



## PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

Contact: Renée Hoyos 865.607.6618 – Executive Director, Tennessee Clean Water Network  
Andrew Fahlund 202.347.7550 x3022 – Senior Program Director, American Rivers

### **An Historical Agreement for the Little Tennessee River Watershed**

**KNOXVILLE** – May 10, 2004 is an auspicious day for the Little Tennessee River Watershed and Great Smoky Mountains National Park. On this day, the Tennessee Clean Water Network and American Rivers will participate in the historic signing of the Settlement Agreement between Alcoa Power Generating Inc., agencies of the federal government, the states of Tennessee and North Carolina, local communities and a number of non-governmental organizations. This agreement preserves 10,000 acres of pristine watershed lands adjacent to Great Smoky Mountains National Park, ensures passage for four endangered fish species, puts water back into two previously dry stretches of river, and provides more than \$12 million for conservation projects and enhanced recreational facilities.

“This agreement has been the hard work of many diverse interests over the course of more than five years. We are very proud to be one of the earliest participants in this project and to be present at this historic event.” Said Renée Hoyos, Executive Director of the Tennessee Clean Water Network. “We look forward to the next 40 years of working with our partners to help manage these watershed lands and streams.”

In exchange for the land preservation and conservation funds, non-governmental groups and resource agencies agreed to the continued operation of four hydropower dams on the Little Tennessee River and its tributary, the Cheoah, for 40 years.

"Today's agreement is beneficial not only for Tennesseans, but for citizens around the nation who love the Great Smoky Mountains and healthy rivers and streams." Said Andrew Fahlund, Senior Program Director for American Rivers, a national environmental group.

"While many people rightfully tout the benefits of today's settlement on land protection, we must not overlook the significant benefits of this agreement on the protection and restoration of endangered fish and mussels in the Little Tennessee River basin. Improved river flows and requirements for fish passage will significantly enhance the survival of this unique natural heritage."

Before the settlement can be fully implemented, Congress first must correct a defect in the existing license for these dams. A small portion of one impoundment is located within the boundary of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, a violation of two federal laws. In order to enable Alcoa to receive a legal license, Congress must authorize a land swap. Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) has introduced S. 2319, the Tapoco Licensing Act, toward this end.

“We are grateful to Senator Alexander for championing this cause. We call on members of Congress to support Senator Alexander’s legislation and ensure that this agreement is fully implemented for the benefit of the economy and ecology of Eastern Tennessee and Western North Carolina,” said Ms. Hoyos.

**Signing Ceremenony:**

**TIME:** Monday, May 10, 2004, 1 p.m.

**PLACE:** Calderwood Overlook on Highway 129 in Blount County. In case of rain, the ceremony will be held at the Calderwood Hydroelectric Development building.

**TOURS:** Media tours of the Alcoa Power Generating Inc. hydroelectric facilities in Tennessee and North Carolina will be available.