

The National New River

NEWSLETTER

Committee To Save New River Becomes National Organization

The recent formation of the National Committee for the New River gave tremendous impetus to the battle to preserve the river from being dammed for a hydroelectric plant.

The president of the national group is Hamilton C. Horton, Jr., a Winston-Salem, N. C. attorney, businessman, and former state senator.

The Rev. Hal Eaton of Mouth of Wilson, Va., and James Watkins, III, of Beckley, W. Va., are the vice presidents. Eaton and Watkins each head their respective state committees. The state committees and the chartered affiliates, for that matter, shall retain their independence for local purposes.

The board of directors of the national organization is composed of the boards of each state committee and a representative from each chartered affiliate. The present board of the National Committee for the New River is as follows:

Edmund I. Adams, Mrs. Stella Anderson, Dr. Miles O. Bidwell, Vance Bond,

Lorne Campbell, Wallace Carroll, Richard Caudill, James Chambers, Mrs. Louise Chatfield, Mrs. Carl T. Cox, T. Paul Cox, George R. Crouse, Peter Crow, Donald Dickenson, Dr. Palmer Fant, J. Cam Fields, Thomas B. Fowler, Mrs. Helen Frazier, Sidney Gambill, Kenneth Graham, Dr. C. L. Hampton, Douglas Henderson, Charles Hoffman, Carl J. Holcomb, Mrs. Polly Jones, Jerry P. Kirk, Dolly Maschal, Rep. Hugh C. Sandlin, Robert Schibel, Mrs. Jane Sharpe, Robert L. Shaw, III, Clifford Stamper, Harold Stanley, James Todd, Dr. Thomas Townsend, and Lawrence Whittington.

Joe C. Matthews serves as Executive Secretary to the Committee and John C. Curry serves as Legal Counsel to the Committee.

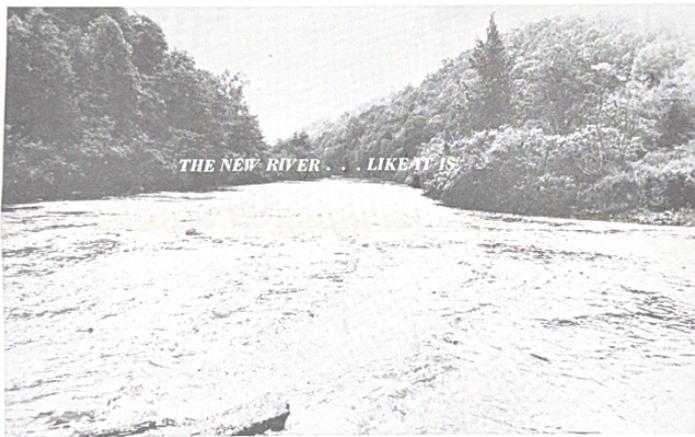
The new national organization was formed October 25 at a meeting at Hawk's Nest State Park near Beckley, W. Va. It is significant that the site of the work is in West Virginia because that state, along with neighboring Vir-

ginia, has long been officially in favor of the Blue Ridge Project, the proposal of Appalachian Power Co., a subsidiary of American Electric Power Co. — the largest private utility company in the entire world — to dam the New River in two places, thus flooding 40,000 acres in Virginia and North Carolina. In particular, the significance of organizing the National Committee for the New River at a location West Virginia means that the private citizenry of that state disagrees with public policy toward the fate of the New, deemed by geologists to be the oldest river in this hemisphere and second oldest (to the Nile) in the world.

For a number of reasons the plan to destroy the New transcends the immediate locality of the dams and has become an issue of national importance. For one thing, the ancient river was a major travel artery of early man in this continent and the lands to be flooded hold the archeological keys to unlock and

enlighten the history of the first residents of North America. Yet another reason is that Appalachian Power Co. withheld from the U. S. Department of the Interior the findings and conclusions of two studies on the archeological potential of the land to be inundated. A fourth reason is that the pumped storage aspect of the project will use more energy than it will produce in an age when falling energy resources increasingly threaten this nation.

Watkins said that it thus became right to let the people of the nation know the sorry case for Appalachian Power's proposal and to expand the fight to save the river. He also said that public opinion voiced nationally would prod federal officials into taking the action necessary to block the utility company's plans. Otherwise, the federal government would simply cave in to the pressure applied by big business and big labor to rape a national treasure.



THE NEW RIVER . . . LIKE IT IS

OR THIS?

This picture of High Rock Dam Lake shows mud flats and dead fish which would characterize the two impoundments proposed by Appalachian Power Co. on the New River in Crayson County, Va., and Ashe and Alleghany Counties, N. C. The power project's weekly pumping cycle would produce muddy and stinking flats 50 feet wide.



Powerful Allies Are Reinforcing North Carolina

Active and influential reinforcements have joined North Carolina's long and lonely battle against the Blue Ridge Power Project, the scheme of Appalachian Power Co. to dam the ancient and uncomparable New River.

Among them are the Isaac Walton League, Sierra Club, National Wildlife Federation, and Wilderness Society. But perhaps more important is the new alliance of Tar Heels with Virginians and West Virginians; for both the Virginia and West Virginia governments have supported the project as long as North Carolina has fought it, and the burgeoning citizen opposition in the two Virginias could ultimately lead to a change of policy by state political leadership.

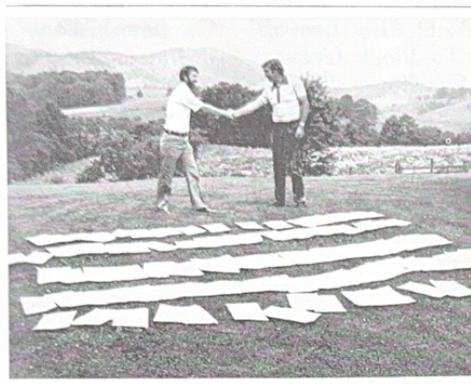
The alliance was formed when West Virginia's Coalition to Save the New River and the Committee to Save the New River — Virginia and the Committee to Save the New River — North Carolina joined forces during a mass meeting January 4, in Raleigh. Eventually, that group formed the core of the National Committee for the New River.

The Virginia group, headed by The Rev. Hal Eaton of Mouth of Wilson, brought more than 3,000 active members into the fight to save from flooding 40,000 acres of fertile farmland in Virginia and North Carolina.

The chairman of the West Virginia delegation, James H. Watkins, III, of Beckley, reported that his fears are focused on changes the power company intends for Bluestone Dam, fifty miles downstream on the New River from the Virginia-West Virginia border. Modification of Bluestone, now a flood-control dam, would follow the construction of the Blue Ridge project. The power company argues that Bluestone's use for flood control would end with the completion of the two Blue Ridge project dams upstream in Virginia. Consequently, Appalachian Power proposes to convert Bluestone into another hydroelectric dam, raising its impoundment by 80 feet and releasing more than 12,000 cubic feet of water per second. The danger level for public use downstream from Bluestone is 4,000 cubic feet per second, or twice the normal flow.

The power company would thus flood homes and farms in West Virginia as well as spoiling the recreational value of the famous New River Gorge, the wildest stretch of white water in the Eastern U. S.

(See CAUSE, Column 1, Page 4)



Peter Crow, left, professor of English at Ferrum College, Ferrum, Virginia. Hal Eaton, right, pastor of Young's Chapel Baptist Church, Mouth of Wilson, Virginia. In the foreground are 150 signed pages of a petition calling for preservation of the New River. Crow has presented the petitions to Eaton, who is president of the Virginia Committee for the New River. Four thousand Virginians from every Congressional district in the state signed the petitions. Crow was coordinator of the effort. Copies of the petition have been sent to all Virginia Congressmen, the Governor of Virginia, and the Department of the Interior.

Cause Gains Allies

(Continued from Page 1)

The newest volunteers in the battle to save the river are from the student body of Appalachian State University, Boone, N. C. In early September, a group was organized under the leadership of Brad Adcock, attorney general of the student government. The group immediately began laying plans for a large rally to bring public attention to the issues surrounding the river.

Also, a standing committee of the student government has appointed a subcommittee to deal solely with the New River fight. Mike Broome, president of the student body, has said that other schools in the state will be prodded into action to save the river. Students at ASU have been the first to organize.

The Grayson County (Va.) School Board has also recorded its opposition to the project, adopting a resolution requesting the Secretary of the Interior to include the New in the National Wild and Scenic River System. The board found that the project would harm the county's agricultural economy and disrupt its road system, endangering and handicapping the transportation of students to the public schools.

The Oak Walton League, Sierra Club, National Wildlife Federation and Wilderness Society are only four of the eleven national organizations actively opposed to the Blue Ridge project. The others are: Friends of the Earth, Committee for the New River, Environmental Policy Center, American Rivers Conservation Center, Environmental Action, National Parks and Conservation Association, and American Forestry Association.

Furthermore, four of these—American Rivers Conservation Center, Environmental Policy Center, Sierra Club, and Friends of the Earth—were joined by both the Conservation Council of Virginia and North Carolina in a report on the proposed power project, "Issues of the Upper New River Controversy" (excerpted on Page 2 of this newsletter).

Other organizations whose help could be instrumental in saving the New are: BASS, P. O. Box 2044, Montgomery, Ala. 36109; Environment Defense Fund, 162 Old Town Rd., East Setauket, N. Y. 11733; Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, U. S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D. C. 20240; American League of Anglers, 810 18th St., N. W., Washington, D. C. 20006; American Fisheries Society, 1319 16th St., N. W., Washington, D. C. 20036; Natural Resources Defense Council, 1710 "N" St., Washington, D. C. 20036.

Letters To Ford and Kleppe Are Sought

"Write on" is the battle cry of the National Committee for the New River.

If Hamilton C. Horton, Jr., president of the committee, had his way, letters opposing the Blue Ridge Project would flood Secretary of the Interior Thomas Kleppe just as the project would flood 40,000 acres of fertile farm lands. Specifically, Horton has appealed to the nation at large to write Kleppe and send a copy of that letter to President Ford and to write members of Congress. Also, he has asked residents of Virginia and the New River to declare to their governors in an effort to persuade both states to change their official policy favoring the power project.

Rules to be followed in writing officials are: (1) Use one's own stationery; (2) Sign one's name and include address; (3) Avoid form letters—use own wording; (4) Confirm letter to the Blue Ridge Project issue and name it unmistakably as the proposal of Appalachian Power Co.,

Mandamus Is Possibility If Stalling Continues

Thomas Kleppe, the Secretary of the Interior, and before him D. Kent Frizzell, Acting Secretary, have flouted the law by delaying the circulation of North Carolina's petition to have 26.5 miles of the New River declared a part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Federal law requires the secretary to circulate such petitions among certain interested federal agencies for review and comment within a reasonable time. The secretary cannot decide whether to accept or reject the petitions until the agencies have responded to it. They have 90 days to do so, but the petition is still bottled up in the Department of the Interior.

As a result, the National Committee for the New River has written Kleppe a polite letter requesting that he obey the law and circulate the state's petition. Also, the letter reminds the secretary that if he continues to keep the petition out of circulation the committee has the legal right to go to court, get a writ of mandamus, and make him circulate the petition.

The committee hopes it will not be necessary to obtain the writ; but if it has to, it will.

Project License Granted Illegally?

The license for the Blue Ridge Power Project may be illegal.

The archeological resources of the New River valley were ignored by both the Federal Power Commission and the Department of the Interior when the FPC granted a license to Appalachian Power Co. in June 1974 to build the twin-dam hydroelectric plant. So North Carolina has amended its suit to have the license revoked to include evidence that two archeological studies were overlooked in the licensing process. The U. S. Court of Appeals has agreed to consider the evidence.

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 requires that federal agencies help preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage. North Carolina maintains that the FPC violated that law.

The Federal Historic Preservation Act of 1960 requires the Secretary of the Interior to order professional archeological surveys of areas to be flooded by the construction of a dam by a federal agency or by any private person or corporation holding a license issued by such an agency. The Department of the Interior apparently violated that law; for no survey was ever begun.

As the New York Times reported September 3: "Appalachian Power, at the direction of the FPC staff, contracted for arche-

ological surveys of the project area in 1965 and 1969.

The first survey was done by Dr. Harvard Avers, professor of anthropology at Appalachian State University in Boone, N. C., and the second by Dr. C. G. Holland, lecturer in anthropology at the University of Virginia. Both archeologists collected thousands of projectile points and other artifacts, some dating to 8000 B. C.

"In an interview last week, Dr. Holland said that the New River valley was a 'major migration route,' and that the artifacts found at numerous archeological sites in the Blue Ridge project area represented successive levels of Indian development, from paleo-Indian times up to the 15th and 16th centuries, when white men arrived."

"Dr. Avers said that the New River area 'holds a main body of knowledge about early man.'

"Mr. Edmisten (Rufus L. Edmisten, attorney general of North Carolina) will not only have the reports of these surveys to cite in his argument before the U. S. Court of Appeals, but he is also expected to raise a number of questions about them, including the following:

"Why did Appalachian Power never turn over to the FPC the reports of Dr. Avers and Dr. Holland, which recommended that two years of excavation and salvage be undertaken prior to construction on the dams?"

"Why did the FPC never ask Appalachian for the surveys, for which it required the company to contract?"

"Why did the Department of the Interior, as required by a 1960 law, never have an archeological survey made of the area to be flooded?"

"In the same story, the Times reported: "In an interview, Douglas P. Wheeler, deputy assistant secretary for fish and wildlife and parks, said: 'The department has no record of a survey having been made that comports directly with the statute. I think you can make a case that someone violated the letter of the law if you go on the specifics.'"

The case was argued before the court October 23, and the power company's lawyers were hard put to field some searching questions from the bench.

HELP WANTED

The National Committee for the New River isn't rich, nor does it want to be. It just wants to spend money—yours—in the battle to save the river from destruction.

Although it has no paid staff, it still has costs: this news letter, for one, and postage and stationery, too. If you find this news letter helpful in getting out the facts on the Blue Ridge Project and stirring up interest in it, think how nice it would be to reprint it and send thousands of copies around the country. Or, how about some full-page ads in The New York Times, The Washington Post, and the Los Angeles Times. Expensive? You bet, but probably worth every penny of the cost. So send a little donation (or, if you can afford it, a big one). If we pull together, we can save the river.

Make checks payable to: The National Committee for the New River, and mail them to: P. O. Box 575, Winston-Salem, N. C. 27102.

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