

**Governor Mike Easley announced yesterday 17 western counties, including Avery, still fall under mandatory water conservation directives.**

People across the state need to conserve water, he said, as the summer heat progresses. Even after recent rainfall, 57 counties in North Carolina are still experiencing drought. The number is down from 83 last week. Watauga and Ashe are listed as having moderate drought, but that could worsen with more dry weather and high temperatures.