

URGENT MESSAGE

TENNESSEE CITIZENS FOR WILDERNESS PLANNING

*Newsletter No, 48, May 11, 1972

We are departing from our usual NEWSLETTER format to concentrate on only two items, both concerning Tennessee and both of extreme urgency, Each and every member should be able to take some action on at least one of these items, and we hope most of you will be able to do something about both.

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED IN A CRISIS ON THE DUCK RIVER

TVA has just released its final environmental impact statement on its 2-dam Duck River Project, This means that, unless President Nixon's Council on Environmental Quality regards the impact statement. as inadequate, TVA can start construction 30 days after CEQ received the statement.

We are quite sure that if the project were judged solely on its merits, both CEQ and the President's Office of Management and Budget would find the Duck River dams environmentally and economically unjustified., (The Office of Management and Budget has five times over the past four years refused to include the project in the President's budget.) Unfortunately, however, final decisions are often based on political maneuvering rather than on the merits of the. case, The fact that the unjustifiable Duck River Project has received any funds at all has been due to the efforts of Representative Evins who is now Chairman of the powerful pork-barrelling Public Works Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee. Mr. Evins is on record as having endorsed the dams before TVA had even studied their economic feasibility!

Since politics will be involved in *the* final decision, your expression of opinion on this project is desperately needed, A personal letter to President Nixon, with copies to the Council on Environmental Quality, your Congressman, two Senators, and Governor Dunn would be most effective, (See enclosed coupon sheet for form of address, etc.) If you really can't manage that, the coupons can be cut, apart, filled in with your signature, address, and date, and mailed. Be sure to communicate with Governor Dunn also.

We urge every single member to respond to this appeal, The unjustifiability of the Duck River Project is clearly recognized by the staffs of all the responsible government agencies involved, except TVA. Let us ensure that the political decision agrees with the decision on merit.

We refer you to NEWSLETTERS Nos. 42 and 43, (and to the DRPA brochure enclosed with the former) for pertinent facts on the Duck River Project controversy, Those of you who do not have this material may wish to refer to the following short summary and to the enclosed coupon sheet when composing your letters to the President, etc,

1. The project consists of two dams: Columbia (at mile 137) and Normandy (at mile 249), which would, respectively, impound 54 and 17 river miles and a total of about 16,000 acres. The 268-mile long Duck River is the only Tennessee river left in the Valley that has a watershed as large as that of the average TVA tributary impoundment.
2. The benefit/cost ratio, even by TVA's computation, is only a very marginal 1.3/1.0. The presently estimated cost of the project is close to \$80,000,000.

3. The following are the benefits claimed by TVA and reasons why conservationists consider them non-justified.
- a. Recreation, 25%. Within a 50-mile radius, there already are 9 major reservoirs. TVA has not properly credited the free-flowing river-recreation benefits that would be lost. Over 1/2 of the total reservoir area (2/3 of Columbia Res.) would be mud during part of the year: since one claimed benefit is water supply, much of this 9000-acre drawdown could occur during the low-rainfall summer recreation season.
 - b. Water supply, 16%. Even at minimum flow, the free flowing river can supply between 5 and 26 times the municipal needs of the various towns. A recently released state report indicates that Coffee County has one of the state's best natural ground water supplies; TVA admits that the river will meet all of Shelbyville's needs for the foreseeable future; and Columbia's future needs could be served by a small tributary impoundment.
 - c. Water quality control, 7%. A better phrase would be "pollution dilution" -- should a federal agency charged with resource development promote this as their policy, instead of controlling pollution at the source?
 - d. Industrial expansion, 29%. The coming of industry is predicted as a result of the claimed water supply and pollution-dilution benefits. Experience along existing reservoirs has shown that these may not be the prime factors in site selection.
 - e. Flood control, 7%. Should 16,000 acres be permanently put under water to protect against the occasional flooding of smaller acreages of pasture land (no damage done) and cropland (whose fertility is mostly the result of past flooding)?

>> Note from scanner/transcriber (CEK) about page numbering in this Newsletter—
 Originally it seems to have been in two separate (independent?) parts, the first of which ended above. The second part consisted of four pages, numbered : (1)—4. These four have been renumbered: 3—6 so as to flow in one document.

Two more pages follow here, after the text— page 7 is a drawn map/sketch of "Slickrock Creek Watershed & Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest" and page 8 (un-numbered) is the "enclosed coupon sheet" mentioned in the middle of page 1.

YOUR ACTION NEEDED TO PRESERVE JOYCE KILMER - SLICKROCK CREEK

The recent threat of the Tellico Plains-Robbinsville Highway invading either the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest or the wild Slickrock Creek drainage has intensified conservationists' concern for the permanent protection of these areas. As a result, the U.S. Forest Service appointed a study team to determine land-use possibilities and, incidentally, to provide the Federal Highway Administration with "relevant information to help decide where to construct the final segment" of the controversial highway. A 100-page USFS report, "Special Study: Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Area Management Alternatives", published in mid-April, summarizes the data collected by the USFS team and identifies seven land management alternatives. A public hearing was held May 10 at Robbinsville and the hearing record will remain open until June 10.

It is very important that a large number of conservationists be heard from on this highly important issue, Protection of one of our few remaining wildernesses in the East is at stake. But even more important, this specific issue provides us with our best (and perhaps only) opportunity to have an impact on the USFS's presently hostile attitude toward applying the Wilderness Act to the Eastern United States. We therefore urge all of you to send in a written statement, however short, for the record (see specific instructions below). Since most of you will not have an opportunity to read the full report, we are summarizing pertinent sections for you here.

The seven alternatives that are identified consist of various combinations of management directions for Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest (JKMF) and Slickrock Creek Watershed (SCW), including "multiple use management" (i.e., logging, road building, etc.) for all or major parts of SCW, retention of present status for JKMF, wilderness designation under the Wilderness Act for JKMF and all or part of SCW, and "wild area management" (through USFS administrative action, or possibly through new and uncertain legislation) for SCW or both areas.

CONSERVATIONISTS' RECOMMENDATIONS

All of the major conservation groups of this region as well as national groups who are familiar with the area and who have studied the report recommend Alternative #2, i.e., wilderness classification under the Wilderness Act for the entire area -- SCW and JKMF. The reasons for this recommendation can be summarized as follows:

1. The needs for eastern wilderness are great. Out of a total of 9,900,000 acres of USFS land that have been designated as wilderness, only 37,600 acres, or only 0.4% lie east of the Mississippi. None of the USFS areas still being studied are within the Appalachian Mountains. In the most favorable case, out of our total wilderness that might be designated by all agencies, less than 2% could lie east of the Mississippi, yet over 50% of our population resides there. (Data from p.12 of report.)
2. The area in question represents only 1.5% of the Nantahala and Cherokee National Forests of which it is a part, (P. 2 of report.)
3. The area amply qualifies for wilderness status. Even the USFS does not question this as far as JKMF is concerned. As far as SCW goes, the report admits that a considerable portion of SOW is virgin timber, that even in previously cut areas there are sound trees aged several hundred years standing among 50-60 year old second growth, that the water quality of the streams is outstanding, and that the animal and plant populations are quite representative of the native fauna and flora. Yet, in Alternative #2 the USFS makes a judgment to the effect that "Slickrock Creek does not have all of the minimum conditions necessary to be studied for inclusion in the National Wilderness System" (contrast this with the introductory statement, p. 6, "no recommendations are made in this study."). The USFS's judgment is based on an "Evaluation of Wilderness Characteristics" by 12 criteria, on the basis of 3 of which

the report considers SCW not to qualify. However, the "criteria" misquote or misinterpret the Wilderness Act, e.g., by substituting "man's imprint unnoticeable" for "man's imprint substantially unnoticeable." In an "intrusion inventory", the report lists 4 overgrown fields, totaling less than 3 acres in size (or less than 0.027%), 3 rock piles to facilitate cultivation, remnants of 3 old dwellings, 2 graves, and some remnants of an old railroad bed (which those of us who have visited the area know to be virtually impossible to detect). The extremely fast forest growth in this part of the country will soon erase even these very negligible imprints of man (which, incidentally, are no greater than exist in already designated wildernesses). However, the USFS's prejudice against applying the Wilderness Act is revealed by the big play that is made over these "intrusions".

4. Wild Area Management (Alternatives #3 and #4) could possibly give at least as much protection as designation under the Wilderness Act. However, such management might be based on purely administrative (rather than legislative) designation and would thus be much more subject to change. If it is to be based on future legislative designation, we would be buying a pig-in-a-poke if we were to advocate it at this time.

5. Alternative #2 would not permit routing the Tellico Plains-Robbinsville Highway on either side of Haeo Lead, the ridge that separates JKMF from SCW. The highly deleterious impact that the Haeo Lead route would have on the easily displaceable soils on the steep Slickrock side of the ridge is described on p. 69 of the report. Three alternative routes to the south of JKMF would still be possible.

6. Alternative #2 would not permit relocation of U.S. 129 through the Slickrock area, as suggested in the 1971 NPS report. Conservationists are already on record as opposing that section of the report -- independent of the present study.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Before June 10, 1972, write to Mr. Del Thorsen, Supervisor, National Forests in North Carolina, P.O. Box 2750, Asheville, North Carolina 28802, and ask that your statement be made part of the official record.
2. Recommend Alternative #2, namely that Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest and the entire Slickrock Creek watershed be protected as a single wilderness area, unbroken by roads, under the terms of the Wilderness Act of 1964. Give reasons for your recommendations (see summary of recommendations, above). If you have visited the area, state that you are speaking from personal experience. (But if you have not visited, do not let this inhibit you from writing anyway!)
3. Recommend that the Tellico Plains-Robbinsville Highway be constructed in the Big Santeetlah Creek watershed and south of Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest. Congress originally approved this route.
4. The Interior Department's report on the Circle-the-Smokies road system proposed the rerouting of U.S. 129 to south of the Little Tennessee River into the Slickrock water-shed. Object to this routing as the system can be accomplished without this.
5. Protest the inconvenient place and time at which the hearing was held and the fact that no hearing was held in Tennessee.
6. Send copies of your statement to the following:

John McGuire, Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, Washington, D.C. 20250

Mr. Ted Schlapfer, Regional Forester, U.S. Forest Service
1720 Peachtree Street, N.W., Atlanta, Georgia

Your two senators, Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510

Your congressman, U.S. House of Representatives,, House Office Building,
Washington, D.C. 20515

7. Ask your senators and congressman to introduce legislation for the establishment of the Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Creek Wilderness, under the Wilderness Act of 1961.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (Summarized from Report)

Slickrock

The Slickrock Creek watershed contains 11,095 acres and is located both in Tennessee and North Carolina in the Unicoi Mountains just south of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Its waters flow into Calderwood Lake. The Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest is located adjacent to it to the southeast. To the east Robbinsville, North Carolina, and to the west Tellico Plains, Tennessee, are the closest towns.

The area consists of steep slopes, sharp ridges and deep valleys, and contains major rock exposures. The headwaters of the creek originate over 4,000 feet above the lake in the vicinity of Stratton Bald. The stream and its tributaries have numerous waterfalls and rapids.

The vegetation in the watershed consists of native showy wildflowers and typical southern Appalachian deciduous forest growth, richly developed. The lack of weedy or introduced species as a dominant part of the flora indicates that the area has been substantially unaltered by man. Due to a diversity of topography and altitude range, there is a considerable variety in vegetation.

Slickrock Creek is a high quality mountain stream with an extremely clean bottom, long deep pools and rapids. For these reasons the stream is classified as an excellent fishing stream, primarily for brown trout which reproduce naturally.

The watershed contains substantial populations of wildlife such as bear, boar, deer, and small game. Slickrock contains some of the best remaining black bear habitat in the Appalachians and sustains a relatively high population. This is partly due to the remote and rugged terrain of the area, the dense thickets and rock outcrops.

What makes Slickrock unique is the remoteness of the area. Much of what it has to offer, such as scenery, streams, vegetation, etc., may be found in other places, but in Slickrock one must walk to enjoy it. There has been no development of recreational facilities in the area. thus it is still a haven for the hiker or fisherman who seeks the solitude of the true wilderness.

The Cherokees inhabited the area and there were a handful of homesteads by white settlers. No logging was done until 1915 when the Babcock Lumber Company purchased Slickrock. This operation continued until 1922 when Calderwood Dam was constructed on the Little Tennessee. About 30% of the area remains in virgin timber. These virgin stands and many sound trees in the second-growth areas are several hundred years old. The portions of the area which were logged have returned to stands of vigorous and thrifty hardwoods.

In 1936, the Forest Service acquired the watershed from the Babcock Land and Lumber Co., but delayed further timber activities until the late 1950s when an access road was built to Big Fat Gap and the area was compartmented for timber sales. However, no timber was ever logged or sold.

On June 2, 1969, The Wilderness Society asked the Forest Service to set aside the Slick-rock area as a wilderness area. Trout Unlimited and The Wilderness Society also expressed

their concern over the road building and proposed timber sales. These two actions caused the Forest Service to withdraw the timber sale and to reevaluate the management of the area. This is still incomplete, pending future decisions.

Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest

The Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest contains 3,840 acres. It is located entirely in North Carolina and is the entire watershed of Little Santeetlah Creek, a tributary of Big Santeetlah Creek. Robbinsville, North Carolina is the closest town to the Forest.

The Forest is in mountainous land with elevations ranging between 2,040 feet at Santeetlah Creek to 5,380 feet at Stratton Bald. As in the Slickrock area, the vegetation varies with elevation and proximity to the streams, making for considerable variety.

The Forest is one of the most impressive of the nation's remaining virgin forests, containing over one hundred species of trees, many over 300 years old, some over 20 feet in circumference and 100 feet tall. This is one of the few remaining areas that never had any settlements and where man has done nothing to alter the landscape.

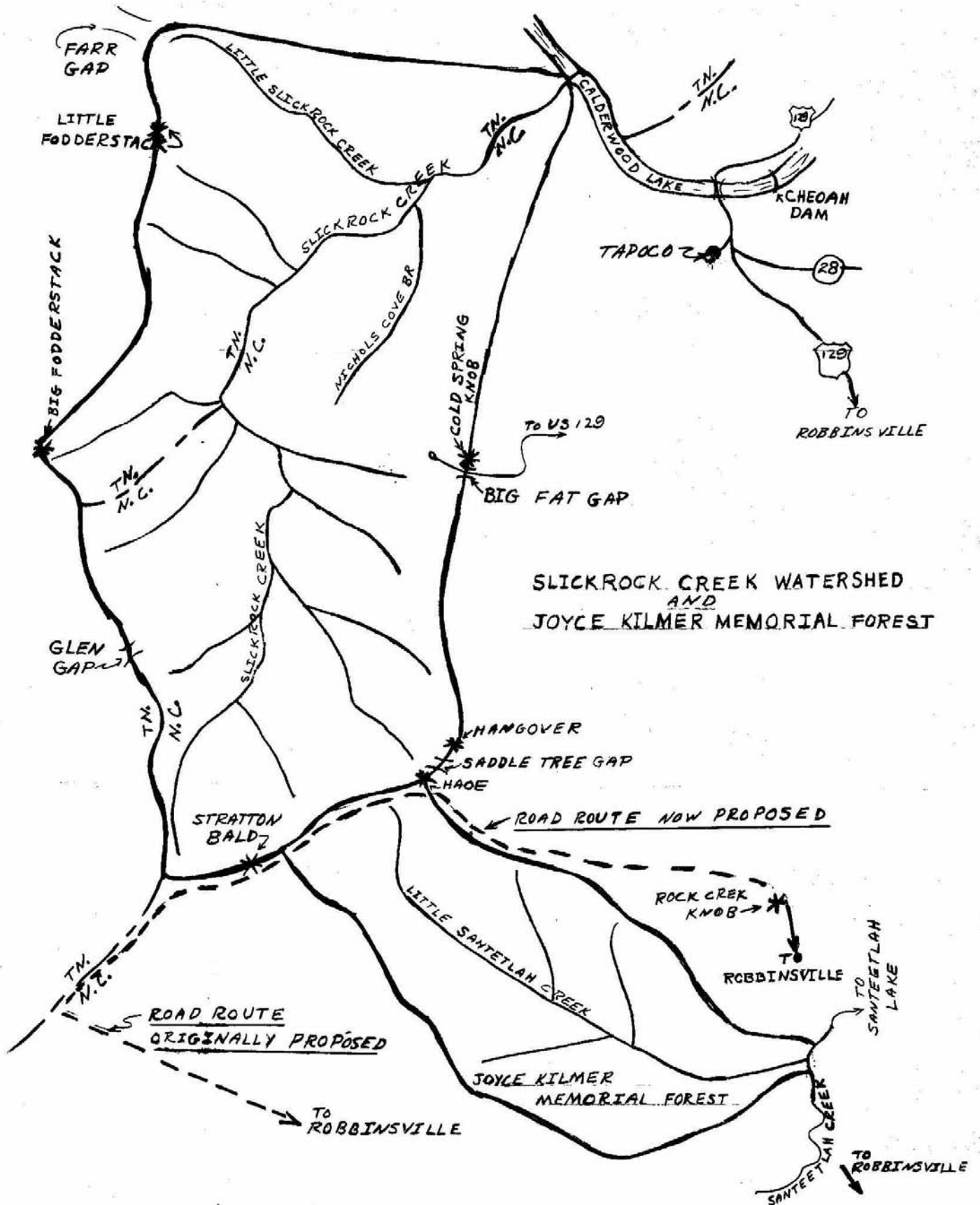
The last owner prior to the acquisition of the land by the Forest Service was the Gennett Lumber Company, which was in the process of preparing to log the area in the 1930s when the Forest Service became interested in the drainage. In 1935, the tract was set aside as a lasting memorial to Joyce Kilmer, the soldier-poet.

THE ROAD CONTROVERSY

In the late 1950s the legislatures of both Tennessee and North Carolina endorsed the construction of a road system to permit the development of the recreation potential of this mountain area. This was the beginning of the plans for a highway to connect Tellico Plains, Tennessee, and Robbinsville, North Carolina. The Forest Service, in 1960, agreed to the project and gave it Forest Highway status. The Tellico-Robbinsville Highway was originally proposed to be in the Big Santeetlah Creek watershed. This route was described by the Forest Service in its 1962 Reconnaissance Report on the road as being a very good route with possibilities for many excellent scenic views and providing for the development of the extensive recreational potential of the Santeetlah Creek watershed. This route would pass outside and to the south of the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest, providing good access but leaving it untrammelled by man and would not violate the protection given in 1936.

For reasons which the Forest Service and congressmen will not explain, the route was shifted to pass through the upper region of the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest and along Haeo Lead thus resulting in a withdrawal of the protection given by the Secretary of Agriculture in 1936. This has generated a national controversy. As a result of concerned public interest an agreement was made in 1971 to defer further construction of the highway until land-use decisions can be made.

The construction of the proposed Tellico-Robbinsville Highway on either side of Haeo Lead between these two areas would destroy these wilderness qualities mentioned. Not only would the erosion from road construction on the steep slopes spoil the streams and cause huge scars, but the increased pressure from the tourists that the road would attract would destroy the remoteness and alter the scenic quality of this natural area. This proposed route is aimed at the heart of a rare wilderness area; therefore, to protect it the route must be changed to one of the several alternate routes which the Forest Service has at its disposal. Let's save Slickrock and Joyce Kilmer while we can!!



President Richard M. Nixon
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I should like to register my strong opposition to TVA's proposed Duck River Project (Normandy and Columbia dams). Your Office of Management and Budget has never found this project justifiable and never included it as a budget item. The dams would cause severe environmental damage, waste \$78 million of the taxpayers' money, and displace hundreds of families. We urge you to call a halt to this project!

Respectfully yours,

The Hon. Russell E. Train, Chmn.
Council on Environmental Quality
722 Jackson Place, NW
Washington, D.C. 20506

Dear Mr. Train,

The Council on Environmental Quality now has before it TVA's final environmental impact statement on the Duck River Project. I should like to register my strong opposition to this project. It would destroy the last free-flowing large river in Tennessee and one with a richness of fauna unrivalled by other rivers of this size on the North American continent. Environmental and scientific damages of all types would be severe. None of the benefits claimed by TVA withstands the test of objective analysis, and OMB has never considered the project economically justifiable. I urge CEQ to oppose this project!

Sincerely yours,

Senator Howard H. Baker, Jr.
Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Baker,

I should like to register my opposition to TVA's Duck River Project. OMB has repeatedly failed to find this project justifiable and has never included it as a budget item. Congressional appropriations in the past have come only as a result of the work of small, powerful local pressure groups. Many residents of the immediate area now oppose the project, which would displace hundreds of families, cause severe environmental damage, and waste \$78 million of tax money.

Sincerely yours,

Senator William E. Brock III
Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

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Sincerely yours,

Congressman
House Office Building
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Congressman

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