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TENNESSEE VALLEY, APPALACHIA WOULD LANGUISH UNDER CURRENT ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES

(Arlington, VA — September 7, 1999) In a special report released today by Greening Earth Society, special correspondent Tom Kuennen examines the likelihood that regional economic development like the Tennessee Valley Authority would be impossible under current environmental thinking. In "Would the Green Movement Have Pulled TVA's Plug," Kuennen concludes that because of its emphasis on dam-building, use of fossil and nuclear energy to generate electricity, encouragement of "self-indulgent conspicuous consumption" of consumer products like refrigerators in every home, and provision of popular recreation opportunities, "The great benefits TVA has provided the people of the Tennessee Valley since 1933 would never come to be."

Greening Earth Society president Fred Palmer asked Kuennen to evaluate the history of TVA in light of current environmental thinking after reading John M. Hartigan's feature story on how Depression-era dams changed the South in the May/June 1999 edition of *Blue Ridge Country*. "Hartigan wrote that electricity, flood control, agricultural development, industrial development, and erosion control might have been enough for any agency to achieve, but TVA didn't stop there," Palmer reflects. "That got me to thinking that every aspect of that list of positive contributions to life in the Tennessee Valley would be anathema under current environmental dogma. These are precisely the things the Kyoto Protocol is meant to forestall in the Third World where life today is much as it was in Appalachia during the Depression."

Kuennen notes that a British observer of life in parts of West Virginia, East Tennessee, and Kentucky in 1933 likened life on the farm to Europe in the Middle

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Ages. This was because wood was burned in kitchens where pots and pans sat over a little fire on the hearth, smoky oil lamps provided dim light, and “water was brought into the house by the women and children from wells invariably situated at inconvenient and tiring distances,” according to Odette Keun.

“The most dramatic change in life came from low-cost, abundant electricity generated by TVA dams,” Kuennen writes. “Electric lights and modern appliances made life easier and farms more productive. Electricity also drew industries into the region, providing desperately needed jobs.” He then recalls that both President Clinton and Vice President Gore visited the region within two weeks of one another earlier this summer. The President was there to launch his “New Markets” tour by highlighting economic distress in East Kentucky. Vice President Gore visited his birthplace in central Tennessee to launch his presidential bid.

“What neither politician said was that today’s environmental policies – as embraced by Clinton/Gore and preceding Republican administrations – hamper coal mining, resource development and the tobacco industry, and have put those industries at risk, hurting regional economies in Kentucky and Tennessee,” says Kuennen. “Moreover, virtually every component of today’s TVA would have been prohibited from development under current federal environmental policies. Despite its dedication to the health of economically disadvantaged citizens and social equity, today’s environmental movement would have blocked TVA at every turn, with disastrous results.”

This is because today’s environmental movement discourages both hydro-generated and coal-fired electricity, he explains. Therefore, TVA’s 29 hydroelectric dams and 59 fossil-fueled power plant units would be discouraged from development along with its three nuclear units.

Kuennen also points out that TVA’s historic programs to raise living standards of rural customers through provision of transmission lines, inexpensive electricity and

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consumer goods would have been greatly altered or truncated given the environmental movement's suspicion of power line and electrical distribution grid construction, low-cost power in general, and "self-indulgent conspicuous" consumption.

He notes that TVA is the largest single utility purchaser of coal in the U.S., buying about 40 million tons per year at a cost of about \$1.1 billion to serve more than eight million customers in parts of seven states. "The region's future is joined at the waist to TVA and its ability to supply low-cost power," Kuennen writes. As an example he cites the Oak Ridge National Laboratory's plans for the Spallation Neutron Source, a massive \$1.3 billion neutron-scattering facility for research in fields ranging from medicine to structural biology to superconductivity. While that project would support more than 2300 jobs and generate \$3.6 million in state sales tax, annually, during its construction, its ongoing operations would create 1586 jobs and pour \$2.2 million per year into state coffers on top of the Oak Ridge lab's already immense impact on the region through employment of 14,500 Tennesseans across 20 eastern counties.

"The federally owned corporation that would have been stillborn under contemporary environmental philosophies has plans that will sustain it long after the Clinton/Gore administration passes into history," Kuennen concludes.