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Community Water Education in Northwestern North Carolina

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Community Water Education in Northwestern North Carolina

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Community Water Education in Northwestern North Carolina

The southeastern drought has prompted regular media coverage, policy proclamations, and mandatory changes in water use for many communities. While the public is encountering the news and in some cases feeling the effects of water restrictions, there is little evidence that they well understand the connections between hydrological realities and policies regarding water resources. An example of this is the increasing number of requests for well-drilling permits as a way to tap “new” water in some communities. To begin to address this gap in public understanding, MountainKeepers, a non-profit organization based in Boone, NC, has partnered with students and faculty at Appalachian State University to develop community-based water education materials. This team will compile existing data and information about the water supply in northwestern North Carolina and use this to develop a short presentation, a CD-Rom and print materials. The team will then schedule public gatherings in diverse communities in northwestern North Carolina to share the information about the water supply and begin dialogues about water managements. At these gatherings, the team will assess community attitudes and knowledge about water supply issues and will also collect information about water management approaches being employed in these communities. The team will distill the information gathered at these meetings and try to identify opportunities for leveraging knowledge and resources in promoting science-based water management among communities. Additionally, all of the information generated will be made available to the public to further disseminate the knowledge. Results from the project will be presented as potential “lessons learned” for other community education efforts.