

Rescue effort 'rough'

Written by Lauren Ohnesorge
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Rescue workers are still searching for 16-year-old Nicholas Hicks, believed to have drowned Sunday near Elk Falls.

"We're coming along. It's a rough process," Avery County Rescue Squad's Charlie McKinney said.

Searchers are running into several snags along the way. The Elk River area is difficult to navigate. Today, search teams are focusing on certain, hard-to-get-to areas in hopes of finding Hicks. Not a trace has been found, according to McKinney.

The weather is not making things easier.

"These 45 minute bursts of rain have been killing us because it's been muddying up the waters and it's just... it's rough," McKinney said.

Specialized search and dive teams have been brought in- and local resources are being exhausted, McKinney said. With 13 agencies on the case, local rescue workers are looking for community support. Food, water and ice are running out.

Elk Park Volunteer Fire Department and Avery County Rescue Squad has been sorting out the food situation, but it is getting expensive. Over sixty people may be at the search site at one time, McKinney said.

Needed items can be brought to Elk Park Fire Department during the day and Avery County Rescue Squad at night. All donations are appreciated, according to McKinney. Hicks is believed to have been swinging on a rope with a friend when he disappeared in the water. According to Avery County Sheriff Kevin Frye, it is a recovery, not a rescue effort.