Anne M. Tompkins, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina announced that Twenty area residents—19 from Wilkes, one from Hickory— have been charged with conspiracy to distribute, possession with intent to distribute and manufacture methamphetamine. According to allegations contained in the superseding indictment unsealed today in U.S. District Court, from about January 2009 to about June 2012, the defendants did knowingly conspire to distribute, possess with intent to distribute and manufacture more than 500 grams of methamphetamine, which has a street value of $100 to $150 per gram. In addition to the drug conspiracy charge, each defendant was also charged with one count of possession of pseudoephedrine.

The following individuals were named and charged in the indictment:

· Johnny Sanford Johnson, 61, of Roaring River, N.C. Johnson was also charged with two counts of possession of materials to make methamphetamine, one count of possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime, and two counts of maintaining drug-involved premises.

· Brenda Wyatt Triplett, a/k/a Kandy Combs, 53, of Hays, N.C. Triplett was also charged with one count of possession of materials to make methamphetamine, one count of maintaining drug-involved premises, and one count of endangering human life while illegally manufacturing a controlled substance.

· Bobbie Jo Combs, 30, of Roaring River. Combs was also charged with one count of possession of materials to make methamphetamine and one count of maintaining drug-involved premises.

· Larry Ray Mash, 51, of Wilkesboro, N.C. Mash was also charged with two counts of possession of materials to make methamphetamine and two counts of maintaining drug-involved premises.

· Chris Isaac Johnson, 34, of Roaring River. Johnson was also charged with one count of possession of materials to make methamphetamine and one count of maintaining drug-involved premises.

· Belinda Barker, 44, of North Wilkesboro, N.C.

· Steven Dewayne Bates, 43, of Hickory, N.C. Bates was also charged with one count of possession of materials to make methamphetamine and one count of maintaining drug-involved premises.

· Anna Marie Foster, 29, of North Wilkesboro. Foster was also charged with one count of possession of materials to make methamphetamine and one count of maintaining drug-involved premises.

· Billy Shane Love, 36, of Millers Creek, N.C. Love was also charged with one count of possession of materials to make methamphetamine and one count of maintaining drug-involved premises.

· John Arland Roberts, 48, of North Wilkesboro.

· Scott Willard Sidden, 33, of Hays.

· Junior Lee Pardue, 57, of North Wilkesboro.

· Amanda Lea Taylor, 22, of Roaring River.

· Timmy Joe Taylor, 25, of North Wilkesboro.

· Joseph Hobert Wood, 34, of Roaring River.

· Brian Robert Teague, 38, of Hays. Teague was also charged with one count of possession

of materials to make methamphetamine and one count of maintaining drug-involved premises.

- Michael Ashley, a/k/a Smiley, 35, of Hays. Ashley was also charged with one count of possession of materials to make methamphetamine and one count of possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime.
- Claude Junior Royal, 68, of Millers Creek. Royal was also charged with one count of possession of materials to make methamphetamine and one count of maintaining drug-involved premises.
- Jeffrey Sparks, 43, of Roaring River. And,
- Marty Swift, 38, of North Wilkesboro.

Johnny Johnson, Triplett, and Combs have been in federal custody since December 2011, Chris Johnson since January 2012, and Mash since February 2012. Barker, Bates, Roberts, Sidden, Pardue, Amanda Taylor, Teague, Royall, Sparks and Swift were taken into custody, July 10, 2012, and made their initial appearances in court today in Charlotte before U.S. Magistrate Judge David S. Cayer. Foster, Love, Timmy Taylor, Wood and Ashley are in state custody.

The sentencing range for the drug conspiracy charge is a statutory minimum sentence of 10 years imprisonment, a maximum of life imprisonment and a $10 million fine. The statutory maximum sentence for possession of pseudoephedrine is 20 years imprisonment and a $250,000 fine. The statutory maximum sentence for possession of materials to make methamphetamine is 10 years imprisonment and a $250,000 fine. The statutory maximum sentence for maintaining drug-involved premises is 20 years imprisonment and a $500,000 fine. The statutory minimum sentence for possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime is five years imprisonment and a $250,000 fine. And, the statutory maximum sentence for endangering human life while manufacturing methamphetamine is 20 years imprisonment and a $500,000 fine.

The charges contained in the indictment are allegations. The defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond reasonable doubt in a court of law.

The investigation, which is ongoing, is being handled jointly by ATF and SBI, with assistance from the Wilkes County Sheriff's Office and the Elkin Police Department. The prosecution is being handled for the government by Assistant U.S. Attorney Ann Claire Phillips and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Erin Comerford of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Charlotte.