



Madison County Government
www.madisoncountync.gov

Contact: County Manager's Office
(828) 649-2854
rhoneycutt@madisoncountync.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Madison County Emergency Management French Broad River Search and Rescue, Four Counties Join Search

Madison County, NC – February 21, 2023

The Madison County Sheriff's Department Investigation and Madison County Emergency Management Services continues Search and Rescue Operations for Phillip Shelton.

Madison County agencies began operations following a 911 call reporting Mr. Shelton missing Saturday afternoon. Family members reported Mr. Shelton was fishing with his dog on the French Broad River Saturday.

The initial response included line-of-sight, thermal drone flights, and searches of the immediate area near where Mr. Shelton's car and dog were found. Subsequently, a canoe and other personal items of Mr. Shelton were discovered along the riverbank. Water nearing flood stage level and nightfall prevented swift water rescue operations on Saturday.

Sunday, Walnut Fire Department augmented drone operations with swift water operations along a three mile stretch of the river. Monday, operations expanded to the state line with support from Asheville Fire Department.

Today, Madison, Buncombe, Cherokee, and Henderson County departments are executing swift water and line-of-sight operations from Marshall to the state line. The Henderson department is deploying a sonar capability to aid in search and rescue operations. Madison County is grateful for the unified response from both internal and external agencies.

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