

## COALITION

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amendment by Charles Taylor, a Tar Heel lawmaker, that would increase sales of "salvage timber" on federal lands.

Salvage timber refers to downed or dying trees, and trees that are susceptible to insect attack or fires - a definition that gives forest managers some latitude to sell trees of varying quality.

Buzz Williams, the executive director of the Chattahoochee River Watershed Coalition in Georgia and its representative on the coalition's steering committee, spearheaded an effort to get a group of scientists to write President Clinton a letter urging him to veto the bill containing the salvage amendment in April.

While this letter, along with other efforts throughout the U.S., successfully led to Clinton's veto, a revised bill that limits the time period for the increased sale of salvage timber is likely to become law.

Increasing public awareness of the problems caused by mismanaging

forests and emphasizing alternatives that are based on science are key components of the coalition's initiative.

"That's how we're going to turn this around - getting the right facts into the public's hands," Williams says.

Although recent polls demonstrate that a majority of the public supports increased environmental protection, the coalition needs to find ways to channel these beliefs into action.

"I think one of the challenges the coalition faces is translating the support these forests have into effective political pressure for their protection," says Newman of the Southern Appalachian Biodiversity Project.

Despite these challenges, the coalition has an advantage - the know-how and experience of the people involved.

"If an aggregation like this can't make some progress, then nobody can," says Bill Thomas, the forest issues coordinator for the North Carolina Chapter of the Sierra Club and a founding member of the Coalition's steering committee.

The nine organizations that make up the coalition's steering committee

include the Sierra Club in San Francisco; The Wilderness Society in Washington, D.C.; Southern Environmental Law Center in Charlottesville, Va.; Chattahoochee Watershed Coalition in Clayton, Ga.; Southern Appalachian Biodiversity Project in Asheville; Association of Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics in Eugene, Ore.; Cherokee Forest Voices in Knoxville, Tenn.; Citizens Task Force on National Forest Management in Roanoke, Va.; and Bankhead Monitor in Moulton, Ala.

Support for the first year of the coalition's campaign included grants of \$300,000 from The Pew Charitable Trusts in Philadelphia; \$100,000 from the Lyndhurst Foundation in Chattanooga, Tenn.; \$35,000 from the Merck Family Fund in Tacoma Park, Md.; \$35,000 from the Turner Foundation in Atlanta, Ga.; \$50,000 from the Surdna Foundation in New York; \$15,000 from the Town Creek Foundation in Oxford, Md.; and computer hardware from the Smithsonian Conservation Technology Support Program.

## CUTS

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year," she says, "so it would be very hard to have a lower cut-off."

Because the LIHEAP program is administered as a block grant, some states may choose to change eligibility requirements rather than reduce individual checks, Fields says.

In North Carolina, she says, the Division of Social Services and the General Assembly are trying to find more money, especially for the crisis program, by cutting administrative

holds through these programs, says Meyers. On average, the center's clients spend 22 percent of their total income on energy. "To think that energy is not an issue in the South is a fallacy," she says.

She expects that a 25 percent cut in LIHEAP funding, combined with reductions for other low-income assistance programs, will push many families into crisis.

"We will see more homeless families and more families trying to make hard decisions about whether to have adequate food, or a roof over their heads, or heat under that roof," she

tribute, the company has no plans to change the 10-year-old program.

Barbara Allen, CP&L's manager of corporate community relations, voices concern about state and federal budget cuts, but says members of CP&L's foundation board have not yet talked about how they might address the increased need for home-energy assistance.

"Project Share has been so successful," she says, "and the foundation is mostly for educational purposes." But a broadening of the foundation's mission "somewhere down the road" is not inconceivable, and both the foundation and the corporation will pay close attention to the impact of federal cuts as they are implemented.

The Duke Power Company Foundation, which last year contributed \$725,000 in matching funds to its Share the Warmth and Community Challenge programs, is adopting a similar "wait-and-see" approach for at least a year.

Dock Kornegay, the foundation's vice president, says more than 18,000 households received payments from the two programs in the 1994-95 heating season. Though trustees considered increasing solicitations or combining the two programs to respond to the anticipated increase in need, he says, they decided that "at this point, the best we can do is to wait and see the impact." Accordingly, they have approved program contributions for next year at the same level as last year.

Most observers agree that neither foundations nor utility companies can entirely make up for cuts in federal programs. But there is some pressure for utility companies to provide more support for heating-assistance programs, including LIHEAP.

Jeff Brown, director of the state's residential energy program, says utility companies effectively invest in programs to make low-income homes more energy-efficient in 14 states. North Carolina is not among them, although both Duke Power and CP&L participated in a recent study demonstrating the cost-effectiveness and overall benefit of cooperative government-utility programs.

Brown also says community-action agencies may ask the state Utilities Commission to put consideration of utility support of LIHEAP on its agenda.

Meyers of the Crisis Assistance Ministry agrees that community organizations, state government and utilities need to work together to "re-examine our models" of addressing the need for home-energy assistance, and that other states' experience may offer good strategies.



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Last year 92 percent of CP&L's employees gave to the Raleigh-based utility's Project Share program, which helps low-income customers pay their heating bills.

costs.

State agencies already coordinate their home-energy assistance programs with those run by community organizations, she says, and this cooperation will become even more important as everyone feels the pinch of federal budget cuts.

With the support of utility companies and their affiliated foundations, many community organizations run home-heating assistance programs that supplement LIHEAP.

For example, Charlotte's Crisis Assistance Ministry, in addition to administering LIHEAP for Mecklenburg County, supplements clients' energy bills with funds from three utility-supported programs, says Director Caroline Meyers.

Share The Warmth and Community Challenge are funded by donations from Duke Power Co. customers and the Duke Power Company Foundation, and the Piedmont Natural Gas Co. supports a similar matching program. The utility-based programs differ from LIHEAP in that they are crisis-based rather than poverty-based: They are intended as one-time assistance for families in emergency situations.

Last year, the Crisis Assistance Ministry served about 13,700 house-

says.

Increased demand will translate into increased need for funds from the private sector, she says. But in an age of corporate downsizing, it is not reasonable to expect utilities to do much more than they already do to help low-income consumers.

In addition to worrying about fallout from federal budget cuts, Sharon Stroud of Carolina Power & Light Co. is concerned about the impact of corporate downsizing on the Raleigh utility company's Project Share.

Last year, Project Share provided more than \$600,000 to help low-income families facing energy shut-offs, she says. It is administered by the state Division of Social Services and funded through donations from CP&L employees, customers and a shareholder matching fund.

Stroud says the company's employees are generous: Last year, through payroll deductions, 92 percent gave to the project. But as the workforce shrinks as a result of corporate efficiency, contributions also be expected to decline.

Stroud says customers are solicited through bill inserts in December, January and February and can make one-time gifts or monthly pledges, a relatively new option. Besides making it easier for customers to con-

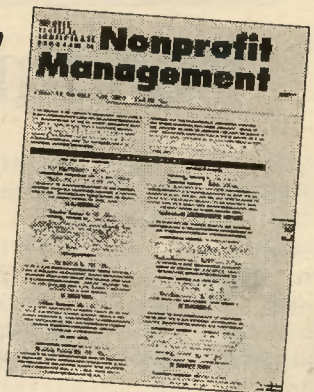
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