

## **News from U.S. Rep. John Spratt (D-SC)**

Assistant to the Democratic Leader

Ranking Member, Committee on the Budget

US House of Representatives – Washington, DC

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### **Spratt Obtains \$3 million for Catawba - Wateree Forest Preservation**

WASHINGTON – U.S. Rep. John Spratt (D-SC) announced today that he had successfully obtained \$3 million for the purchase 1,700 acres of forestland as part of the Catawba-Wateree Forest Preservation Project. The money was allocated under the Forest Legacy Project, which is funded by the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which in turn draws its funds from royalties earned by the federal government in off-shore drilling. All of these items were included in the omnibus spending bill passed by the House on November 20, which is expected to be signed by the president shortly.

“The Catawba-Wateree project is an invaluable natural asset,” said Spratt. “It has wildlife and old-growth forests, and river frontage along a stretch of the Catawba that runs clear and deep. This was a river crossing for Indian tribes and Revolutionary armies. Here or in this vicinity, a number of Revolutionary battles were fought, including Rocky Mount, Fishing Creek, and Hanging Rock. The 1,700-acre tract surrounds Dearborn Island, the site selected for a national arsenal, to be the southern counterpart to Harpers Ferry and Springfield, Massachusetts. In addition to its historic significance, the site is thick with hardwood trees, and buffers a run of the river that is almost unspoiled. So, it has great natural value, great historic significance, and great recreational potential.”

”The \$3 million will supplement \$2,950,000 that Spratt procured in 2002 for the first phase of the Catawba-Wateree project. This money allowed the South Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources (SCDENR) to purchase 1,049 acres of forestland adjoining Landsford Canal State Park along the Catawba River.

“This additional \$3 million will allow SCDENR to pay a substantial portion but not all of the purchase price on 1,700 acres of forestland along Stumpy Pond, near Great Falls,” said Spratt. The land is now under option to the Katawba Valley Conservation Trust. Spratt credits the Katawba Valley and its leader, Lindsay Pettus, for conceiving this forestland project and carrying it forward. The trust has approached the state and other foundations in the hope of finding the balance of

the purchase price. "This is an opportunity," said Spratt, "to use state funding to leverage federal funding, and accomplish something of lasting value for South Carolina."

Spratt said that he had spent a Saturday with Lindsay Pettus, Ralph Garris, and Mayor "Speedy" Starnes, and others from the area and the SCDNR, walking Dearborn Island, and riding over Stumpy Pond, looking at the steep wooded hills and ravines, filled with small creeks draining into the Catawba River. He visited the sites of two colonial-era settlements, Rocky Mount and Fort Dearborn. "I came away convinced of the many reasons this area deserves protection," said Spratt.

The shoreline of the river is essentially underdeveloped, but pressure in the area is increasing. Without immediate protection, the forests may be converted to other uses and lost forever.

"Our first forest preservation projects on the Catawba-Wateree are a model for steps to come," said Spratt. "Much more needs to be done, but this additional \$3 million is crucial to realizing the potential of this project, and building support for its remaining phases. I am proud to have had a hand in making it happen."

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