

Upstate Update

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Upstate Forever's Monthly Bulletin on
Important Issues and Events in the Upstate

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1. For the First Time, DHEC Limits Phosphorus in Saluda River

For the first time, S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) has established limits on the amount of phosphorus that can be discharged from 12 wastewater treatment plants into the Saluda River upstream of Lake Greenwood. In addition, the agency approved an innovative trading agreement among eight of the wastewater utilities (Belton, Easley Combined Utilities, Pelzer, Renewable Water Resources, United Utility Companies, Ware Shoals, West Pelzer, and Williamston) that will allow phosphorus to be controlled in a cost-effective manner. The new limits and the trading program provisions are set forth in renewed discharge permits that were issued by DHEC on June 7. No appeal was filed, so the permits are now in effect.

Upstate Forever has advocated for phosphorus limits on the Saluda River since the release of our 2009 [Saving Lake Greenwood](#) (SLG) report. On that same day in April 2009, the national conservation group American Rivers announced that the Saluda had been designated America's 6th Most Endangered River because of the threat from phosphorus pollution. The SLG report, the result of five years of intensive research by a broad-based coalition headed by *Upstate Forever*, identified the two primary threats to the long-term health of Lake Greenwood as sediment from upstream development and phosphorus from wastewater discharges (see [UU 101](#) for more information).

During dry years, when the rivers and lakes are most vulnerable to algae blooms, wastewater treatment plants on the Saluda River account for over 70 percent of the phosphorus that reaches Lake Greenwood. Until now, there was no limitation on the amount of phosphorus that could be released into the river. DHEC has answered the call of *Upstate Forever*, American Rivers, and local advocacy groups such as Preserving Lake Greenwood to impose meaningful phosphorous limits on the wastewater plants. This is a huge accomplishment in our SLG campaign to protect the health of the Saluda River, Lake Greenwood, and the communities that depend on them. It can also serve as a model for addressing water quality problems in other watersheds.

Promoting sensible growth and protecting special places in the Upstate

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2. City of Greenville Reduces Parking Space Requirements

There is a surplus of off-street parking available in commercial developments in the City of Greenville. That is the conclusion of a study of parking lot occupancy rates by *Upstate Forever* and Furman University. Using aerial photographs and on-the-ground counts, researchers found that between 41 and 63 percent of parking spaces, depending on the type of commercial development, sit empty during *peak* shopping hours. These results show that the size of parking lots could be reduced significantly and still accommodate consumers' needs.

With funding from a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Targeted Watershed Implementation Grant, *Upstate Forever* is working in collaboration with the City of Greenville and Furman University to create a Floodplain Restoration Bank (FRB). The overall objective of the FRB is to improve water quality by decreasing the amount of impervious parking areas while generating funds for water quality improvement projects. Large parking lots are highly detrimental to water quality because they prevent infiltration of water into the soil and are a major source of water pollution.

The parking lot inventory was the first step in this process. The next step was to propose revised parking ratios (the number of parking spaces per 1,000 square feet of building area) for the City based on our data. Transportation planners estimate ideal parking ratios based on an 85% occupancy factor, so we followed this rule in our proposal. On June 13, City Council adopted an amendment to the parking ordinance based on our recommendations.

City staff next plan to propose a requirement that parking spaces above the minimum and below the maximum be constructed using pervious material or other approved low-impact development techniques. This is the last modification to the parking ordinance needed before the FRB can be instituted.

More flexible local parking requirements as well as innovative parking solutions are needed to address critical water resource issues in our communities. The Floodplain Restoration Bank project in Greenville will can serve as a model for other communities to modify their parking requirements in order to facilitate more appropriate parking solutions, better use of developable land, and improved water quality.

3. Spartanburg Leads Upstate with New Urban Code

On July 1, the City of Spartanburg becomes the first community in the Upstate to institute a transect, or form-based zoning code – big news for advocates of smarter planning. The new Downtown Code, two years in the making, was adopted by Spartanburg City Council in February and becomes effective this summer, replacing existing zoning regulations in the downtown area. An outgrowth of the 2008 Downtown Master Plan, the code focuses on the forms rather than the uses of downtown buildings in order to ensure a pedestrian-friendly urban environment while maximizing flexibility. Downtown Spartanburg is now divided into three distinct districts: D-T4 (urban neighborhoods surrounding the downtown area), D-T5 (gateway corridors and blocks surrounding the downtown core) and D-T6 (core of the downtown area with the highest level of pedestrian activity and urbanism). Building heights, building types, frontages and setbacks are specific to each district and detailed in the code.

The Downtown Code will apply only to new and extensively renovated buildings, but over the

long term it should greatly improve the character and walkability of the downtown. The Downtown Master Plan, including the Downtown Code, can be read in full at www.cityofspartanburg.org/index.cfm?PageID=140. And for information about the Transect and other planning tools, go to www.upstateforever.org/programs_sustComm.html.

4. Placemaking Workshop Helps Communities Plan for Healthier Lifestyles

With Spartanburg's Downtown Code now a reality, the timing could not have been better for the May 12 workshop presented by *Upstate Forever* and the City of Greer on the subject of "Creating Active, Healthy Communities through Placemaking." Nearly 100 engineers, architects, planners, other local government staff members, and interested citizens from across the Upstate gathered at Greer City Hall to explore the rural-to-urban transect as a framework for restructuring our built environment to support active, healthy lifestyles.

During the morning session, workshop leaders Tom Low and Guy Pearlman of the Charlotte office of leading urban design firm Duany Plater-Zyber presented statistics and case studies on the links between health, environment, and sustainability; "sprawl repair"; "complete streets"; and affordable housing. In the afternoon, participants took part in hands-on, cooperative design exercises (devised for non-designers) to plan communities to include mixed uses, transit, access to nature and physical activity, and maintenance of local and regional character.

To tackle our nation's health problems, our built environment must be conducive to physical activity as an integral part of daily life. Pedestrian-friendly communities have proven successful in addressing public health issues, including obesity and chronic heart and respiratory diseases. But current zoning and development regulations in the Upstate often prohibit compact, mixed-use development. The rural-to-urban transect approach promotes diverse walkable communities, conservation of rural and agricultural lands, and protection of natural resources and should be considered for adoption by cities and counties throughout our region.

5. Court Upholds Permit for South Saluda Trout Enhancement Project

In 2009, the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, proposed the installation of a trout enhancement project in the section of the South Saluda River that adjoins properties owned by local conservation champion (and current *Upstate Forever* Board Member) Dianne Culbertson and by the nonprofit Naturaland Trust. The project is part of a broad-based effort by a coalition of agencies and nonprofit organizations called "Partners for Trout" to protect the remaining trout habitat in South Carolina and to restore part of what has been lost. Because South Carolina has lost a huge amount of its original habitat for trout, the Partners for Trout work is greatly important.

The project involves the installation of 15 native rock cross-vanes in a 2,964 foot stretch of the South Saluda River. A rock vane basically redirects the flow away from the banks toward the middle of the river. This creates riffles between the vane and a pool downstream of the vane, which is exactly the kind of habitat desired by trout and other fish. Most of the vane is submerged during normal river flow.

This section of the South Saluda is an ideal candidate for the project because the river is straight and shallow, has some erosion of its banks, and contains few riffles and pools. NRCS had funding available for the project, and Culbertson and Naturaland Trust agreed to its installation.

Culbertson leased her 15-acre property to *Upstate Forever* so that we could handle all of the administrative and contractual details for her.

The South Saluda project requires a Construction in Navigable Waters permit, which was issued by DHEC last September, only to be appealed by a downstream landowner. After the DHEC Board declined to hear the case, the landowner appealed to the S.C. Administrative Law Court, which heard the case in April.

On June 14, the Court issued its ruling and upheld the permit for the project. The Court heard all of the evidence and determined that the landowner's claims are baseless and without merit. This is a resounding victory and a complete vindication of *Upstate Forever's* and our partners' position that this project is good for the river, the trout, and the community. We look forward to installing the project as soon as possible and helping improve trout habitat in the South Saluda River. See the [Fact Sheet](#) on our website for more information about the project.

6. *Upstate Forever Receives Grant for Laurens County Water Quality Outreach*

Upstate Forever has been selected to receive a grant from DHEC to perform outreach in the Walnut Creek Watershed in Laurens County and work one-on-one with interested landowners to implement practices to reduce nutrient runoff into Walnut Creek and the Reedy River. The Walnut Creek Nutrient Reduction Project is a subset of our [Saving Lake Greenwood campaign](#) (see item 1, above) and aims to reduce phosphorus and nitrogen contributions to Lake Greenwood.

The project will reduce nutrients carried in overland runoff from agricultural fields and failing septic systems, stemming the flow of phosphorus and nitrogen into the Reedy River and Lake Greenwood. It will also address the long-term phosphorus impairment in the Reedy River arm of Lake Greenwood. The project activities will help implement DHEC's near-finalized TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load requirement) for the Reedy River, which calls for a 60 percent reduction in phosphorus and 40 percent reduction in nitrogen from stormwater runoff. If fully implemented, the TMDL will significantly improve the health of Boyd Mill Pond and Lake Greenwood – a source of drinking water, economic development, recreation, tourism and pride for more than 500,000 people across our region.

7. *Challenge Grant and Land Trust Day Exceed Expectations*

At the beginning of 2011, an anonymous supporter offered to match donations to *Upstate Forever's* Land Trust Program *if* we were able to raise \$25,000 by June 1. We are thrilled to report that our members' generosity enabled us to surpass our goal: you donated \$35,000! Thank you to all who contributed and we are deeply grateful to our anonymous benefactor who matched those donations.

And that's not the only good news for our land protection efforts this month. For the eighth year in a row, Mast General Store selected *Upstate Forever* as the beneficiary of its annual Land Trust Day. The Greenville store donated 20 percent of all sales on June 4 to *Upstate Forever's* Land Trust Program, which amounted to \$7,200, the largest total yet! Thank you *again*, Mast General!

8. *Project Rx Keeps Pharmaceuticals Out of Rivers and Off of Streets*

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, each person in the United States filled an average

of 12 prescriptions in 2009. With the Upstate's population of approximately 1.3 million people, that means we bring home more than 15 million prescriptions each year, plus many millions more bottles of over-the-counter drugs. A lot of the pills in these containers go unused.

Sadly, too many people flush or pour leftover medications down the drain. Even trace amounts of these drugs can disrupt the balance of life in our lakes, rivers and streams. Scientific studies have found that even extremely diluted concentrations of pharmaceutical residues can cause harm to fish, frogs and other aquatic species in the wild. Related research reports that human cells fail to grow normally in the lab when exposed to trace concentrations of certain drugs, raising concerns about the long-term impacts on human health.

Lacking a safe method to dispose of medications, many people leave them sitting in the medicine cabinet – out of sight, out of mind. The problem with holding on to medications is the potential for them to find their way out of our homes and onto our streets, making our neighborhoods unsafe. Every day an estimated 2,500 youth in the United States misuse some form of medication for the first time. Seventy percent of those who abuse medication report obtaining it from a friend or family member.

A diverse group of local organizations has come together to address the issue of proper medication disposal. Greenville County Sheriff's Office, Greenville Family Partnership, Greenville Technical College, Renewable Water Resources, Greenville Safe Communities, Bon Secours St. Francis Hospital System, Carolina Institute for Community Policing, Greenville Hospital System, *Upstate Forever* and Whole Foods Market partnered for Project Rx: A River Remedy. At our drug take-back event on June 18 at two locations in Greenville County, over 750 pounds of medications were collected from more than 370 participants and were safely incinerated by Sheriff's Deputies. All pill bottles and other containers were recycled. We hope to promote similar take-back events in other Upstate communities. For more information, visit www.ARiverRemedy.org.

9. John Muir Visits Upstate Forever

Although the real John Muir passed away in 1914, the Upstate was fortunate enough to have a visit from "John Muir" in 2011. The [Greenville Chautauqua Festival](#) kicked off its celebration of "Ideas that Changed America" on June 17 with a performance by Lee Stetson as John Muir, father of our National Parks System and co-founder of The Sierra Club. Stetson has been interpreting the character of Muir for hundreds of thousands of park visitors at Yosemite National Park since 1983. After the performance, *Upstate Forever*, Naturaland Trust, and Greenville Chautauqua hosted a reception with Muir/Stetson at the *Upstate Forever* main office, providing a unique opportunity to converse with with a historical figure.

10. St. Francis Health System Recognized for Environmental Leadership

Bon Secours St. Francis Health System has over the past three years reduced overall power consumption by 12 percent, increased waste recycling by 28 percent, and conserved 8.3 million gallons of water. For these and other accomplishments, St. Francis received the 2011 Environmental Leadership Circle Award from Practice GreenHealth, the only health system in the nation to achieve this honor. Way to go, St. Francis!

11. Frank Holleman Receives Statewide Honor

Frank Holleman, tireless champion of conservation and winner of *Upstate Forever's* 2007 Volunteer of the Year Award, was honored in Columbia on April 11 with the 2010 S.C.

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Environmental Awareness Award. Frank received this award “for his exceptional leadership, creativity and passion for upstate and coastal land conservation and education efforts,” including his instrumental role in protecting the Blue Wall Connection and Stumphouse Mountain properties. We couldn’t agree more. Congratulations, Frank!

12. Upcoming Upstate Forever Event

The Beach Ball 2011

Saturday, August 27, 7:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m., Hartness Estate, 200 Smith Road, Greenville
Cost: \$100/person, with seating packages available

This annual philanthropic event is a summer favorite, offering top-notch food, drinks, and dancing under the stars! Once again, *Upstate Forever* is a ticket-selling partner for the Beach Ball – we keep 50% of the proceeds from the tickets we sell! Beach Ball 2011 accepts advance ticket sales ONLY, so purchase your tickets from *Upstate Forever* now, and help two good causes at once! Contact Kirbie Crowe at kcrowe@upstateforever.org or call (864) 250-0500 x21.

13. Quote of the Month

“Everyone needs beauty, as well as bread, and places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike.”

--John Muir, *The Yosemite*, 1912

