



State of North Carolina
Office of the Governor

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GOV. EASLEY ANNOUNCES \$1.6 MILLION IN GRANTS FOR DROUGHT RELIEF
Six Western North Carolina Communities Will Benefit from Federal ARC Funds

RALEIGH – Gov. Mike Easley today announced that six western North Carolina communities are eligible for total of \$1.58 million in grants from the Appalachian Regional Commission to help expand their public water supplies. The six towns; Lenoir, Valdese, Tryon, Marshall, Mars Hill and Blowing Rock, were chosen because they are among those in the state that are facing the most severe water shortages.

“These communities are among the most vulnerable in our state and could run out of water if the drought continues into the summer,” Easley said. “We helped these towns identify new water sources and now we are helping them pay to connect to those sources.”

The money comes from the Appalachian Regional Commission, a unique federal-state partnership providing social and economic support for a 13-state region stretching along the Appalachian Mountains from southern New York to northern Mississippi. The commission receives an annual appropriation from Congress that it allocates throughout the region, which includes North Carolina’s western-most counties. North Carolina received a total of \$3.5 million from the commission this year.

Typically the money is spent on programs designed to make communities more competitive in the 21st century global economy. However, the seriousness of the drought situation led Easley to designate almost half of this year’s allocation for drought relief. The Appalachian Regional Commission in Washington, D.C., has final approval on the grants, but the commission usually follows the governor’s recommendations.

The following drought-related projects are recommended for funding:

- \$300,000 for the city of **Lenoir** to help pay for a new, deeper water intake in Lake Rhodhiss to provide access to a deeper source of drinking water for city residents and regional water customers.
- \$80,000 for **Valdese** to study its water system as the first step to making it more efficient. The current, aging system is losing 15 percent of its water to unknown sources. In addition, recent line breaks led to the wasting of thousands of gallons of water.
- \$300,000 for **Tryon** to create a regional water system in Polk County. Currently Tryon’s only source of water is the overflow from Lake Lanier. When no water flows over the dam, the town essentially has no available drinking water. In addition, Tryon provides backup water to the Town of Columbus, which has only deep wells as its water source. This project will connect the water supplies of Tryon and the City of Saluda, add a booster water pump to the existing connection between Tryon and Columbus, and

place an unused water intake near Tryon to provide a reliable secondary water source during periods of drought.

- \$300,000 for **Marshall** to build two new wells, a new reservoir and update existing water lines. The expansion is designed to alleviate a critical situation with the town's current water system. Users are exceeding the allowed 80 percent capacity, and the system has experienced an extraordinary number of line breaks and failures during the past year leading to the depletion of the town's reservoir reserves.
- \$300,000 for **Mars Hill** to stabilize and enhance its water system by building an interconnection with the City of Weaverville. This project will create a regional system that efficiently utilizes and manages potable water from both the Laurel Fork and Ivy watersheds.
- \$300,000 for **Blowing Rock** to connect to the Town of Boone's water system. Boone has access to a larger water source and recently signed an agreement with Appalachian State University to be able to draw on its water system, so this will grant will create a regional system that all three entities can use during times of crisis.

Other partners who helped make some of these grants possible include: The N.C. Department of Commerce, N.C. Rural Center and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

For more information about the Appalachian Regional Commission, visit

<http://www.nccommerce.com/en/CommunityServices/CommunityDevelopmentGrants/AppalachianRegionalCommission>

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