

WINSTON-SALEM

80TH YEAR No. 163

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C., SUNDAY,

Ford Signs River Bill

By Bob Poole

Journal Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — President Ford signed the New River bill into law yesterday, bringing an end to a bitter 14-year-old dispute over the river's fate.

The new law prevents Appalachian Power Co. from building the Blue Ridge power project on the river. Two giant dams in the power project would have flooded 40,000 acres in North Carolina and Virginia.

But the law now prevents any federal project which would damage 26.5-miles of the river recently included in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The protected segment, all of which is in North Carolina, includes 4½ miles of the river's main stem and 21 miles of its south fork.

In ceremonies in the Rose Garden of the White House, Ford praised Gov. James E. Holshouser Jr. and others who helped to push the New River legislation through Congress.

"This new law is the culmination of years of effort by a great many people. I congratulate you and your friends for your persistence, your courage and your ul-

timite success," Ford told about 50 people attending the ceremony.

"Some very serious obstacles had to be overcome for this legislation to be enacted, and in a way, that is as it should be," he said. "When a decision has to be made between energy production and environmental protection, both sides have legitimate and worthy claims to make and such decisions should never be made in haste," Ford added.

He said it was "clear that the people wanted to keep the New River like it is. Through the tireless efforts of the North Carolina congressional delegation, past and present, and combined with the efforts of Gov. Holshouser and a determined group of private citizens, the people's will has been done.

"An ancient, majestic river and the beautiful land that surrounds it have been saved for future generations to enjoy, as we enjoy them. With special pride and pleasure, I will now sign the act into law, and I join you in the hope that the New River will flow free and clear for another hundred million years."

Crowded behind Ford during the bill-signing ceremony were Holshouser and a group of congressmen and other officials

who had been involved in various stages of the New River controversy.

Ford looked around at the group of about 20 people standing behind him when it came time to give out souvenir pens and he said, "We'll go as far as we can with these. Sometimes I wish I had a longer name."

Then he handed pens to the congressmen who sponsored New River legislation — Democratic Reps. Stephen L. Neal and Roy A. Taylor of North Carolina and Rep. Kenneth Hechler, D-W.Va. He gave two pens to Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., with the understanding that Helms would deliver one of them to former Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. Ervin sponsored New River legislation in 1974. He did not attend the White House ceremony. Helms sponsored this year's version of the bill.

Former Rep. Wilmer D. Mizell of North Carolina was also present yesterday. He also got a souvenir pen. Mizell, defeated by Neal in 1974, sponsored New River legislation in 1974 and lobbied for enactment of Neal's bill this year.

Ironically, Rep. L.H. Fountain, D-N.C., was also on hand for yesterday's

See River, Page A2



Mild

Triad today. Highs should be low near 50. 5 to 10 m.p.h. The chance of

southern Appalachian Mountain in fair weather and higher

Yesterday At Airport

High 77 at 5:30 p.m.
Low 47 at 7 a.m.
Precipitation 0

Downtown

High 76
Low 53
Precipitation 0

Today

Sun rises 7:01 a.m.;
sets 7:33 p.m.

arded

such disclosures by shipping concerns.

Other sources speculated that the Reynolds announcement might also head off legal action, even though a federal grand jury is investigating rebating in the shipping industry.

The statute of limitations for recording of campaign contributions, like the time limit for the prosecution of corporate political contribution, is three years, thus barring prosecution of the company or its officials under campaign gift statutes.

Rep. Stephen L. Neal, D-N.C., said in Washington that the names of the politicians who received the corporate

River Bill Signed; 14-Year Fight Ends

Continued From Page A1
ceremony. He was absent when the House approved the New River bill Aug. 10, although he voted for similar legislation in 1974.

D. Kent Frizzell, solicitor of the Department of the Interior, was also standing in the dignitaries' section behind Ford. As acting secretary of the Interior in July of 1975, Frizzell caused an uproar of protest from North Carolina by stalling for six weeks on the state's request to place the river in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. It was not until a new secretary of the Interior took office that the department finally agreed to begin processing the state's request for federal protection of the river.

But the prevailing mood yesterday was a festive one, with the crowd cheering Ford and applauding Holshouser. Nature also cooperated. The sun was shining, the sky was a flawless autumn blue and the temperature crisp and comfortable for the outdoor ceremonies.

Holshouser Speaks

After signing the bill, Ford seemed ready to go back inside the White House, but he was interrupted by Holshouser, who asked Ford: "Can I say a word here?"

Ford looked around at Holshouser in mock surprise, hesitated for a moment and said: "Well, this is an open society. Go ahead."

Holshouser then praised Ford for taking a position on North Carolina's side of the New River controversy. (Ford announced in March, two weeks before the North Carolina presidential primary, that he favored federal protected status for the river.)

Holshouser gave Ford a certificate making Ford an "admiral" in the "New River Navy" in recognition for Ford's support of the New River bill. Holshouser said that others who supported the bill will be drafted into his "Navy" later.

side of the White House lawn and quietly watching the crowd.

Hardest Fight

"This has been the hardest fight I've been involved in in 16 years of Congress and eight years of the state legislature," Taylor said. "This is a grand day for me." Taylor is retiring from Congress in January.

His colleague, Stephen Neal, said that the enactment of the New River bill offered a "great example of how democracy can work, starting at the grass roots level and coming up through Washington. I think that people often see their government as so big and distant. This shows how the government can work for their benefit."

"Wouldn't Switch"

Holshouser, who flew 17 people here from North Carolina on two state airplanes yesterday, said that he "wouldn't switch this day for anything in the world. It's just like the day the Senate passed the bill. The sun's out. It's clear and it's fine. It's awfully good we were able to bring all these people together here. It was their cause most of all. I'm glad they could be here for the finale."

Hamilton C. Horton Jr., president of the National Committee for the New River, said that his group would not have won "had it not been for new laws that permit people like the New River people to have an input" in federal decisions.

Got Answers

Horton said that the National Environmental Policy Act — which requires federal agencies to assess the environmental impact of their policies — gave opponents of the Blue Ridge project "an ability to force them (the power com-

pany) to give us answers on the details of their project — its costs, its benefits and its many flaws."

One of the valley people who fought the power project for almost a decade was also present for the bill-signing.

"I had some days when a shadow of doubt crossed my mind that we would ever make it this far," said Lorne H. Campbell, who practices law in Independence, Va., and lives on the banks of the river in North Carolina.

"Retained Faith"

"But I've retained my faith. When I left home yesterday to come up here, that river was flowing as clear as a crystal," Campbell said. "I think that river knows it'll be all right now."

Noticeably absent from yesterday's event was Atty.

Gen. Rufus L. Edmisten, who declined an invitation to attend.

Instead, he chose to attend a political rally and "pig-picking"

in Farmville, N.C. Edmisten was said to have viewed the White

House action as a political event and decided not to attend for that

reason. He was presented by a deputy, however. Ford has been invited to sign the bill in North

Carolina. Although yesterday's ceremony was attended by Republicans

and Democrats, staging the function at the White House was apparently

in keeping with Ford's campaign strategy to use similar events

to show that he is a hard-working incumbent who is too busy working

to spend time outside of Washington on the campaign trail.

Two in Knoxville Escape Gas Leak

KNOXVILLE (AP) — As the temperature dipped to a

This Woman Fought City Hall and Won

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) —