



Southern  
Environmental  
Law Center

## **News Advisory**

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

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**CONTACT:**

Caroline March-Long  
On Behalf of the Southern Environmental Law Center  
434-295-5938 - office  
434- 760-1948 - Mobile  
[Caroline@FourLeafPR.com](mailto:Caroline@FourLeafPR.com)

**Lee Smith, Renowned Southern Writer and NY Times Best Selling Author, Featured Speaker at SELC Event**

*—Ms. Smith discusses how the landscape of her native southwest Virginia influences her writing—  
—Reads from newest book, Mrs. Darcy Meets the Blue-Eyed Stranger—*

**Charlottesville, VA** – February 10, 2010 – The [Southern Environmental Law Center](http://www.SouthernEnvironmentalLawCenter.org) (SELC), the largest nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy organization dedicated to protecting the environment of the Southeast, is pleased to host renowned southern writer [Lee Smith](#) at the upcoming Virginia Festival of the Book in a special event on Saturday, March 20 from 12 noon to 2 p.m. at City Space on the downtown pedestrian mall.

In Smith's discussion entitled "[Sense of Place: Natural Landscapes and the Southern Writer](#)," Smith (*On Agate Hill, Oral History, Saving Grace, The Devil's Dream, and Fair and Tender Ladies*) will discuss her oral storytelling roots and upbringing in rural, southwest Virginia and reflect on how the southern landscape influences her writing much like it has impacted many southern writers.

"Some of our most treasured southern writers have been deeply moved by their experiences in the South, such as mine in Grundy, Virginia. The Southern Appalachian mountains never fail to provide a colorful and beautiful backdrop for my writing," says Ms. Smith.

"Writers have always drawn their inspiration from the natural world. I see it now in danger and it just frightens me," she adds, explaining why she wants to be part of the SELC event. "There is something in the contemplation of mountains, of nature, and natural places that leads us to think of important things, real questions and issues that people need to be addressing and to be writing about."

Following her talk, the public is invited to a "Meet the Author/Book Signing" in the SELC office headquarters on the downtown mall, (across from Regal Cinema) from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

"As an organization deeply grounded in a love of the South and a strong sense of place, we're honored to host Lee Smith at this year's Festival," says Marie Hawthorne, director of development at SELC. "Her powerful writing gives voice to the South's natural landscapes at a time when unprecedented growth pressures threaten to overwhelm our mountains, forests, rivers, coast, and countryside."

The Festival of the Book event is part of SELC's annual writing contest, the Phillip D. Reed Memorial Award for Outstanding Writing on the Southern Environment.

**More about the Reed Writing Award**

Now in its 15th year, the award is named in memory of SELC founding trustee Phil Reed, a talented attorney and committed environmental advocate. Reed, a graduate of Princeton University and Yale Law School, was one of the first practitioners of environmental law. He worked in government, the Environmental Law Institute, a non-profit research organization, and headed the environmental practice at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom in New York.

**More about Lee Smith**

Lee Smith is the author of eleven novels, including *On Agate Hill*, *Oral History*, *Saving Grace*, *The Devil's Dream*, and *Fair and Tender Ladies*, plus three collections of short stories. Her novel, *The Last Girls*, was a *New York Times* bestseller as well as a winner of the Southern Book Critics Circle Award. Her latest novel is *Mrs. Darcy Meets the Blue-Eyed Stranger*, published by Algonquin Books in early spring 2010.

A retired professor of English at North Carolina State University, Ms. Smith received an Academy Award in Fiction from American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1999.

Visit [http://www.southernenvironment.org/reed\\_award](http://www.southernenvironment.org/reed_award) for more information on the Reed Writing Award.

See [www.vabook.org](http://www.vabook.org) for more information on the Virginia Festival of the Book.

**About the Southern Environmental Law Center**

SELC is a nonprofit and the largest environmental advocacy organization dedicated to preserving the Southeast's natural heritage for future generations. Focused on clean air and water and protecting forests, rural lands, mountains and coast, SELC has informed, implemented and enforced environmental law and policy for 20 years. Established in 1986, SELC has 63 staff and is headquartered in Charlottesville with offices in Chapel Hill and Asheville, North Carolina, Atlanta, and Sewanee, Tennessee. Visit SELC online at [www.SouthernEnvironment.org](http://www.SouthernEnvironment.org).

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