

# Sprawl wastes water, makes drought worse, report says

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## Paved-over land limits ability to refill aquifers, groups say

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Sprawl has made the Upstate drought more painful by depriving the landscape's ability to recharge underground aquifers, a national environmental report on 18 growing metropolitan areas said Wednesday.

Paved-over land sends billions of gallons of water into streams and rivers as polluted runoff rather than into the soil to replenish the groundwater, according to the report by American Rivers, Smart Growth America and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

In the Greenville-Spartanburg and Anderson metropolitan area, more than 166,000 acres of land were developed from 1982 to 1997, with impervious area accounting for 58,205 acres, the report said.

Annual groundwater infiltration lost in the region was estimated from 12.7 billion to 29.5 billion gallons, the report said.

The report characterizes sprawl as strip malls, highway development, residential, commercial and office developments and the loss of forest and farmland and other open space.

The report urges communities to enact "smart growth" initiatives to preserve trees and open space, both natural filters to rainwater, and to reduce the amount of paved roads.

The drought exacerbates the amount of water that would have filtered to the groundwater, the report said.

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has a rainfall deficit ranging from 50 to 60 inches. This year, the deficit at Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport is 24.76 inches, according to the National Weather Service.

"Sprawl hasn't caused this year's drought, but sprawl is making water supply problems worse in many cities," said Betsy Otto, senior director for watershed programs at American Rivers.

Greenville County Council is considering a landscape ordinance that would require developers to landscape parking lots and save more trees and shrubs in new developments.

Diane Eldridge of Upstate Forever, a group promoting land preservation, said learning to use less land for development results in less impact on the environment.

Ways include not building too close to streams, building on smaller lots, building closer to metropolitan areas already served by infrastructure and building in harmony with the landscape, she said.

She said based on census figures, Greenville County is expected to grow by 10.6 people a day through 2010 and that the number of people per square mile went from 148 in 1930 to an expected 500 in 2010.

She said that over the next 20 years, there should be more than 73,000 new residents in Greenville County and more than 36,000 new cars and 18,000 new dwellings.

The American Rivers report said the biggest impact of sprawl is in Atlanta, which developed 609,500 acres from 1982 to 1997 and lost groundwater infil-