

Regional Public Awareness Campaign Focuses on Clean Rivers and Water

"No matter where you live, your rivers are closer than you think. Be "RiverSmart" about the things you do at home."

This message from the "RiverSmart" public awareness campaign is being utilized by a regional environmental education program reaching both Southwest Virginia and East Tennessee. The Boone Watershed Partnership and the Southwest Virginia Environmental Education Team is launching "RiverSmart" this week to help people make a connection between home and rivers. The campaign's purpose is to create awareness about how to prevent pollution and ways to conserve water.

If you don't live directly beside a river, just how much do your actions at home affect that waterway? Just about everything you do at home affects the environment in some way whether living close to a river or not, according to "RiverSmart."

"The premise of RiverSmart is that we all contribute to water problems, and it will take all of us to solve them," notes Don Elder in the "RiverSmart" guidebook. Elder is president of River Network.

This campaign addresses both pollution prevention and water conservation by providing specific and simple ways that people can help at home, such as sweeping instead of washing off driveways, and maintaining septic tanks with regular pump outs.

The River Network developed the "RiverSmart" campaign through its sponsor, Swiss Re, which allows nonprofits such as the Boone Watershed Partnership to receive the program kit at no cost.

The "RiverSmart" kit includes print ads for newspapers and recorded public service announcements for radio and television. The kit also includes printed information to share with the public, such as a scavenger hunt and tips for pollution prevention and water conservation.

Partnering organizations, including the Boone Watershed Partnership, are working on "RiverSmart" as part of a grant from Virginia Naturally/Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. These organizations represent members of the Southwest Virginia Environmental Education Team, which is working to strengthen the region's education network. The grant is being administered by the Upper Tennessee River Roundtable, a nonprofit watershed organization based in Abingdon. Grant funds are paying to print the "RiverSmart" materials for each partnering organization to share within its community.

Partners for "RiverSmart" include Tennessee partners, the Boone Watershed Partnership and the Upper Nolichucky Watershed Alliance and Virginia partners, the Upper Tennessee River Roundtable, Lonesome Pine Soil and Water Conservation District, Holston River Soil and Water Conservation District, Tazewell Soil and Water Conservation District, Daniel Boone Soil and Water Conservation District.

For more information about this program, or to receive a copy of the pollution prevention and water conservation tips, call the Boone Watershed Partnership at 423 543- 7576, or visit the website at <http://boonewatershed.com>.

The Boone Watershed Partnership is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works with local users, regional, state and

federal entities, educators and others to identify and address water resource issues in the Boone Watershed, an area of about 686 square miles lying in Sullivan, Washington, and Carter Counties of Tennessee and Washington County, of Virginia.