

Sheriff says don't swim at Elk River Falls

Written by Lauren Ohnesorge
Wednesday, 27 June 2007 18:41

The drowning of a 16-year-old boy in the basin below Elk River Falls has given Avery County Sheriff Kevin Frye a mission: to enact a swimming ban on that area of the river.

It's just not a safe place to swim, he says.

Personally, Frye says he knows of eight people who have lost their lives, either swimming or jumping off the falls.

People do not realize the abrupt temperature changes, depths and undercurrents the falls have to offer.

The area is not under county jurisdiction, however. In fact, Elk River Falls is part of Pisgah National Forest, and District Ranger Anthony Matthew, who helped search for the drowning victim earlier this week, says there is a process.

Nothing is in the works to ban swimming at Elk River Falls, at least not right now, according to Matthews.

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Frye and others are speaking to rangers about the process of making the area off limits to swimmers.

The goal, Frye said, is to make sure Sunday's tragedy never happens again. If signs were to be put up, it would be in forest rangers' jurisdiction to issue penalties for violators.