

At UNC-Asheville

Forum Discusses Acid Rain Threat

Is acid rain, or 'atmospheric deposition' a critical issue for Western North Carolina? Experts who spoke at a recent forum held at UNC-Asheville agree that it is.

The forum, sponsored by Western North Carolina Tomorrow and the North Carolina Board of Science and Technology, presented opinions on the issue from environmentalists, utility companies and the federal government.

"People must be willing to pay additionally to solve the problems of acid rain," said Lynn Greenwalt of the National Wildlife Foundation (NWF), a 4.5 million-member organization.

Greenwalt told the forum, "The problem of acid rain may amke us take notice of the fact that things do not just go away and solve themselves." The NWF vice president said that everything is related in our ecological system and that acid rain will effect many facets of life.

Dr. Eldon Ross of the Southeast Forest Experimental Station in Asheville agreed with Greenwalt's conclusions and called for additional research on the effects of acid rain of the air, plants and soil.

Ross said that studies have shown that trees above 6350 feet in elevation show marked growth reduction which can be attributed to acid rain. He said that growth reduction was found in all trees and age classes. Fish deaths in acidic lakes was another side-effect of acid rain Ross cited in his address.

Dr. Ron Eller of Mars Hill College and Bob Satterwhite of Asheville presented the humanistic perspective

of the problem, while Doug Neeley of the Tennessee Valley Authority and Keith Snipe of Duke Power presented the position of industrial utilities at the forum.

Neeley told the forum that TVA has undertaken what he called, "an ambitious sulfur dioxide emission reduction program."

The federal government's position on acid rain was presented by Roger Morris of the Dept. of Energy. Morris said that the federal government believes that research has failed thus far to identify the extent of damages caused by acid rain.

Morris said that since enactment of the Clean Air Act, sulfur oxide emissions, a major cause of acid rain, have declined by more than 15 percent. Morris said the Reagan administration has requested \$127 million for acid rain research in 1985.

In his closing remarks, Dr. Newton Smith, chairman of Western North Carolina Tomorrow's Cultural Resources Committee said, "We may not know exactly what the problem is, but it is out there. We have lakes dying, fish being killed, forests damaged, soils altered, an increase in respiratory disorders, corrosion of buildings and monuments and the rain, the sleet, the fog and the snow are carrying and depositing acids and other atmospheric depositions as regularly as our postal service carries and deposits junk mail to us."

Videotape copies of the forum are available by contacting Susan Smith of Western North Carolina Tomorrow at 227-7492.



LYNN GREENWALT

Sen. Helms Outlines '85 Agriculture Agenda

Sen. Jesse Helms last week outlined what he believed would be the likely agenda for agricultural legislation when the 99th Congress opens next month in Washington. Helms is the chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee.

Helms said he is working on a farm bill prescribing a course of market orientation aimed at restoring profitability to U.S. Farmers. In a press statement released Friday, Helms said, "Obviously, 1985 will be a crucial year for farm policy in this country, given the fact that the existing farm policy is both counterproductive and far too costly. It won't be easy, but it will be in the best interests of both farmers and taxpayers, if Congress approves farm legislation that is market-oriented, flexible, internally consistent, long-term in design and sensitive to all elements of the production system."

When Congress returns to work next month, the legislators will have to enact legislation to continue price supports for basic farm commodities

such as wheat, peanuts, soybeans, sugar, milk, wool and mohair. Numerous other agriculture programs will also expire in 1985 is legislation is not introduced to extend them. Included in these are the Food for Peace program, food stamps, the milk assessment authority, Commodity Credit Corp. donations to military and Veterans' Administration hospitals, the Agricultural Export Credit Revolving Fund and various research and extension programs.

Helms said that export programs will also be a major part of farm legislation. Helms said, "One of the keys to a workable, market-oriented policy is a world market that is free, fair and open. If our farmers are willing to be price competitive, then Congress must ensure that they are getting a fair shake in world markets."

Soil conservation is also likely to receive Congress' attention in 1985, Helms said. The Soil and Water Conservation Act of 1977 expires at the end of 1985. Helms said that "The

operation of current farm programs has done much to squander our soil and water resources. As we look at a sensible, long-range approach to farm policy, we must be sure our commodity programs are working in tandem with conservation programs."

Helms said his committee may also need to amend the Rural Electrification Act during the 99th Congress' first session. Efforts to amend the act were unsuccessful during the 98th Congress, Helms said, adding that amendments are needed to ensure the future solvency of the electric and telephone revolving fund.

Helms said, "A great deal of work went into this REA legislation last year, and it is important to keep that momentum going to see this issue resolved. Congress must pass a REA bill that will keep the revolving fund self-sufficient while providing for the legitimate credit needs of rural electric and telephone cooperatives."

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