# Environmental groups make deal with Duke, Progress

COLUMBIA (AP) — Environmental groups have reached an agreement with Duke Energy and Progress Energy over their proposed merger.

Under the deal announced Monday with the Southern Environmental Law Center and others, the utilities promise to stick to an enforceable schedule for closing several power plants that run on coal.

The utilities also promise to find conservation measures to save 1 percent of the retail energy sold in the previous year starting in 2015 and save a cumulative 7 percent of the energy sold from 2014 to 2018. They also will give $2 million to Palmetto Clean Energy Inc., a South Carolina nonprofit that promotes local renewable energy options.

South Carolina regulators are holding hearings this week to discuss the merger, and the environmental groups had asked to intervene.