and state parks were often at maximum capacity, my husband, dog, and I could enjoy a neighborhood stroll or ride on the Prisma Health Swamp Rabbit Trail. We cherished

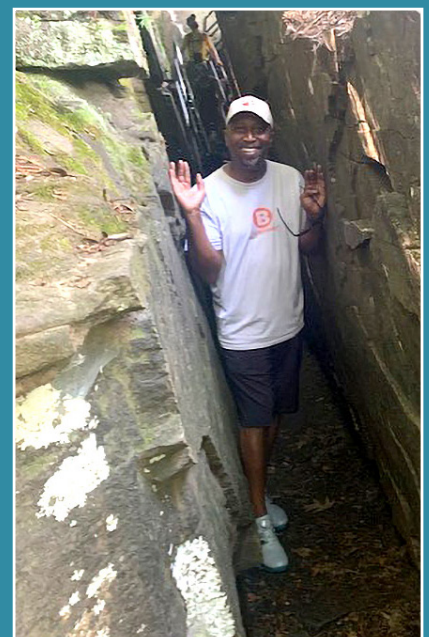
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***"Greenspaces and natural resources have a dramatic effect on economic development and growth because they provide a place for communities to come together."***

*My hope is that, by creating more natural spaces for the citizens of Spartanburg to get outside, we will spur continual development, combat homelessness, and reduce crime. It helps make our beautiful city one in which all neighborhoods feel safe and promotes a sense of opportunity for all.*

**— JEFF TILLERSON**

CITY OF SPARTANBURG SENIOR  
CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER  
& UF BOARD MEMBER

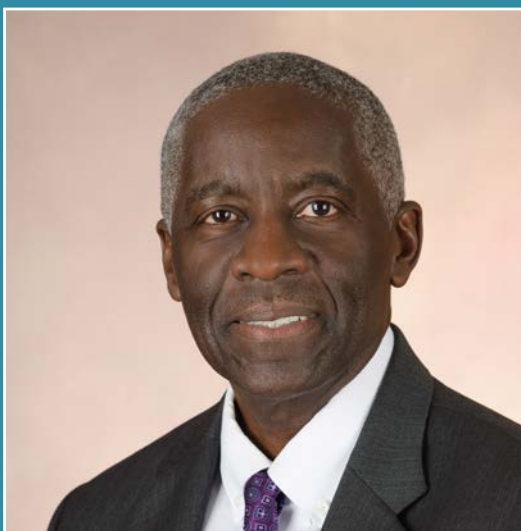


*"The City of Anderson is experiencing its most significant growth pattern in more than 50 years. A key to sustainable growth is being mindful of our natural resources with a view toward the long term."*

*We've created new parks like Church Street Plaza and North Main Commons while investing in significant upgrades to existing greenspaces like Linley Park. We have parts of an interconnected trail system in place with plans for completion on the drawing board as an element of our mobility and health strategy.*

*Equitable outcomes should be at the forefront of the process. This is imperative to be able to offer the types of amenities that move us toward our aspirational goal of being the most desirable city in the region.*

— **TERENCE ROBERTS**  
MAYOR, CITY OF ANDERSON



To envision a future for the Upstate that is greener, brighter, more prosperous and equitable, is to embrace the symbiotic relationship between 'traditional' conservation and land use planning and policy.

*Continued from page 13*

the interactions made and relationships built within our neighborhood on these outings.

Living in this vibrant community, where a mixture of goods, services, and natural areas are available to me through alternative transportation choices, has truly changed my life. It's an opportunity that I will never take for granted and will continue to work each day to expand access for more Upstate residents.

**Smart growth builds stronger, more financially stable communities**

Ultimately, sprawl cannot pay for itself. While a development boom may bring new residents, businesses, tax income, and discretionary spending to a local economy, those benefits are often short-lived. What's worse, that temporary surge in dollars is often later eclipsed by the high cost of maintaining strained suburban infrastructure.

The good news? Studies show a clear connection between people-friendly development and the economic viability of a community. Building with a smaller, denser footprint in appropriate areas leads to lower infrastructure costs for cities and towns, and a more robust tax base for continued improvements.

In 2017, the *Shaping Our Future* initiative — a partnership between Upstate Forever, Ten at the Top, Furman University's Riley Institute, and a steering committee representing diverse communities and interests from across the Upstate — completed a 10-month study and comprehensive report exploring alternative patterns for growth in the Upstate.

One particularly illuminating component of the study was



the Return-on-Investment Analysis executed by Urban3, a community planning consultant with an economic focus. This analysis calculated anticipated future tax revenues in the 10-county region based on different development patterns and intensities.

Urban3's analysis revealed that if regional land use trends don't change, revenues produced by new development will likely not cover even half of the costs to serve it. The more compact development patterns they analyzed were much more fiscally viable.

Additionally, real estate sale analysis shows that neighborhoods with a high walkability score are overall more desirable and highly valued than those with a lower score. And, of course, parks, open spaces, and working farms and forests strengthen local economies.

### Smart growth contributes to a healthier environment and more plentiful greenspace

More dense development in appropriate urban zones is critical to the protection of our region's remaining rural areas and natural resources.

Building with a smaller footprint — growing up rather than out — preserves more greenspace. Directing growth toward existing urban cores helps reduce development

pressure on agricultural and rural landowners. Together with conservation initiatives, this method of growth also contributes to the preservation of wildlife habitats, as well as the protection of endangered species (like the Upstate's bunched arrowhead or Oconee bells) and biodiversity.

Responsible growth is critical to the health of our region's water, too. Intact riparian buffers (undeveloped swaths of land adjacent to waterways) safeguard water quality by helping to filter out pollutants like litter and pet waste before they enter a river or stream. Buffers also reduce the risk of flooding by slowing down stormwater.

### We must embrace smarter growth practices ASAP

For individuals and families, for communities and natural resources, smart growth is a win-win-win.

Envisioning a new model for Upstate communities may seem daunting and certainly has its trade-offs, but championing responsible development over the next years or even decades will pay dividends for generations to come.

*Would you like to stay informed about smart growth and land use planning issues in the Upstate? Visit [upstateforever.org/email](http://upstateforever.org/email) to join our email lists dedicated to land planning and policy in Greenville and Spartanburg.*

If we want to preserve greenspace:	If we want more affordable housing choices near jobs & amenities:	If we want to reduce cars on the road:
<p>We must significantly change HOW we develop.</p> <p>We must build UP, not out, in areas near urban centers that can accommodate greater density.</p> <p>We must prioritize including accessible greenspace and open space as part of new development.</p> 	<p>We must create more diverse housing options.</p> <p>We must build "right-size" buildings to suit their location. That means:</p> <p>Taller, larger footprint, well designed buildings along major streets.</p> <p>Smaller scale, house-size buildings in walkable neighborhoods (i.e. duplexes, triplexes, mansion apartments, cottage courts).</p> 	<p>We must significantly change how and where we develop.</p> <p>We must create pockets of higher density, walkable, mixed-use development to make efficient public transit feasible.</p> <p>We must invest in "complete streets" infrastructure for walking, biking, and transit.</p> 

## Businesses thriving on conservation properties

*We spoke with four businesses who hold easements with Upstate Forever, and they told us how their protected property's natural assets are bolstering their thriving businesses. From green burials, grass-fed beef farms, event venues and vineyards, local easement holders are proving how conservation and economic success work together in the Upstate.*

### Calico Vineyard

GREENVILLE COUNTY | 115 ACRES

Steve and Lantie Sandlin have been working with seeds and plants for most of their lives. For many years they ran a farm supply business until they were ready to begin their own farm. "Running a farm is just what I wanted to do," Steve says. "It's a natural move from selling fertilizers, seeds, and plants all your life to putting your own plants in."

The Sandlins own and operate Calico Vineyard, a 115-acre farm in Travelers Rest, SC, named after their beloved cat, Calico. On roughly 15-20 acres, they grow grapes, blackberries, blueberries, muscadines, beans, strawberries, and more. This produce is available around the Upstate at local farmer's markets, and they sell grapes to individual wine makers. Eventually, they plan to open the farm to the public to can come tour and pick fresh produce. Visitors to the property can also rent their farmhouse through Airbnb.

Steve was motivated to put his family property under easement when he saw how much of the Upstate was being developed. He's been in the development business and thought he would take the initiative to put the land into easement.

"I want to preserve it like it is. It's where my great grandfather lived, and my grandfather lived, and now where I live," he says.

He knows the easement will protect his property and preserve the area's natural resources forever. In the meantime, he enjoys working the land, viewing the area's wildlife and spending time with his current cat, Julio.

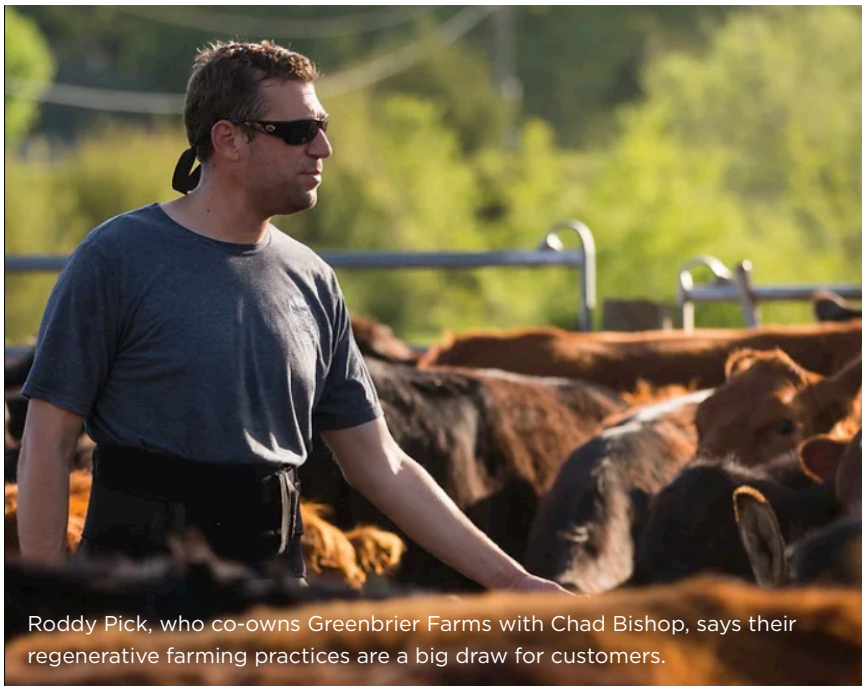
Funding from the South Carolina Conservation Bank, Greenville Women Giving, and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control helped protect Calico Vineyard.

*To learn more, visit [calicovineyard.com](http://calicovineyard.com)*



Steve and Lantie Sandlin, owners of Calico Vineyard in Travelers Rest, grow grapes, blackberries, blueberries, muscadines, beans, strawberries, and more.





Roddy Pick, who co-owns Greenbrier Farms with Chad Bishop, says their regenerative farming practices are a big draw for customers.

## Greenbrier Farms

PICKENS COUNTY | 330 ACRES

"We have an understanding and ultimately an appreciation for what sustainable farmers and regenerative farming systems can do for an individual, group, and community at large," says Roddy Pick of Greenbrier Farms. He co-owns Greenbrier Farms, a second-generation family-owned-and-operated farm spanning 330 acres, with his business partner Chad Bishop.

As advocates for regenerative agriculture, they are committed to sustainability and to humanely raising their cows and pigs. "People gravitate to that because they appreciate the health benefits of grass fed, grass finished beef and pastured pork," says Roddy. "Most importantly, our customers help us advocate for regenerative farming practices all over our state and region because they believe we must respect and take care of our most precious asset—our land."

When Roddy and Chad purchased the land, the property was already under easement, which allowed them to immediately start conversations with like-minded individuals and groups who were interested in what the farm could provide.

Not only does the farm offer grass-fed, grass-finished beef and pasture-raised pork, but they also provide privately grown, select produce for their restaurant Fork & Plough. There is also an event venue on the property for wedding and corporate event packages. And Upstate residents can visit the Farm on Thursday nights for Pizza Night, or they can join the annual Butcher Class and Spring Plant Sale, offering grown-from-seed produce starters, trees, and woody florals.

At Greenbrier Farms, the Pick and Bishop families have struck the right balance between business, sustainability, and conservation. "We have

*Continued on next page >>*

***"One of the defining and indelible things that came out of the pandemic is the absolute need for local and regional destinations. Nature, adventure and all manner of outdoor pursuits need to be close by and accessible to all."***

*At Half Moon Outfitters, our internal mission statement is 'Our product is your experience.' Protecting habitat, and having access to pristine natural areas is essential to Half Moon and opens the door to having a great experience in the great outdoors.*

### — BEEZER MOLTEN

FOUNDER OF HALF MOON  
OUTFITTERS



***"The abundance of natural resources and pristine wilderness in Upstate South Carolina is a BIG factor in its recent popularity and growth."***

*World renowned wilderness areas, our vast network of lakes and waterways, and the SC State Park system create a well-protected yet accessible avenue for people to experience the beautiful landscapes that make up South Carolina's Upstate.*

*Responsible stewardship and management of these resources will ensure they act as a draw for the area in terms of economics and quality of life in the future.*

**— ERIC MILLS**

SUNRIFT ADVENTURES



*Continued from previous page*

documented data from Furman showing that we are as bird diverse as places like Paris Mountain State Park and Conestee Nature Preserve," notes Roddy. Their upland hardwood forest, grassland prairies, and wetlands provide much needed animal and insect habitat. "There is nothing like mornings on the farm when you witness the world around you awaken," says Roddy.

Funding from the South Carolina Conservation Bank helped protect Greenbrier Farms.

*To learn more, visit [greenbrierfarms.com](http://greenbrierfarms.com)*

## **Kings Mountain Preserve**

CHEROKEE COUNTY | 36 ACRES

After almost 30 years in the funeral industry, Terry Robertson knows firsthand the importance of keeping the burial process as natural as possible. "I was embalming 200-300 people a year, and it nearly killed me," he says. In 2000, he was diagnosed with cancer likely caused by his exposure to formaldehyde in the traditional embalming process.

Terry beat the odds, but it changed him. "After that, I stayed out of prep rooms and started focusing more on serving the families," he says. "I found I spent a lot more time outside gaining an appreciation of nature."

Terry and his wife Amanda own Kings Mountain Preserve, a green burial facility. Compared to a traditional burial — which may include disruptive and polluting elements like embalming fluid, vaults, concrete, steel, exotic hardwoods, and backhoes — a green burial has minimal impact on the environment. "It's like your final footnote for mother nature, and a way to do it right for her," says Terry.

Instead of being chemically embalmed, the body is refrigerated prior to burial. The family may bury their loved one in a wicker basket, a poplar casket, or pine casket, all of which are totally biodegradable.

Graves are hand dug — which ensures that the dirt is put back in the ground in the same order it was removed. The site is then marked with a native stone that the family can engrave if they wish. All in all, the green burial is less than half the price of a traditional burial in the counties Kings Mountain Preserve serves.

Loved ones return to visit King's Mountain Preserve often, in part because of the serene, parklike setting. The property contains three miles of hiking

### **More about conservation burial sites**

*There are very few conservation burial sites in the Southeast; the Upstate is fortunate to have two such properties: Kings Mountain Preserve and Ramsey Creek Preserve. Both properties are protected by conservation easements held by Upstate Forever; in fact, in 2006, UF became the first organization in the world to hold a conservation burial easement when the Campbells chose to work with us to protect Ramsey Creek Preserve.*



trails where visitors can walk and see wildlife and lush greenery. Terry's favorite spot is a little waterfall off King's Creek. "It makes you feel like you're surrounded by life, not by death," he says.

To learn more, visit [kingsmountainpreserve.com](http://kingsmountainpreserve.com)

## Ramsey Creek Preserve: Memorial Ecosystems

OCONEE COUNTY | 75 ACRES

Billy and Kimberley Campbell opened their natural burial business — Memorial Ecosystems, Inc.— at Ramsey Creek Preserve in 1998, and they've been serving the Upstate region ever since. Their business model thrives off the notion that they are literally and figuratively connecting people to the landscape.

Whether it's a land trust or a family trying to save their farm, natural burials — the Campbells prefer that term over "green" burials — are an economically and environmentally viable way for land to produce income without selling it to developers. As Kimberley explains, "we need as many tools in the conservation toolbox as we can get, and this gives the land a purpose."

Billy and Kimberley have used their property to develop many of the standards and techniques for natural burial, ranging from how to preserve the body without embalming to which native plants to incorporate into the landscape.

The Campbells have perfected methods for restoring previously zoned agricultural land to its natural state by bringing conservation science into the design process. Their online photo gallery showcases some of the 300+ species of native plants found at Ramsey Creek Preserve, one of which is a federally endangered wild cone flower.

Against the backdrop of this idyllic landscape, Billy and Kimberley are driven by their philosophy of community: "For us it's always been extremely important to have this connection with the community, where this becomes a place where people can hike, picnic, have small weddings or baby blessings, or just a place to walk."

Kimberley especially noticed an uptick in visitors during the pandemic when the parks closed. They remained open so the families could still visit their relatives. "Sometimes we all just need a quiet walk in nature," she says.

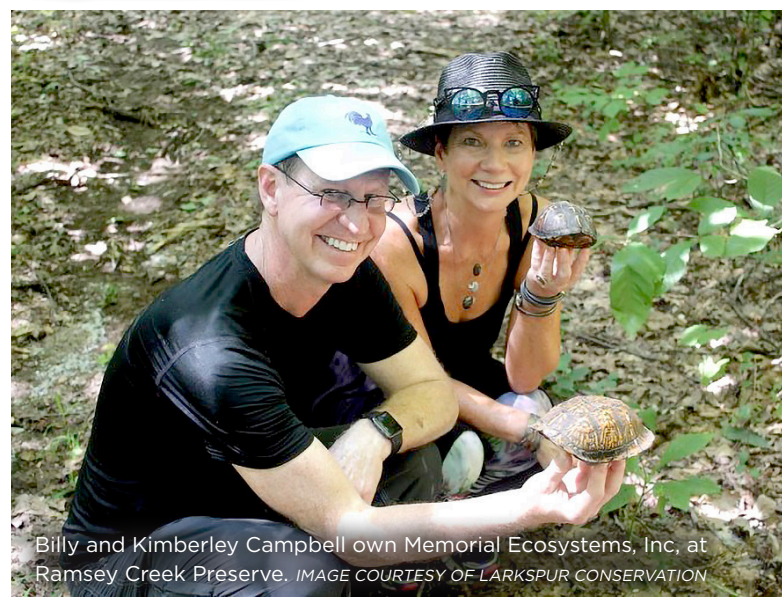
To learn more, visit [memorialecosystems.com](http://memorialecosystems.com).



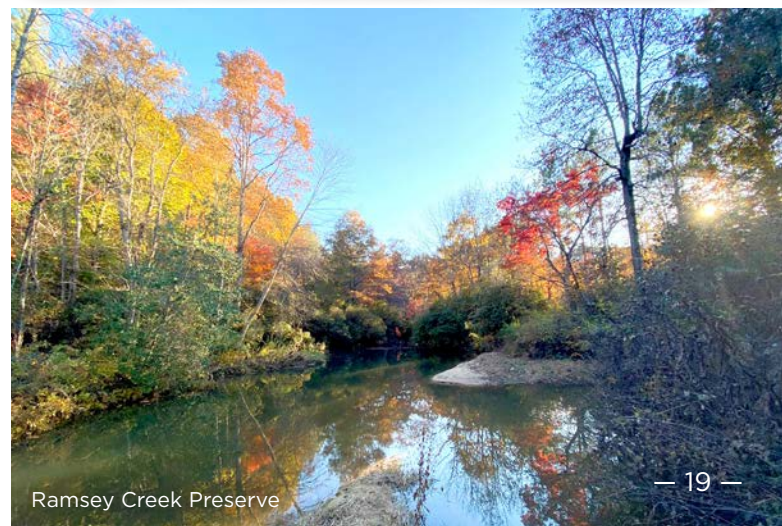
Terry and Amanda Robertson own Kings Mountain Preserve.



Kings Mountain Preserve



Billy and Kimberley Campbell own Memorial Ecosystems, Inc. at Ramsey Creek Preserve. IMAGE COURTESY OF LARKSPUR CONSERVATION



Ramsey Creek Preserve



# Clean energy creates jobs & drives innovation



**By Michael K. Coleman**

CLEAN ENERGY ADVOCATE  
mcoleman@upstateforever.org

As the United States and other countries mobilize to reduce carbon emissions and SC embraces market-driven efforts to electrify the transportation sector, there is often discussion about how the clean energy sector will create good paying jobs while also making our communities more resilient.

Historic federal and state investments in clean energy are fueling the demand for workers to build solar panels, wind turbines, battery storage, and other infrastructure to support the growth of renewable energy.

While investments are important, policies that support the transition to clean energy also keep SC competitive in attracting industries. Rep. Jason Elliott and other sponsors passed legislation (House Bill 4831) to help establish a strong supply chain for the wind industry in SC, which would attract more jobs.

According to the Solar Energy Industries Association, total solar power accounted for 2.8% of South Carolina's total net generation in 2021. The Southern Alliance for Clean Energy (SACE) highlighted in their "Solar in the Southeast Report" that SC is a solar leader on a watts per customer basis. The report also touts Duke Energy as a leader in

installed solar capacity in the Southeast. South Carolina has tripled solar electricity generation since 2018 and currently has a total investment of \$2.6 billion.

Building the Clean Energy economy will require more than just wind turbines and solar panels. Other areas that will see workforce expansion in clean energy:

**Advancing the electric grid** to include more automation, increase resilience, and implement demand-side management technologies to reduce peak grid demand will bring jobs to SC. Computer Analysts will manage modernized grid systems that rely on computer control. A legion of technicians will deploy the smart technologies that help utilities better manage the power grid. Production workers will play a major role in assembling equipment for substations, including smart meters.

**Meeting the demand for electric vehicles** will undoubtedly require a vast workforce to assemble vehicles, but manufacturers can also capitalize on building components like batteries, electric motors, and other related technologies. The National Electric Vehicle Charging Network, funded by the Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, will employ construction workers across the country to facilitate the buildout of charging infrastructure. In a boost to SC's clean energy economy, ABB E-mobility, a global EV charging manufacturer, recently announced they will be opening a facility in Columbia that will produce up to 10,000 EV chargers per year.





**Energy storage systems** save generated energy for use when customers need it most. Past generation models could deliver power generated from coal, natural gas, hydropower, and nuclear energy to meet customer demand. Solar and wind energy generation operates under different patterns, which has made energy storage the linchpin of the clean energy economy.

This subsection of the clean energy sector requires skilled workers for roles in manufacturing hardware and developing software, as well as managing information technology. In SC, embracing the development of facilities that incorporate storage technology can introduce more flexibility into the grid, improve grid efficiency, support renewables, and even protect against volatile fuel costs.

The transition to clean energy is not limited to these areas, and will include jobs in innovative technologies, energy efficiency, and bioenergy.

The energy sector has experienced vast growth with the total number of energy jobs in the US increasing from 7.5 million in 2020 to more than 7.8 million in 2021.

With recent federal investments from the Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act, there are no signs of slowing down as the US races to dominate the clean energy market, but we must continue to make investments and develop public policies that support the transition to clean energy while protecting ratepayers and maintaining affordability.

## 2021 Cumulative Gift & Legacy Societies

*Upstate Forever's Cumulative Gift Societies recognize the total program support given by individuals and entities over the life of the organization.*

*Includes membership and contributions, sponsorships, and planned gifts received by Dec. 31, 2021.*

### **THE FOUNDERS SOCIETY** (\$1 MILLION & UP)

Anonymous, In Memory of Marjorie E. Schmidt  
The Mary Black Foundation  
The South Carolina Conservation Bank  
Tommy & Harriet Wyche  
Brad Wyche & Diane Smock  
The V. Kann Rasmussen Foundation

### **THE UPSTATE CHAMPION SOCIETY** (\$500,000 - 999,999)

Glenn & Heather Hilliard  
Fujifilm Manufacturing  
Hollingsworth Funds  
The South Carolina Department of Health & Environmental Control  
Alice M. Wald

### **THE 1998 SOCIETY** (\$250,000 - 499,999)

Anonymous  
The Graham Foundation  
The Hipp Foundation  
Pete & Sally Smith Foundation  
The Phifer Johnson Foundation  
Prisma Health System  
The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

### **THE STUMPHOUSE SOCIETY** (\$100,000 - 249,999)

Anonymous  
James & Kathy Barr  
Mike & Laura Baur  
Callie & John Rainey Foundation  
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

Community Foundation of Greenville  
Conestee Foundation  
Andrea & Edwin Cooper  
Daniel-Mickel Foundation  
Lillian Darby  
Greenville Transit Authority  
Greenville Women Giving  
Warren Guinn  
John & Priscilla Hagins  
Harriet Wyche Memorial Endowment  
J. M. Smith Foundation  
John I. Smith Charities  
Jolley Foundation  
Thomas & Sandra Kester Family  
Erwin & Nancy Maddrey  
Genevieve Manly  
Mast General Store  
Milliken & Company  
Palmetto Bank  
Jack & Cindy Plating  
Priester Foundation  
ScanSource  
Spartanburg Water System  
TD Charitable Foundation

### **THE COMMUNITY PARTNERS SOCIETY** (\$50,000 - 99,999)

Blue Cross Blue Shield of South Carolina  
BMW Manufacturing Company  
Duff & Margaret Bruce  
Fannie Cromwell  
Dianne Culbertson  
The Duke Energy Foundation  
Gally & Fielding Gallivan  
Roger & Marianna Habisreutinger  
Doug Harper  
Brice & Reid Hipp  
Bill & Libby Kehl

Gloria Larkin  
Paul & Sara Lehner  
Mary Peace Sterling Foundation  
The Oak Hill Fund  
Carlton & Brenda Owen  
Pacolet Milliken Enterprises  
Leon & Barbara Patterson  
Piedmont Natural Gas  
Rob & Christina Rogers  
Stephanie Schmidt  
Hal & Minor Shaw  
Wade H. Sherard  
David & Angela Shi  
Bruce Snyder  
Startex-Jackson Water District  
The Stringer Foundation  
Mark & Starla Taylor  
The Turner Foundation

### **THE LEGACY SOCIETY** (THOSE WHO HAVE PUT UP IN THEIR ESTATE PLANS)

Gilbert & Barbara Allen  
Dennis & Jane Chastain  
Gary C. Davis  
Jo & Bob Hackl  
Ed Hall  
Bill & Emily Holt  
Maureen Johannigman  
Ed Krech  
Gloria Larkin  
Stacey Lindsay & Terry Schager  
Joyce P. Murphy  
J. Tony Rackley  
Wade H. Sherard  
David & Angela Shi  
Priscilla Ann Woodside  
Brad Wyche & Diane Smock  
Tommy & Harriet Wyche  
Stephen & Julie Ziff

# What is SC doing about toxic 'forever chemicals?'



**By Megan Chase-Muller**

STATE POLICY DIRECTOR

[mchase@upstateforever.org](mailto:mchase@upstateforever.org)

**Dear Ask An Advocate,**

*I was talking with my neighbor last week, and she said she'd just read an alarming article about toxic chemicals called "PFAS." She said they cause all kinds of health problems and are found widely in our water supply. Is this true? And if so, can you tell me what Upstate Forever is doing about it? Clean water is very important to me, and I'd like to help. Sincerely, **Worried in Walhalla***

**Dear Unsure,**

I'd like to tell you that PFAS — Per and polyfluoroalkyl substances — aren't a danger, but the truth is that they are very toxic and are found widely throughout SC's water supply. These chemicals have captured headlines for years due to the growing body of evidence of their toxicity to humans, and in particular to vulnerable populations such as developing children and pregnant women.

**Why are PFAS so harmful?**

The durability of these "forever chemicals" centers around the carbon-fluorine bond, one of the strongest in chemistry, and a structure that makes them both water and oil repellent. This makes them extremely useful in manufacturing, but it also means they won't break down in the environment.

PFAS have been found to cause cancer, developmental issues in infants, liver and thyroid disease, hormone dysregulation, high cholesterol, and a decreased response to vaccines. Two of the most studied types of PFAS — PFOA and PFOS — are in the blood serum of 99% of Americans. This summer, the EPA released an updated health advisory for PFOA and PFOS, sparking frustration over the shockingly low levels deemed safe for children: less than one part per trillion, or the equivalent to one drop of water in 20 Olympic-size swimming pools.

While the EPA works to set drinking water standards for these chemicals, our water remains at risk from certain textile and plastics manufacturers, landfills, airports and military bases. These chemicals can even escape typical wastewater treatment plants and become concentrated in sludge that then gets applied to farmland as a budget fertilizer.

Whether you get your water from a private well or from a public drinking water provider, if your water source is located near one of these facilities, it is at risk. Don't know where your water comes from or if it's located near these types of facilities? Visit SC DHEC's online SC Watershed Atlas or simply ask your water utility.

**What's being done about PFAS in SC**

Testing in August 2020 by SC DHEC revealed widespread PFAS contamination in almost every public drinking water system sourced from lakes and rivers. More testing is needed to confirm risk to the public, but state funding is limited and is now being used to identify hot spots near suspected polluters.

**COMMON PFAS SOURCES**



SHAMPOO & COSMETICS



NONSTICK COOKWARE



WATERPROOF ITEMS



FAST FOOD PACKAGING



PAINT



FIREFIGHTING FOAMS



CLEANERS



PESTICIDES



PHOTOGRAPHY

Upstate Forever advocates at the state and local level on issues related to conservation, water, clean energy, and smart growth. View our advocacy priorities at [upstateforever.org/2022priorities](https://upstateforever.org/2022priorities).



This year, SC legislators responded to calls from concerned residents by creating a \$10 million fund for water utilities and private well owners to assess and treat contamination from emerging contaminants like PFAS in their drinking water.

We have also seen leadership within the Upstate business community. Spartanburg's Milliken & Company announced that it would phase out all PFAS-containing compounds from its textiles portfolio by December 31, 2022.

We applaud this action and hope it compels others in the business community to assess similar paths to prevent PFAS exposure to South Carolina communities.

### **You can help combat PFAS contamination**

Thank your legislator for voting to pass a state budget that prioritizes the safety of our drinking water and remind them that more action will be needed to address the state's needs. Just by reaching out, you're signaling that these issues matter to their constituents.

Urge SC DHEC's Bureau of Water to finish their drinking water assessment by conducting monthly sampling of the drinking water systems that had measurable levels of PFAS in 2020. Voice your support for SC DHEC's effort to limit PFAS in wastewater discharges and in runoff from wastewater sludge applied to farmland.

Ask your water utility about the actions they have taken to assess the risks of PFAS in your drinking water. Few utilities have conducted testing for PFAS, and because these chemicals are unregulated, utilities don't have to report what they find to SC DHEC or to the public. Encourage them to use new state and federal resources to complete their assessments and install treatment methods when needed.

Sign up for Legislative Updates to be informed about opportunities to advocate for legislative action or other ways to make your voice heard.

*Got a question for one of UF's experienced advocates? Send us an email at [info@upstateforever.org](mailto:info@upstateforever.org).*



## **UPSTATE FOREVER NEWS**

### **UF and partners seek to turn inactive Saluda Grade line into a 31-mile rail trail**

Alongside our partners Conserving Carolina and PAL: Play, Advocate Live Well, Upstate Forever is working to purchase the inactive Saluda Grade railroad corridor for a new approximately 31-mile rail trail. Similar to the popular Prisma Health Swamp Rabbit Trail or Virginia Creeper Trail, this rail trail would spur economic growth while providing new opportunities for outdoor recreation.

The potential Saluda Grade rail trail would run from Inman, SC to Zirconia, NC. Approximately 16 miles of the line are in South Carolina while about 15 miles are in North Carolina.

The route includes dramatic scenery along the Blue Ridge Escarpment and passes through historic downtowns in Saluda, Tryon, Landrum, and Inman. When active from 1878 to 2001, the line was renowned as the steepest standard gauge mainline railroad ever built in the United States.

As we've seen with the Prisma Health Swamp Rabbit Trail in Greenville County, trails like this are transformational economic engines. They bring money and jobs to the local economy, boost quality of life for residents, and offer a safe and accessible way to spend time outdoors.

To learn more about the project and sign up for email updates, visit [upstateforever.org/saluda-grade](https://upstateforever.org/saluda-grade).

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP

UF expands land management efforts



**By Lauren Muller**

LAND STEWARDSHIP ASSOCIATE

[lmuller@upstateforever.org](mailto:lmuller@upstateforever.org)



*Our Land Conservation team is piloting an active land management project in partnership with the City of Westminster to begin controlling kudzu on the Chau Ram Expansion property in Oconee County. Removing a well-established stand of kudzu often takes several years of diligent treatment but will result in a healthier and more biodiverse habitat overall.*

Upstate Forever has launched an exciting new stewardship initiative, the land management program. This voluntary program is designed to provide technical and financial assistance to conservation easement landowners who are motivated to actively address threats to the land's natural resources and conservation values, such as erosion, invasive species, and overall habitat degradation.

This expanded approach to conservation easement stewardship will strengthen relationships with existing landowners and demonstrates that UF's commitment is twofold, with a focus on both the quantity and quality of protected land.

The ecological issues that this program addresses are complex and will require a collaborative approach. We will call upon our robust conservation network in the Upstate to connect landowners with the most up to date information and resources needed to target priority land management activities.

Potential projects may include native plantings, prescribed burns, and invasive plant management. We will focus this work on improving riparian buffers, grassland habitat and forests. These are critically important ecosystems found within our inventory of protected properties due to their high levels of biodiversity and association with priority species identified in the South Carolina State Wildlife Action Plan.

Perhaps most importantly, we anticipate the ripple effects of this new program will result in benefits beyond our portfolio of protected properties. Land management projects can serve as demonstration sites used to communicate techniques, impacts, and lessons learned to the larger community and other partners in conservation.

This new land management program ultimately enhances the work we already do and is well-aligned with UF's mission to protect critical lands that influence our water quality and unique character of the Upstate. Improved management of protected properties will directly impact valuable water resources in the Upstate and will support the diverse flora and fauna that make our region so special.

*Interested conservation easement landowners can reach out to me at [lmuller@upstateforever.org](mailto:lmuller@upstateforever.org) to learn more.*



## RECENT LAND PROTECTION

## Soapstone Baptist Church and grounds

PICKENS COUNTY - Liberia is a small community in Pickens County established just after the Civil War by formerly enslaved Africans and their families looking to start new lives in freedom. On its namesake soapstone outcropping, perched atop a ridge looking toward fields, patches of forest, and the towering Blue Ridge Escarpment, Soapstone Church has served the Liberia community for more than 150 years.

Mable Owens Clarke is the sixth-generation steward and matriarch of Soapstone Church. In the last days of her 104 years, Mable's mother, Lula Owens, asked her to promise one thing: That she would keep the doors of Soapstone open and preserve the church's legacy. For decades, Mable has worked tirelessly to fulfill this oath.

We are honored to have worked with Mable Clarke, Pastor Chet Trower, and several project partners to help protect Soapstone Church and the surrounding six acres through a conservation easement. This will ensure that the historic church, schoolhouse, slave cemetery, and sacred land will be protected from development in perpetuity.

Our many thanks to Brad Wyche, Diane Smock, Carlton Owen, Andy Douglas, and others who played integral roles in the conservation of Soapstone Church. Funding from the South Carolina Conservation Bank and Upstate Land Conservation Fund made this important conservation project possible.

To read more, visit [upstateforever.org/soapstone](https://upstateforever.org/soapstone).

## Tyger River Confluence at Nesbitt Shoals

SPARTANBURG COUNTY - In 2009, The Tyger River Foundation purchased a 10-acre riverfront parcel and created The Nesbitt Shoals Nature Park, establishing the first public river access point on the Tyger River. Since then, nearly 200 additional acres have been acquired in this area where the South and North Tyger Rivers converge.

Upstate Forever has worked with the Tyger River Foundation to place this 201-acre property under conservation easement with support from the South Carolina Conservation Bank and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, ensuring the protection of the area's natural beauty and recreational access. These blueways also serve as a drinking water source to over 10,000 customers in the Woodruff-Roebuck area. The permanent protection of the confluence at Nesbitt Shoals will help safeguard the quality and quantity of drinking water for local residents.

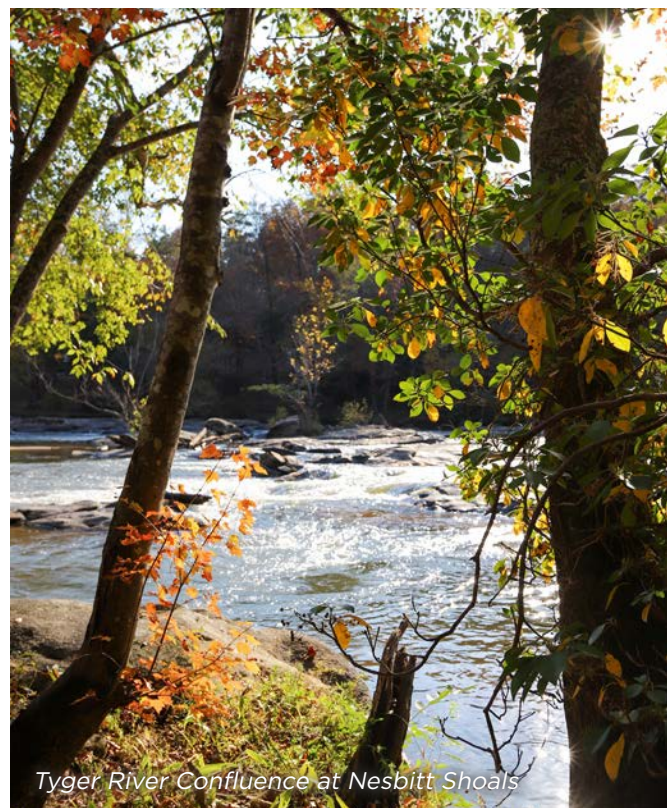
To learn about the Tyger River Foundation, visit [tygerriver.org](https://tygerriver.org).



*Mable Clarke at Soapstone Baptist Church*



*Soapstone outcropping, the church's namesake*



*Tyger River Confluence at Nesbitt Shoals*

The ForeverGreen Annual Awards Luncheon celebrates individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions in fields related to conservation and sustainable growth in the Upstate. After forgoing our in-person ForeverGreen luncheon in 2021 due to the pandemic, it was a joy to gather again to celebrate the Upstate's leaders in conservation on Monday, June 13. In addition to the 2022 awards program, this year's event included several special guests: the 2021 award recipients, who we were unable to honor with an in-person celebration last year, and animal ambassadors from PAWS Animal Wildlife Sanctuary. *To learn more about this year's awardees, see photos of the event, and watch the recording, visit [upstateforever.org/forevergreen2022](http://upstateforever.org/forevergreen2022).*

## 2022 Award Recipients



Executive Director Andrea Cooper with the 2022 awardees: Mable Owens Clarke, Hoyt Grant, Ranger Tim Lee, and Monty Mullen and Julian Hankinson of the Tyger River Foundation.

**TOMMY WYCHE LAND CONSERVATION CHAMPION**  
**Hoyt Grant**, for his dedication to the conservation of the iconic Grant Meadow and Table Rock viewshed

**CLEAN WATER CHAMPION**  
**The Tyger River Foundation**, for their work to protect and provide access to water in Spartanburg County

**PUBLIC SERVANT OF THE YEAR**  
 Interpretive **Ranger Tim Lee**, for his decades of service and wildlife education at the Mountain Bridge Wilderness Area

**MARJORIE E. SCHMIDT STEWARDSHIP AWARD**  
**Mable Owens Clarke**, for her tireless dedication to secure the preservation of the historic Soapstone Baptist Church in Pickens County



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## NEW UF STAFF

### Cathy Bester

joined UF as Program and Event Coordinator in April 2022.



Originally from Ohio, she has previously worked at the Florida Museum of Natural History and the University of Florida's Food Systems Institute.

In her role at UF, Cathy coordinates events and volunteer workdays. She also assists with fundraising and membership initiatives along with various administrative tasks. In her free time, she enjoys gravel cycling, trail running, nature photography, and spending time with her two border collies.





Protecting Land & Water | Advocacy | Balanced Growth

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**On the cover:** *Upstate Forever worked alongside many partners to secure and open the Prisma Health Swamp Rabbit Trail System in the early 2000's. Greenville County Recreation estimates the trail's economic impact on the county is \$7 million per year.*



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"Protecting the beauty of this area, its natural resources and wildlife, is very important to us."

"We have followed the work of Upstate Forever since its inception, and believe that it is an organization which will continue to protect the special places in the Upstate of South Carolina. We hope our eventual gift will play a part in this effort."

— **STACEY LINDSAY & TERRY SHAGER,**  
LEGACY SOCIETY MEMBERS

See page 21 for a list of other Legacy Society members

You can join Terry and Stacey in the Legacy Society by including Upstate Forever in your estate plans. To learn more about planned gift options or request a copy of our complimentary estate planning guide, visit [UpstateForever.GiftLegacy.com](http://UpstateForever.GiftLegacy.com) or contact Aldon Knight, Director of Development & Community Relations, at [aknight@upstateforever.org](mailto:aknight@upstateforever.org) or (864) 250-0500 x131.