

“Dan River Rising: Rural activism in North Carolina's Dan River Basin”

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This research examines the community responses to environmental controversies in two rural North Carolina counties in the Dan River Basin: fracking in Stokes County and the recent coal ash spill in Rockingham County. This project is significant because it provides insight into the community psyche after an environmental disaster occurs, and examines the rationale of rural community members organizing against a perceived environmental threat. Through face to face interviews, we hope to uncover common themes of concern in both counties, and to compare and contrast the diverse motivational factors that lead community members to embrace or refrain from activism.

For an accurate representation of the two communities, we selected 18 local interviewees from a broad range of backgrounds and education, including: entrepreneurs and small business owners, members of local environmental organizations, local officials, fishermen, farmers, and ordinary citizens from various education and occupational levels. The hour long interviews were conducted using a set of predetermined questions relevant to each controversy and were written in a language accessible to all interviewees.

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