

The Town of Black Mountain, NC - Wellhead Protection Advocate from the Beginning

The Town of Black Mountain became the first in the state of North Carolina to receive approval from the Public Water Supply Section of their voluntarily created Wellhead Protection Plan (WHPP) back in 1999. They had been chosen to participate as a pilot WHPP and received a \$5,000 EPA grant which was administered through Land of Sky Regional Council of Government in Asheville, from which they paid a senior intern from the University of Asheville \$5.00 an hour to help them go through the process and write their final WHPP. The Plan was completed in 1995 but would not be approved until that same intern went to work for the North Carolina Rural Water Association as a groundwater technician and assisted the town in getting the final approval for their Plan in November of 1999. Since that time the town has been diligent about updating their Plan, once in 2012 and for the second time in 2021. Each time there were changes in their water system that needed to be addressed in their WHPP. Both times the number of wells being used as sources of their drinking water had changed, so their wellhead protection area delineations needed to be updated to address the changes.

As part of their Plan, the town's Planning and Development Services created and enacted a Wellhead Protection Overlay District Ordinance, making them one of very few systems in the state to take regulatory action to protect their wells, though there are approximately 172 Plans that have been implemented across the state now. The ordinance can be found on the town's website for the public to review here [CHAPTER 4. - ZONING DISTRICT REQUIREMENTS | Code of Ordinances | Black Mountain, NC | Municode Library](#). Each time the Town of Black Mountain has updated their Plan they have reviewed their protective ordinance to make sure it was doing the job it was put in place to do.

The Town of Black Mountain has also been active in educating the public about their water sources and ways they can be protected. They have provided educational information to the public during local festivals and a copy of their wellhead protection brochure can be found on their website here [Wellhead-Protection-Plan-Brochure-PDF \(townofblackmountain.org\)](#). Since the town's Wellhead Protection Plan was first approved in 1999, naturally they have seen a significant amount of turnover in their staff from public works to town government to administrative assistance, and currently there are very few if any employees who were actively involved in the very first Plan's implementation, but employees have known that their Wellhead Protection Plan was important, and they have been proactive about keeping it up-to-date and at the forefront of their activities and the public's attention. Signs that were presented to the town by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2001 are still in place designating where their Wellhead Protection Area boundaries are located. These signs have been instrumental in leaving open the opportunity for dialogue and education with the public surrounding the protection of their water sources. In addition, as one of the *huge* signs is located on Interstate 40 running through the town, it is likely that some of the thousands of people who have traveled the road since 2001 may have given more thought to their source of drinking water and its protection.



