Governor's Advisory Committee on Western North Carolina Recovery

Monday, October 19, 2026
10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Today's Agenda

Call to Order, Introductory Remarks | *Sen. Kevin Corbin, Co-Chair*

Remarks / *Governor Josh Stein*

Streamflow Rehabilitation Assistance Program (StRAP) | *Matt Safford, StRAP Manager, NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services*

Septic Systems Program for Property Owners | *Andy Miller, Deputy Secretary for Infrastructure/Environmental Assistance, NC Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)*

Flood Resiliency Blueprint Project: French Broad River Basin | *Melanie Lander, French Broad River Basin Lead, Flood Resiliency Blueprint Project, NC DEQ*

Recovery Updates / *Matt Calabria & Emily Gangi, GROW NC*

Wrap Up & Next Steps / *Matt Calabria, GROW NC*

Adjourn



Photo: Visit North Carolina

Remarks

Governor Josh Stein



Hurricane Helene StRAP Updates





Matt Safford
Program Manager, Streamflow Rehabilitation Assistance Program
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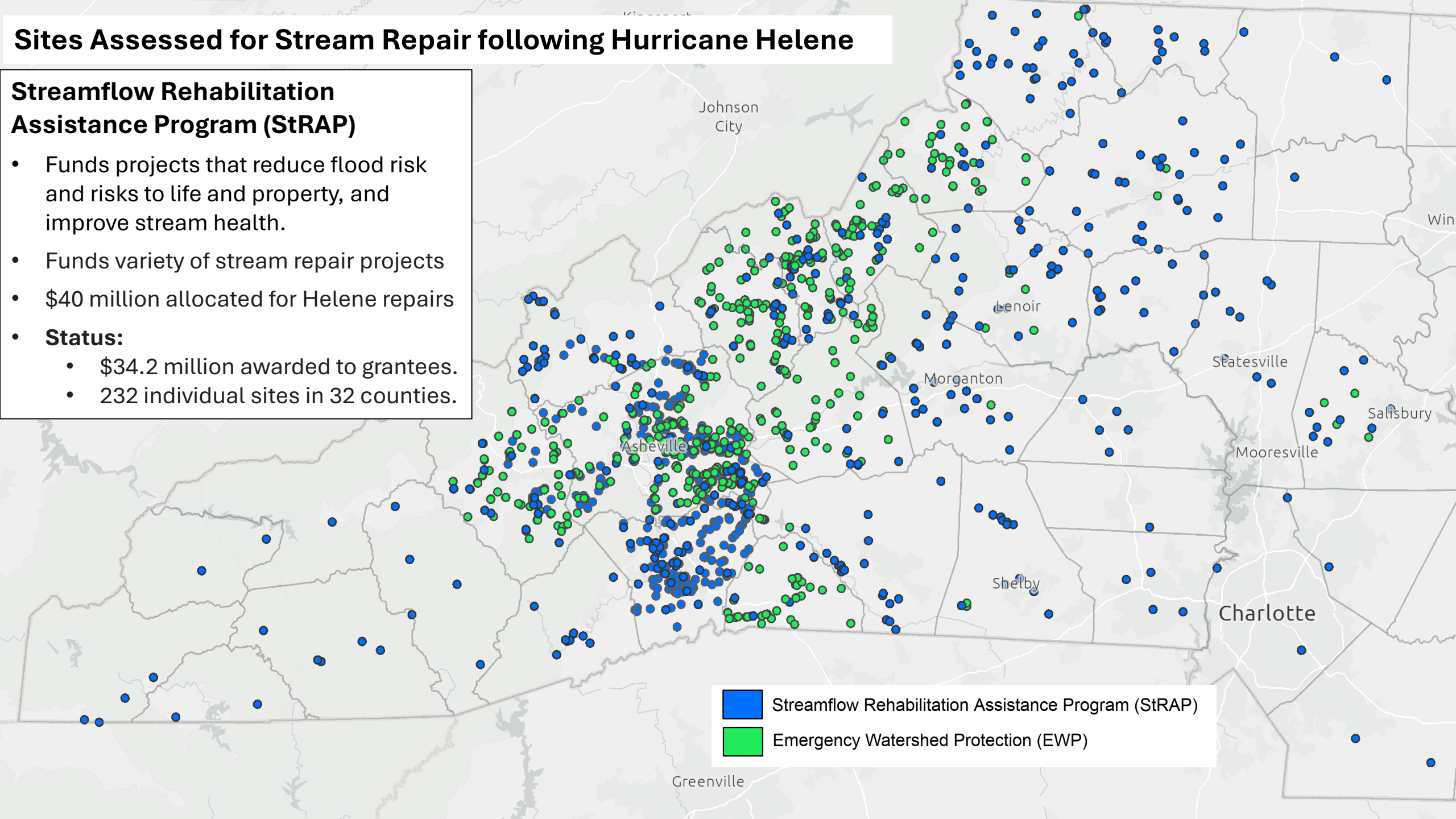
Sites Assessed for Stream Repair following Hurricane Helene

Streamflow Rehabilitation Assistance Program (StRAP)

- Funds projects that reduce flood risk and risks to life and property, and improve stream health.
- Funds variety of stream repair projects
- $40 million allocated for Helene repairs
- **Status:**
  - $34.2 million awarded to grantees.
  - 232 individual sites in 32 counties.



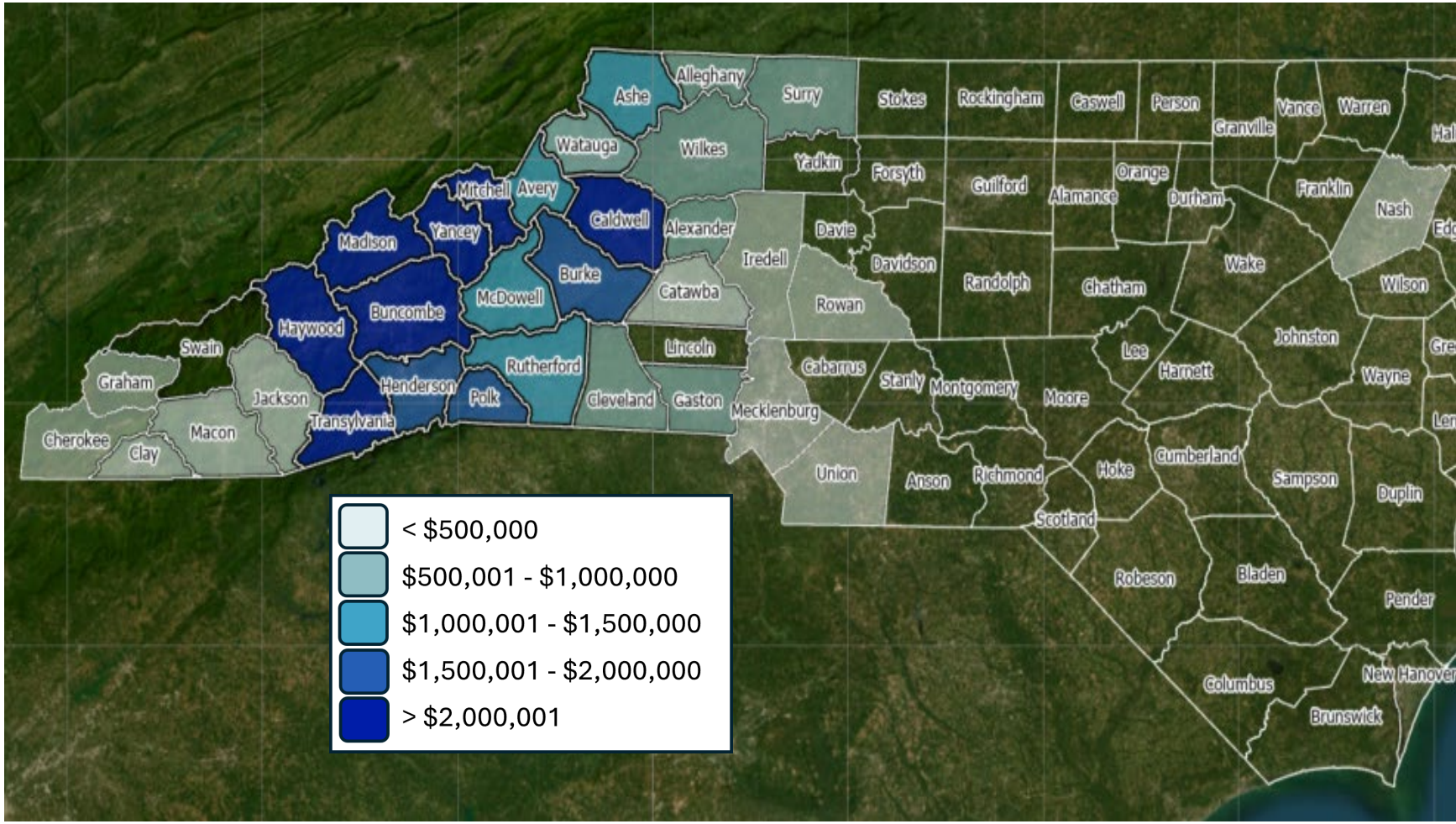
StRAP Awards

$34,199,995 in StRAP funds awarded.

34 organizations awarded funds:

- 25 Soil & Water Conservation Districts
- 3 county governments
- 6 Nonprofits

# of Funded Sites by primary Project Type	
Stream Restoration	22
Streambank Stabilization	107
Stream Debris Removal	88
Sediment Removal	9
PL-566 Flood Control Structure Repair	6



Award amounts range from $70,000 to $2,235,466 per organization, based on amount requested, county cap, and review of estimated project costs (as submitted by the applicant and reviewed by StRAP Staff & DSWC engineers).

Helene Contract Status

Contract Status	Number of Contracts	Amount
Full Executed	26	$27,459,428
Contract Sent to Grantee for signature	8	$3,724,4650
Planned Amendment to award additional funds	3	$3,016,102
		$34,199,995

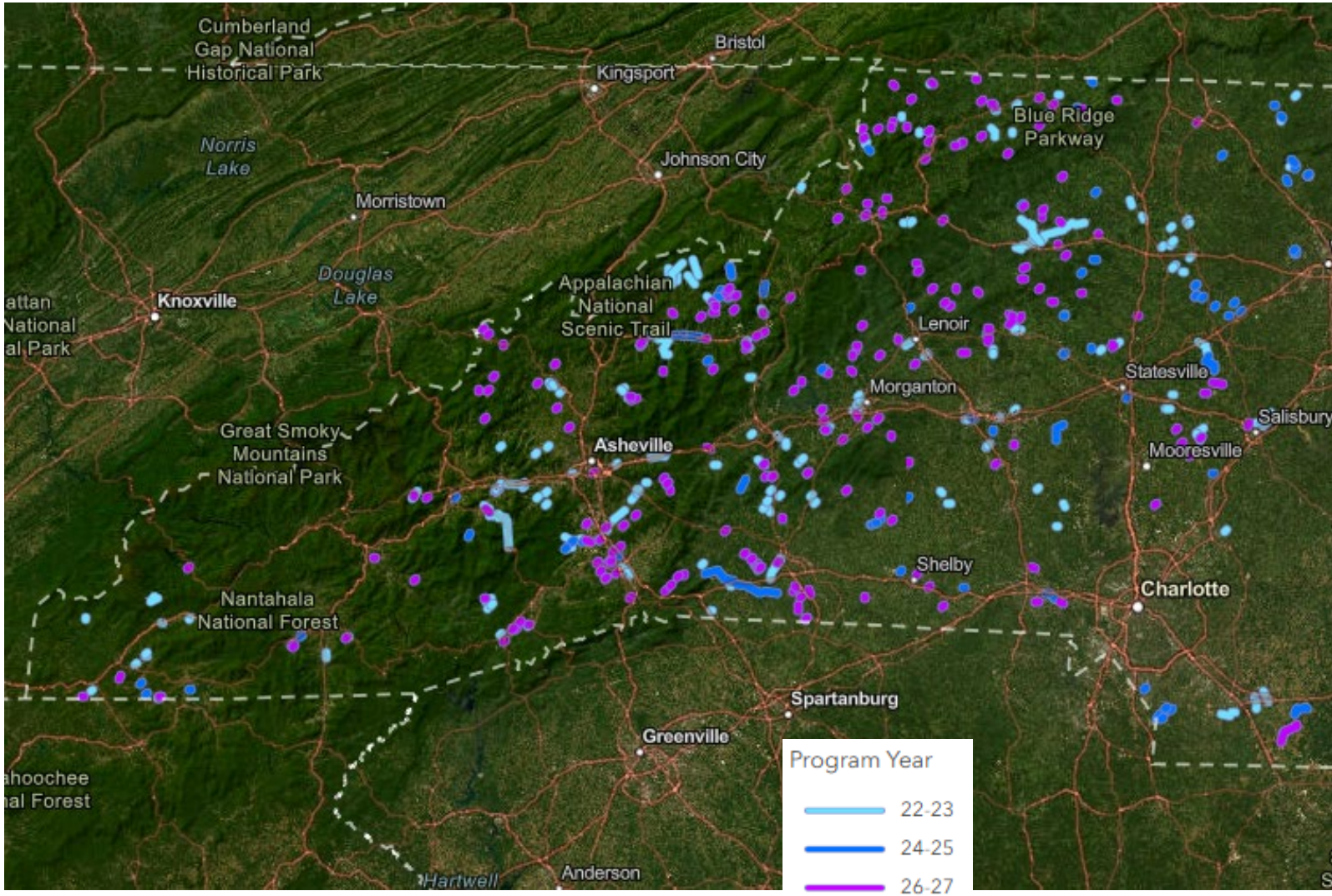
$3.8m in StRAP funds (10% of total StRAP award) was withheld as contingency funding, and will be implemented as part of Additional funding allocation.



Work Completed to Date

Grantees have used multiple rounds of StRAP funding on Helene-related repairs:

- **Use of previous StRAP awards in Helene-affected counties**
  - Grantees with FY22 & FY24 StRAP contracts were approved to redirect remaining funding to address damages from Helene.
- **2026 StRAP Contracts**
  - Majority of contracts in process of hiring engineers/contractors to complete work.
  - Majority of work will begin in early 2027.
  - $33,034.80 reimbursed so far for work completed through 2026 StRAP contracts.



Additional StRAP Funding

NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer services has allocated up to $61 million in additional funding for StRAP.

- Funds will be used to help cover unmet stream repair needs.
  - Total Request for Funding from StRAP application was over $96 million
- Goal of having funds under contract by November 20th.
- Majority of additional funding will be added to existing 2026 StRAP contracts.
- Award amounts based on documented need.
- Funding will cover all types of projects eligible for StRAP funding.

StRAP Grantees have identified unmet stream repair needs in several categories:

- Unfunded Eligible Sites
- Newly Identified Sites
- Ag Disaster Repair Program Sites



Additional StRAP Funding- Unfunded & New Sites

A portion of additional funding will be allocated to help grantees cover unmet need. Falls into 2 categories:

1. **Unfunded Eligible Sites**
   - Sites that were submitted in 2026 application and were eligible for funding, but were not funded due to funding limitations.
   - Includes:
     - 47 sites totaling $6,912,138
     - 15 organizations

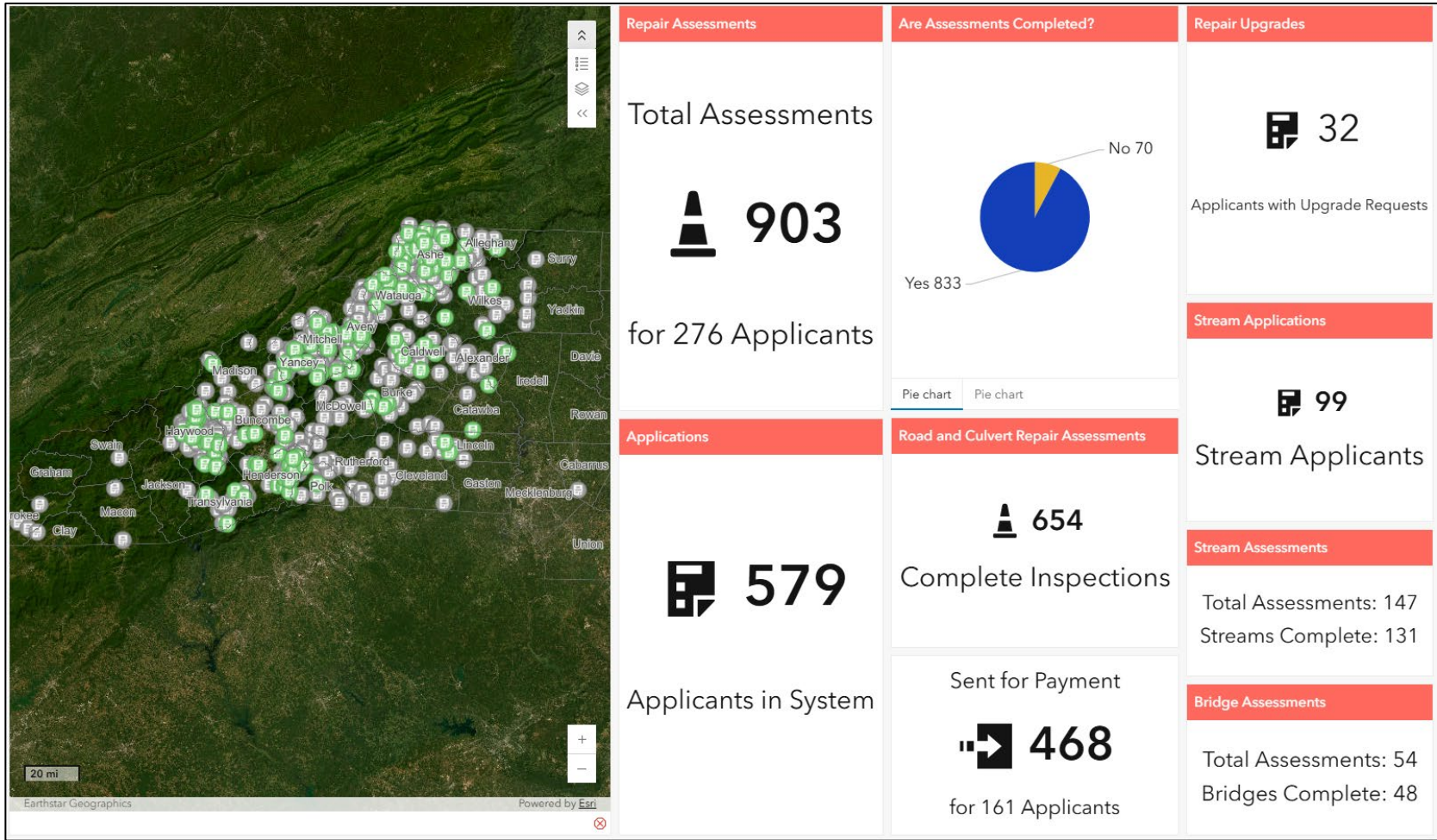
2. **Newly Identified Sites**
   - Sites that were caused by Hurricane Helene, but were not included in 2026 StRAP applications.
     - EX: sites that were not identified until after application period had closed.
   - In September 2026, DSWC reached out to western NC organizations to collect information on new sites that could be eligible for StRAP funding.
   - Includes:
     - At least 61 sites totaling $21,173,386
     - 19 organizations have submitted responses
     - Additional sites being accepted

Additional StRAP Funding- Ag Disaster Sites

NC DA&CS Agricultural Disaster Repair Program covers a range of Helene-recovery projects associated with agricultural land.

Responsibility for stream repair projects will be transferred to StRAP.

- 70 sites needing streambank stabilization, debris removal, or stream restoration.
- Cost estimates are being created based on field visits.
- 20 counties
- Sites have been assessed by DSWC engineers or Soil & Water Conservation District Staff



Timeline Moving Forward

- Remaining contracts will be fully executed in October
- Contracts for $61m additional funds will be awarded in late October/early November.
  - Fully under contract by 12/31/2026
- Once contracts are signed, grantee is responsible for:
  - Hiring contractors/engineers
  - Securing all permits & landowner permissions
  - Overseeing work
  - Submitting progress reports & requests for payment to DSWC
- Contracts will last until June 30, 2029 (unless closed out sooner)
  - Option for 1-year extensions as needed.



Questions?

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Matt Safford
StRAP Program Manager, DSWC
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Benefits of Stream Repair following Helene:

- Protect homes, bridges, utilities, and other structures from being undermined by eroding streambanks.
- Reduce intensity of future floods by restoring stream and reconnecting incised streams to floodplains.
- Reduce risks to life & safety by removing blockages that threaten boaters & recreation.
- Prevent additional erosion that would threaten infrastructure by repairing stream channel and removing blockages that redirect streamflow.
- Prevent loss of land from ongoing bank erosion and protect agricultural land from losing topsoil due to flood scour.
- Reduce upstream flooding by removing logjams and other blockages that restrict flow and back-up water.
- Improve stream health, rebuild wildlife habitat, and reduce sedimentation by rebuilding banks & stream.



CWSRF Helene Decentralized Wastewater Treatment Systems Program Update

Department of Environmental Quality



October 19, 2026

Background and Need

- About **50% of NC's four million households** use septic systems; some counties exceed 90% septic
- An estimated **63% of septic systems** in NC are more than 30 years old, exceeding or nearing normal life expectancy (15–40 years)
- Roughly **140k-200k homes** (7–10%) have systems that are malfunctioning
- Malfunctioning systems release pathogens, nitrates, and contaminants
  - EPA identifies failing septic systems as the third largest contributor to groundwater pollution nationally
- Approximately **50% of NC households** receive little to no local, state, or federal wastewater assistance, despite paying taxes that support centralized systems
- Hurricane Helene damaged an estimated **15,000 septic systems** in WNC, many of which do not qualify for CDBG-DR funding because the repairs rarely exceed $50,000

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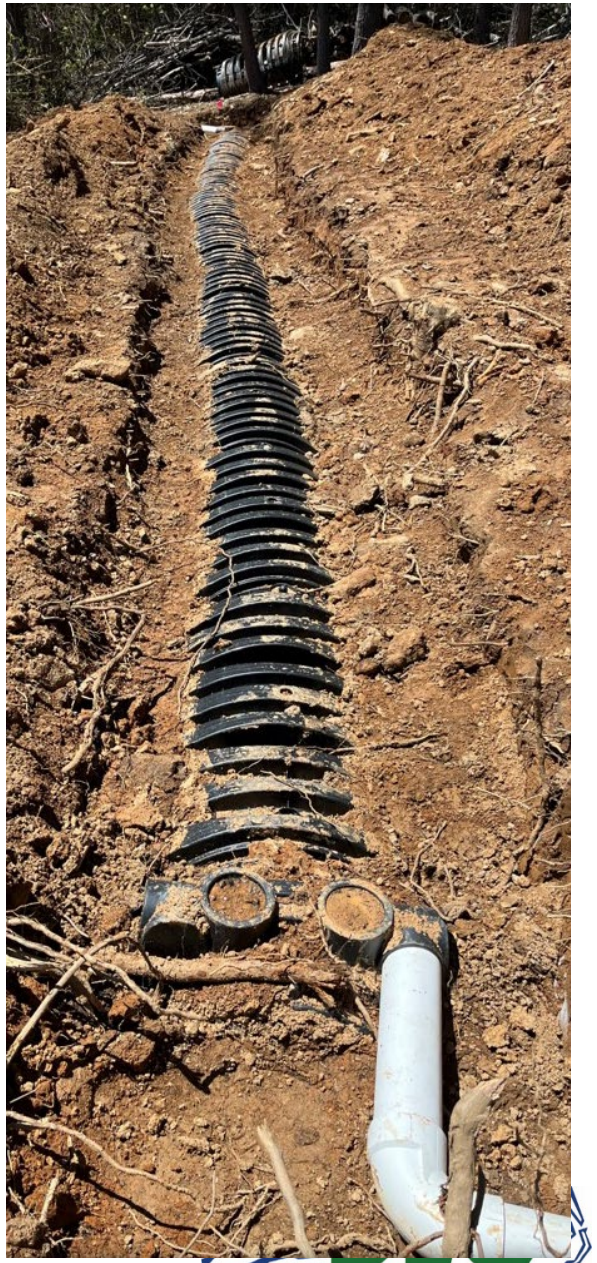
Department of Environmental Quality









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Department of Environmental Quality

WNC Recovery
POWERED BY GROWNC

Program Overview: A New National Model

Program funding came from the 2025 American Relief Act (ARA), which set aside supplemental funds for SRF programs through the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

DEQ received **$22.5M** to support decentralized wastewater treatment systems by improving the resilience of such systems to flooding, and to assess the potential to connect homes to public sewer.

NC is **one of only 12 states** to receive this pilot funding and **the only state** to implement a direct repair and replacement program rather than simply extending sewer lines to improve connections with these funds.

Working with EPA's technical assistance program, NC relied on other pilot programs across the country for guidance while developing a program that was new to both SRF and state purchasing and procurement requirements.

This program offers septic repair and replacement, needs assessment, and septic-to-sewer connection funding to properties located in the **39 counties** under the initial Hurricane Helene emergency designation.

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Department of Environmental Quality

Program Overview: Awardees

The program required legislative approval to include nonprofits as SRF awardees for the first time in **SL 2025-26** enabling regional approaches to decentralized wastewater. Approval was received in late fall 2025 to add nonprofits, but not councils of government, as eligible SRF recipients.

The State Water Infrastructure Authority (SWIA) made awards to **four non-profits** whose applications covered services for all 39 counties in the initial emergency designation.

Awardees will work with local septic installers and property owners with damaged and failing septic systems to provide funding to repair and rehabilitate those systems.

SWIA also awarded three projects that will replace septic systems with sewer connections in Chimney Rock Village and the Town of Laurel Park. Septic system repairs and an assessment are in process for a community in Yancey County.

Funds are **100% principal forgiveness**

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Department of Environmental Quality

Program Overview: Awardees

Recipient	Amount	Project Type
Western Piedmont Council of Governments	$7,556,854	Septic Repair and Replace Program
MountainTrue	$6,510,201	Septic Repair and Replace Program
Clean Energy Fund	$1,637,100	Septic Repair and Replace Program
Water Well Trust (WWT)	$540,600	Septic Repair and Replace Program
Chimney Rock Village	$4,163,192	Septic to Sewer Connection Program
Yancey County Community Project	$229,870	Septic Repairs and Cluster Needs Assessment
Town of Laurel Park	$971,783	Septic to Sewer Connection Program

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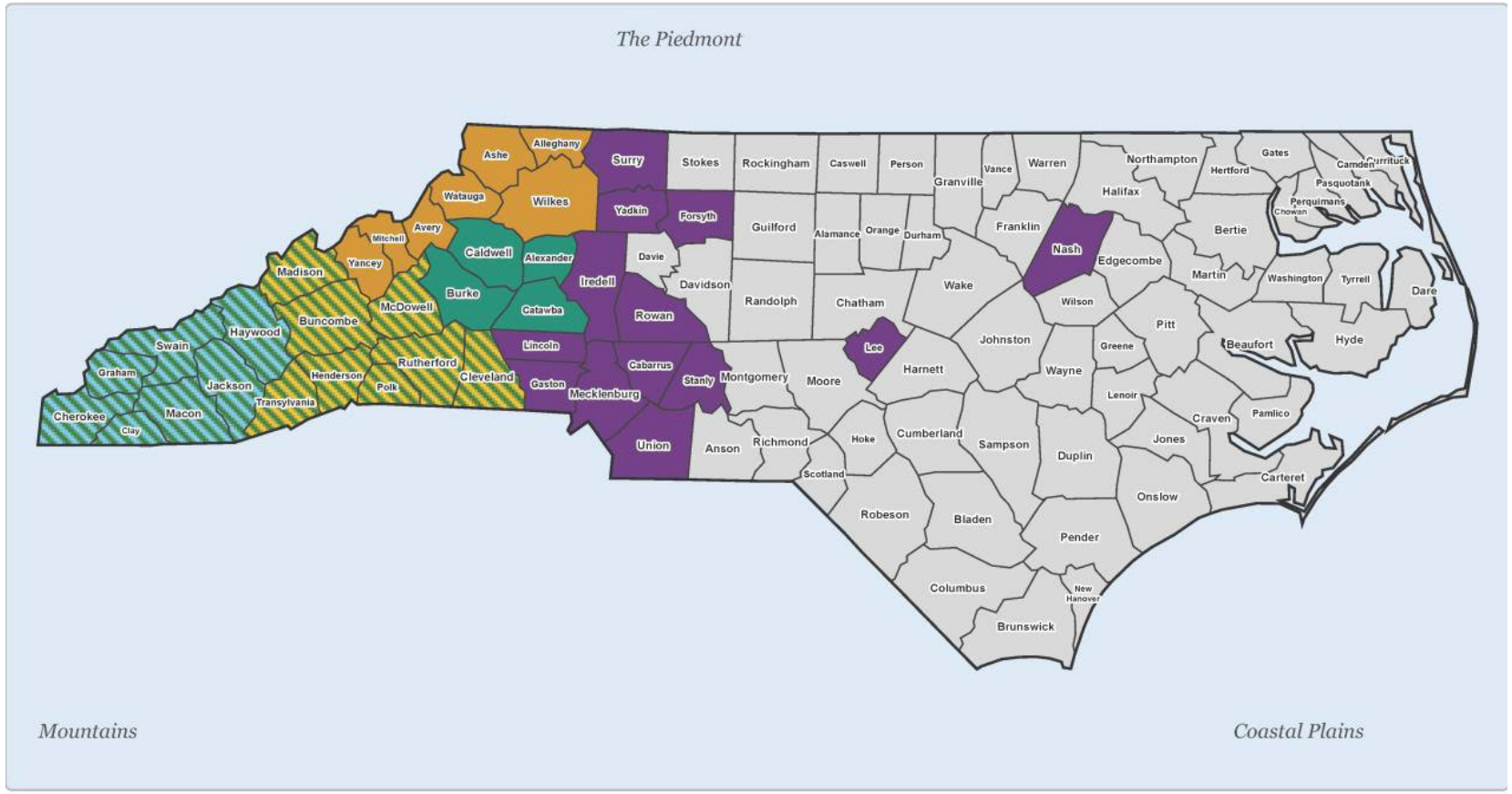
NC Agency Service Areas

Diagonal stripes = two agencies serving the same county — each stripe color matches that agency's legend color



Agency Legend

- Clean Energy Fund of the Carolinas
- Haywood Waterways
- High Country COG
- Mountain True
- Water Well Trust
- Western Piedmont COG
- Unserved

- Clean Energy Fund + Haywood Waterways
- Clean Energy Fund + Mountain True

Note: Each stripe color in the overlap pattern directly matches that agency's solid color above.

NORTH CAROLINA Department of Environmental Quality

Anticipated Program Impacts

- Project at least **1,000 individual septic repairs/replacements**
  - Number may increase due to impacts from Isaias in many of the same regions
- Restoration of safe wastewater service to households and communities with damaged or failing decentralized systems
- Resilience during future flooding, erosion, and landslides: **all projects include a flood resiliency component, so systems can better resist future weather impacts**
- Reduce untreated sewage discharges and risks to groundwater and surface water
- Protection of public health and drinking water in rural and underserved communities

This program also provides a **statewide model** that can be replicated at scale through other SRF programs, both to expand the program from Western North Carolina to the remaining counties of the state, and across the country.

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Additional Need

Potential nonprofit partners could add additional money into programs to continue septic repair and replacement work.

Currently, these funds are administered through SRF, which has several requirements that aren't applicable to septic repair at the household level.

If North Carolina could invest in a revolving septic loan repair program, that could continue statewide, without the SRF requirements.

DEQ is also piloting additional septic projects in eastern counties.

Septic will continue to be a public health issue in NC, as many of our systems are aging and they are subject to increasing environmental pressures, disasters, storms, and weather events.

NORTH CAROLINA
Department of Environmental Quality

Thank you! Questions?



Points of Contact

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Engineer III, Project Manager

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Advancing Resiliency with the North Carolina Flood Resiliency Blueprint

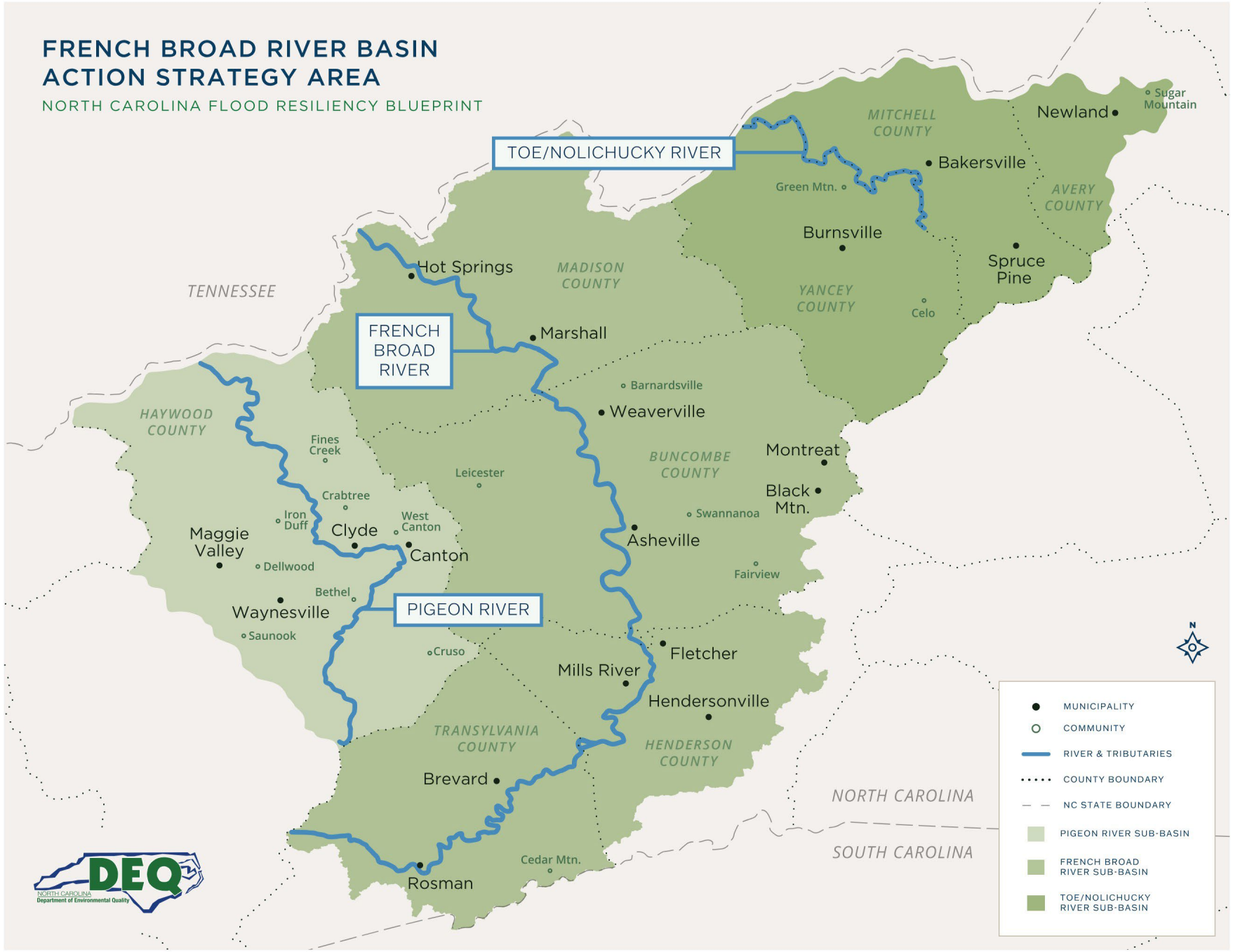
French Broad River Basin

Governor's Advisory Committee on WNC Recovery

October 19, 2026

The NC Flood Resiliency Blueprint





Focus Area

8 Counties:
Transylvania, Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, Haywood, Yancey, Mitchell and Avery

3 Major Sub-basins:
the Pigeon, French Broad, and Nolichucky Rivers

Implementation Funding







Haywood County | **Henderson County** | **Mitchell County**



The *French Broad River Basin Action Strategy* identifies and prioritizes locally-driven projects and policies to reduce future flood risk across the river basin



A Pathway to Long-term Flood Resilience

Resilience Planning

Funding Readiness

Regional Coordination

Action Strategy Development Milestones

5

Final French Broad Basin Action Strategy

Winter 2026/2027



4



Flood Risk & Vulnerability Analysis + Action Review & Strategy Prioritization

Summer/Fall 2026

3

Local Action Plan Development

Spring/Summer 2026





2

Community Capacity and Gap Analysis

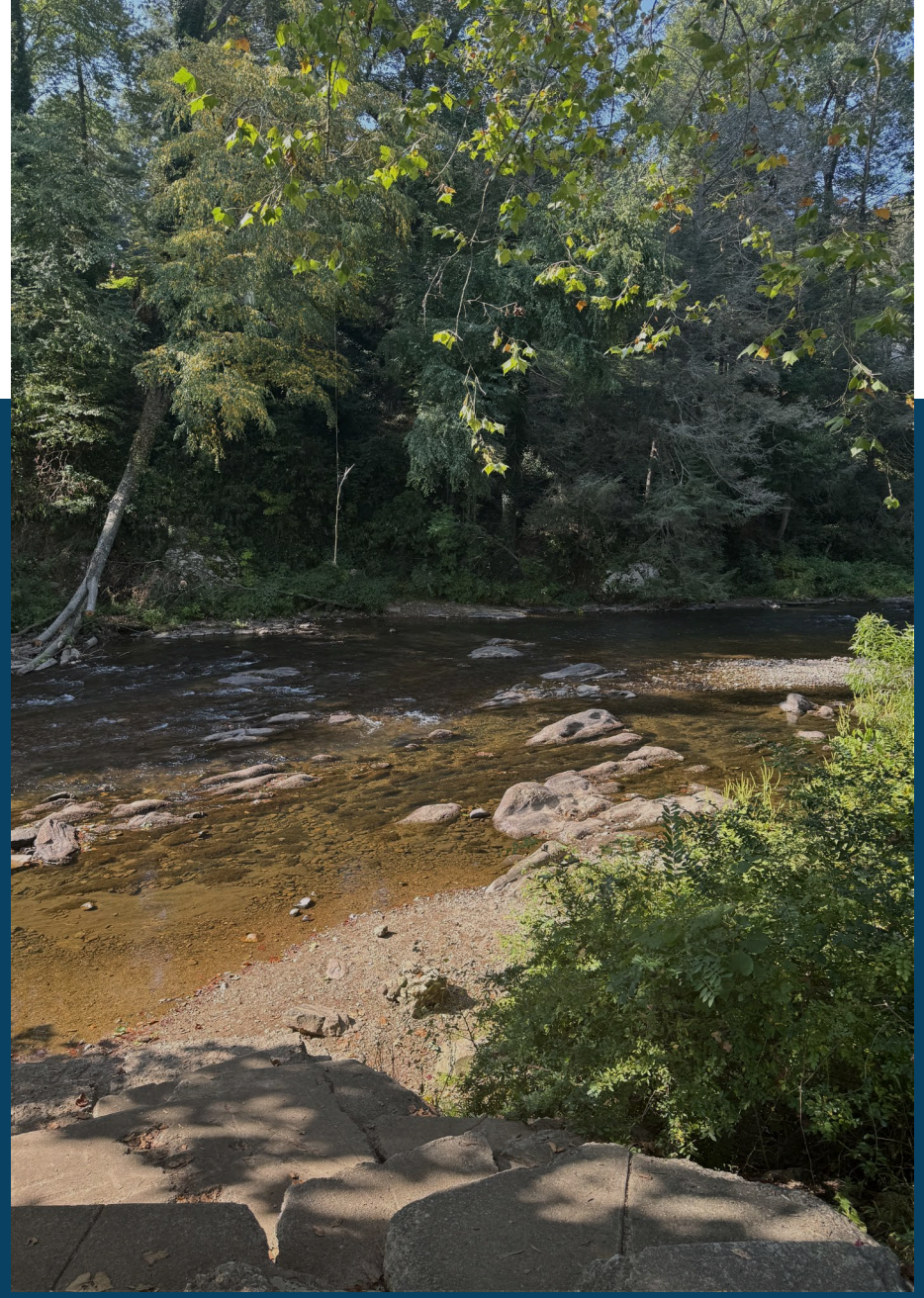
Spring 2026

1

Research Existing Resiliency Actions

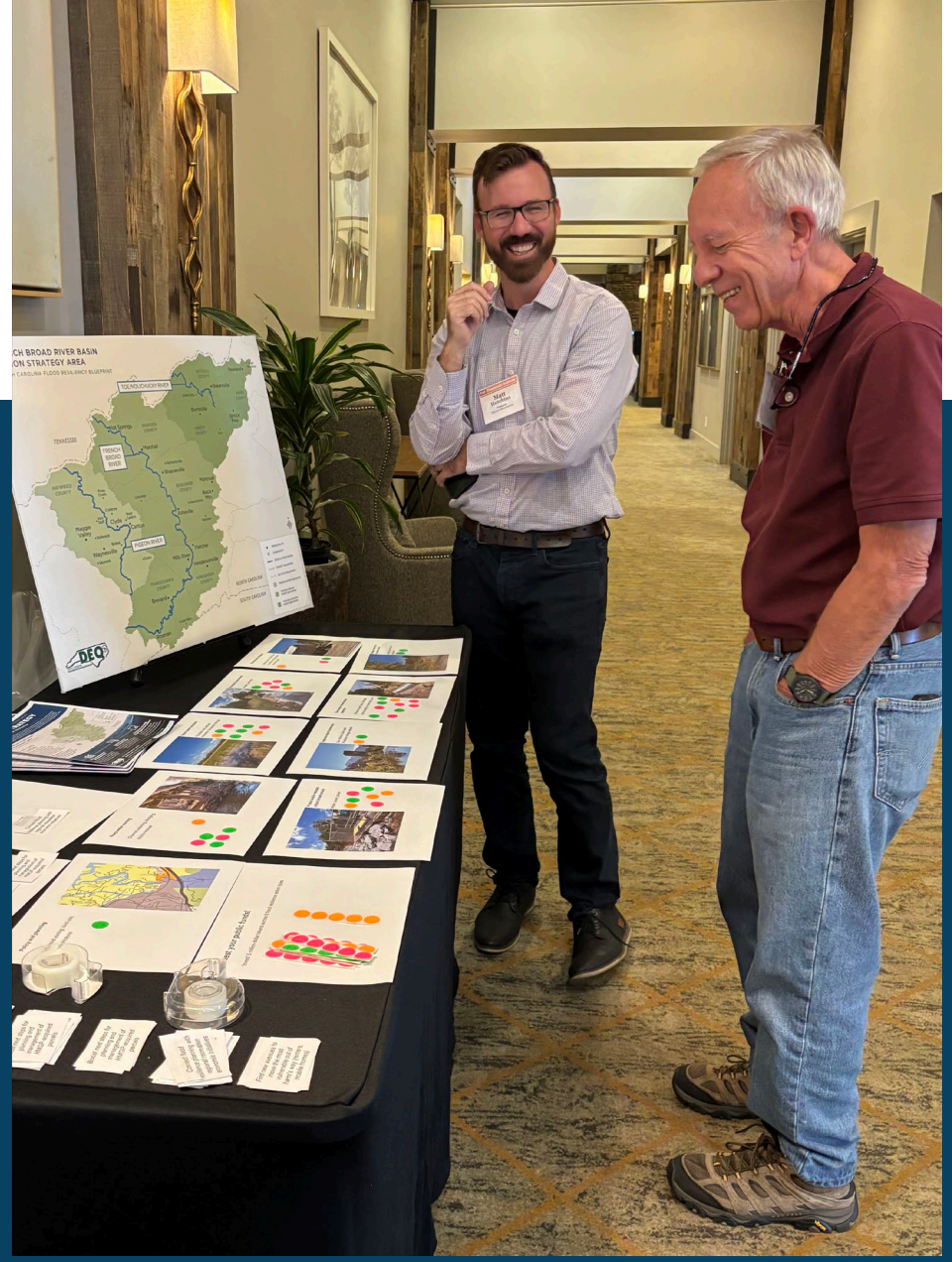
Fall/Winter 2025





WNC Capacity Analysis
Spring 2026

- Smaller and unincorporated communities face significant **capacity challenges**
- Most significant gaps exist in **translating data into implementation ready projects, staffing capacity, and access to technical expertise**
- **Recovery from Hurricane Helene** continues to absorb most local capacity



Flood Resilience Outreach

June-September 2026

Transylvania County

Brevard

Rosman

Buncombe County

Asheville

Biltmore Forest

Black Mountain

Weaverville

Woodfin

Montreat

Henderson County

Flat Rock

Fletcher

Hendersonville

Laurel Park

Mills River

Madison County

Hot Springs

Marshall

Mars Hill

Haywood County

Canton

Clyde

Waynesville

Maggie Valley

Yancey County

Burnsville

Avery County

Newland

Mitchell County

Bakersville
Spruce Pine

Council of Governments

Land of Sky
Regional Council
High Country
Southwestern Commission

Unincorporated Communities

Flood Resilience NGOs

Action Evaluation Process
October-November 2026

- **Initial Screening:** Confirm actions address flood risk, focus on long-term resilience
- **Prioritization:** Risk Reduction, Feasibility, Community Benefit, and Strategic Alignment
- **Review and Balancing:** Geographic representation, capacity needs of communities



Regional Themes
Challenges

- Short-term recovery actions vs. long-term resilience
- The buyout problem-declining tax base, increasing maintenance costs
- Redevelopment in vulnerable areas—especially among vulnerable populations
- New development continues in the floodplain
- Major public education needs around flood risk and vulnerability exposure





Regional Themes

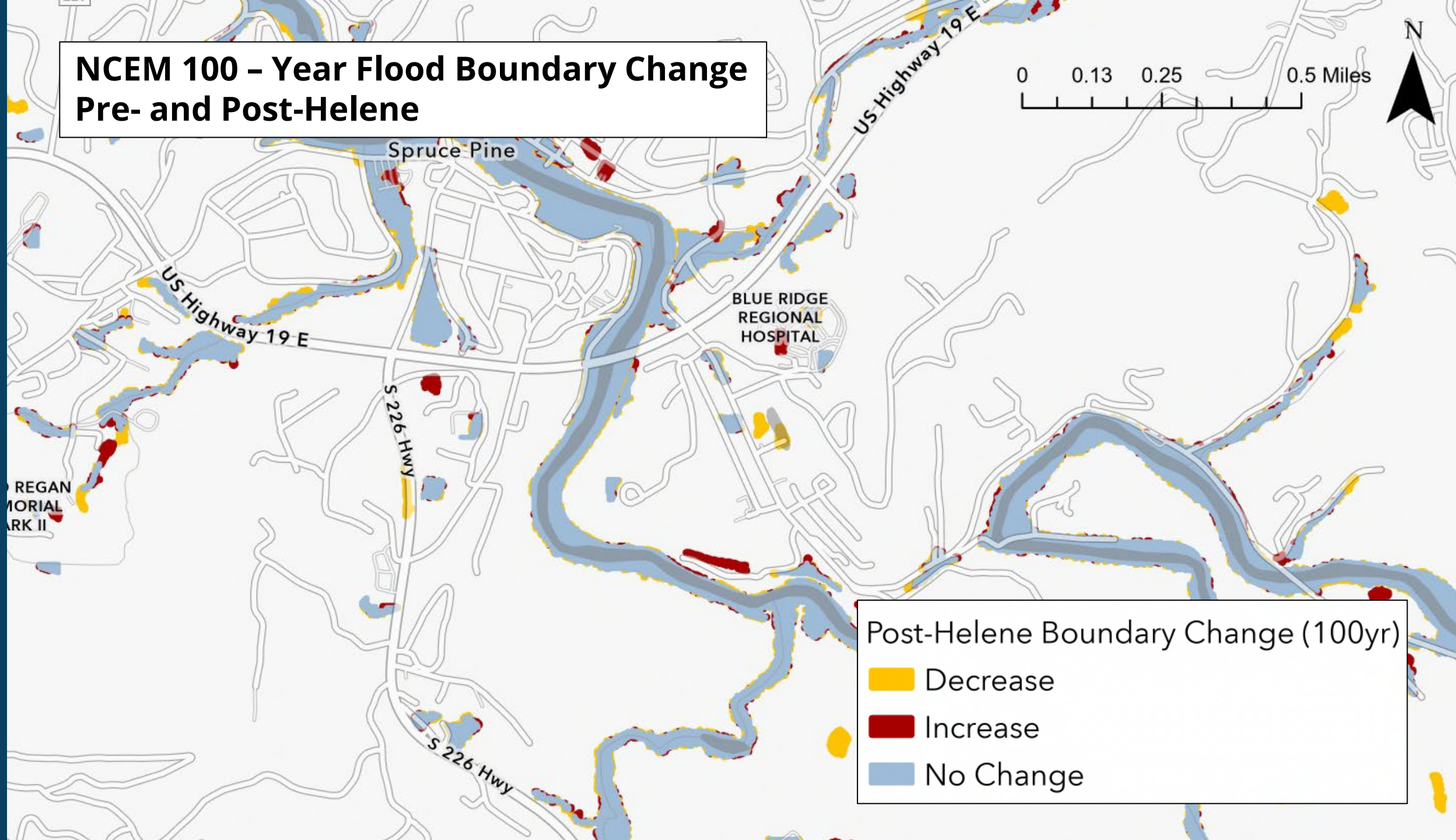
Opportunities

- Planning for higher-value uses for newly-vacant flood-prone properties
- Recreation and economic development, agricultural preservation
- Creation of a basin-wide network of flood storage areas
- Innovative regulatory tools
- Build a pipeline of ready-to-implement projects by supporting early concept development, design, and engineering

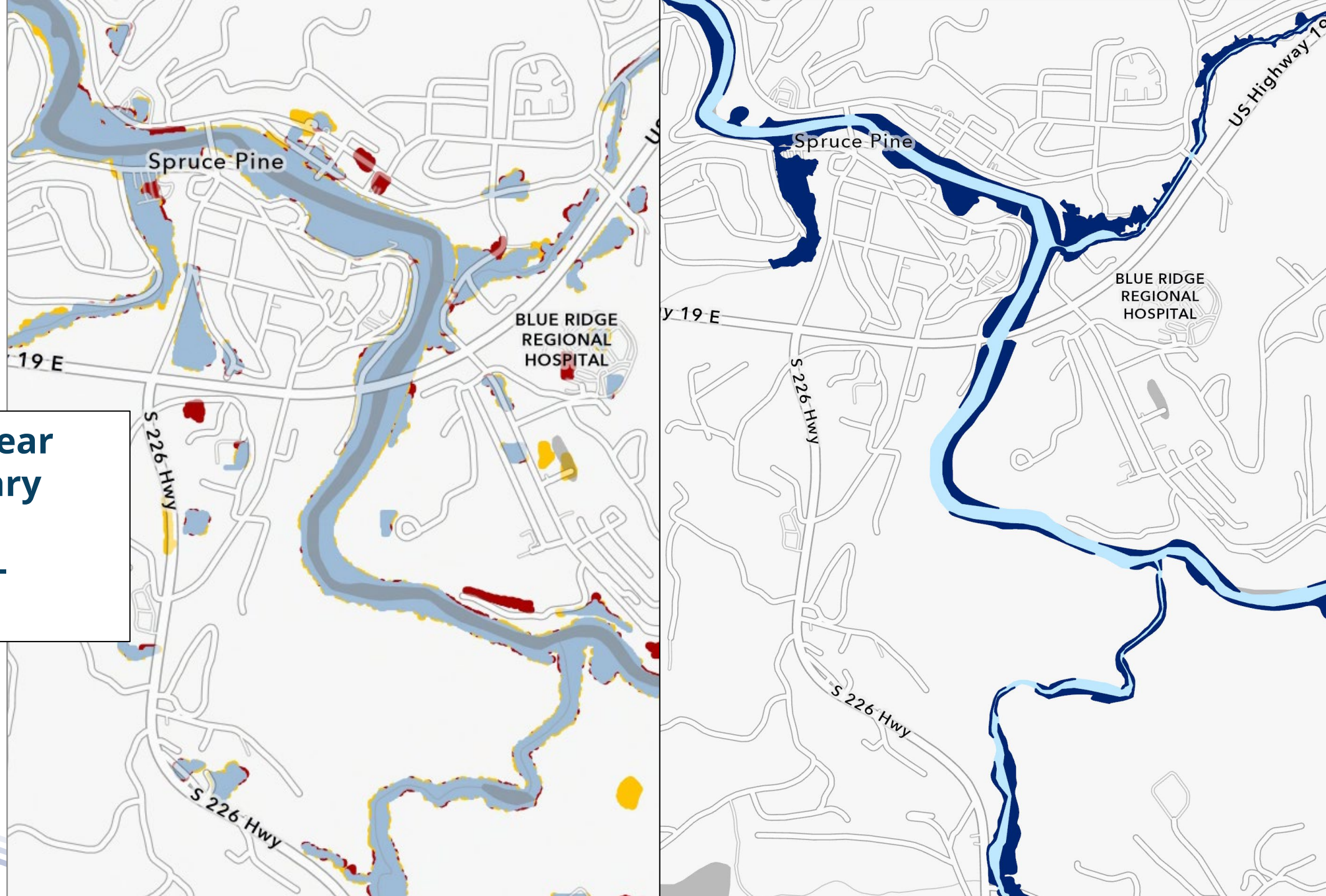


Flood Risk Analysis Update

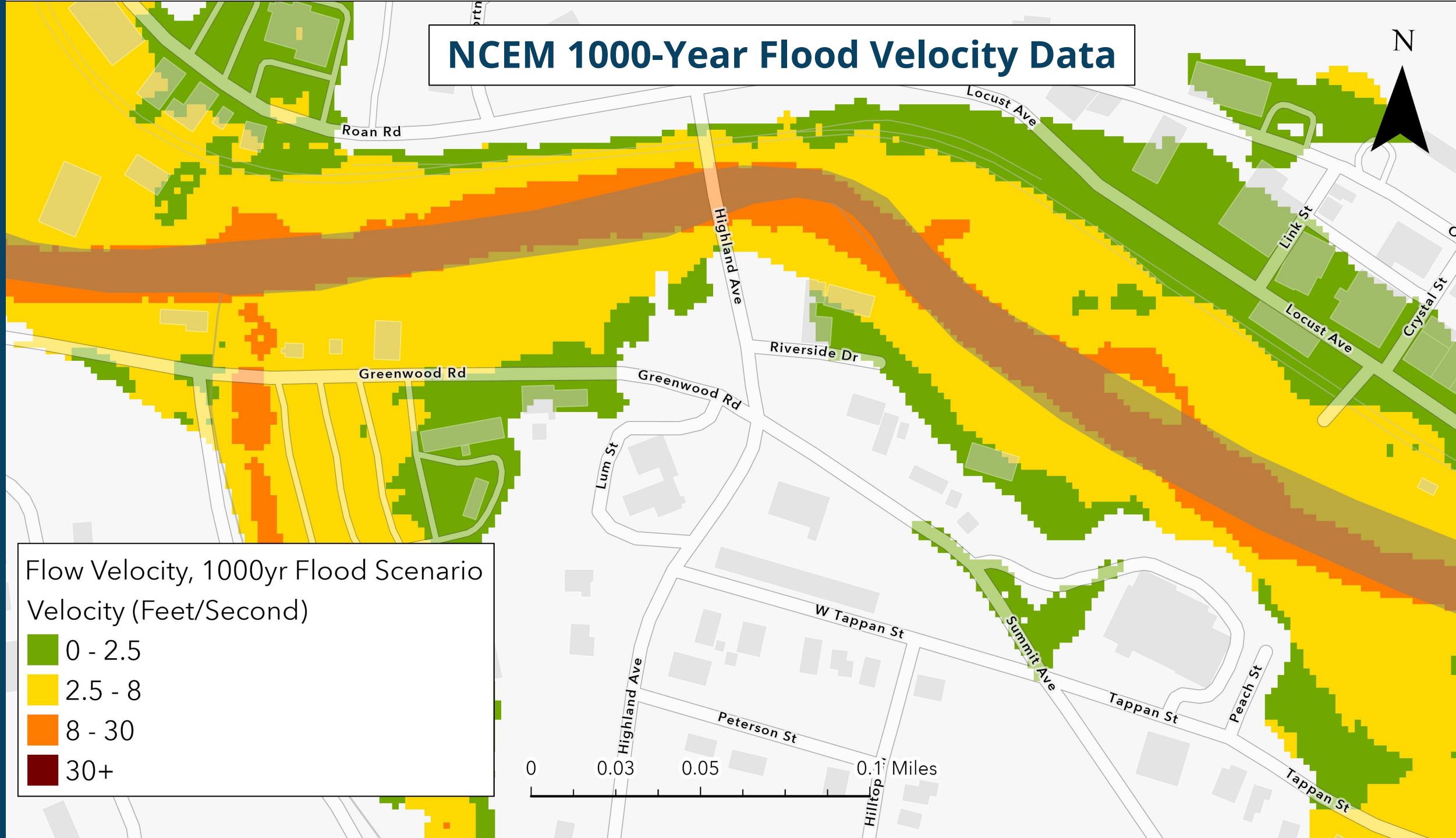
NCEM 100 – Year Flood Boundary Change Pre- and Post-Helene



NCEM 100 – Year Flood Boundary Change Pre- and Post-Helene



NCEM 1000-Year Flood Velocity Data





Next Steps

NORTH CAROLINA
Flood Resiliency
BLUEPRINT

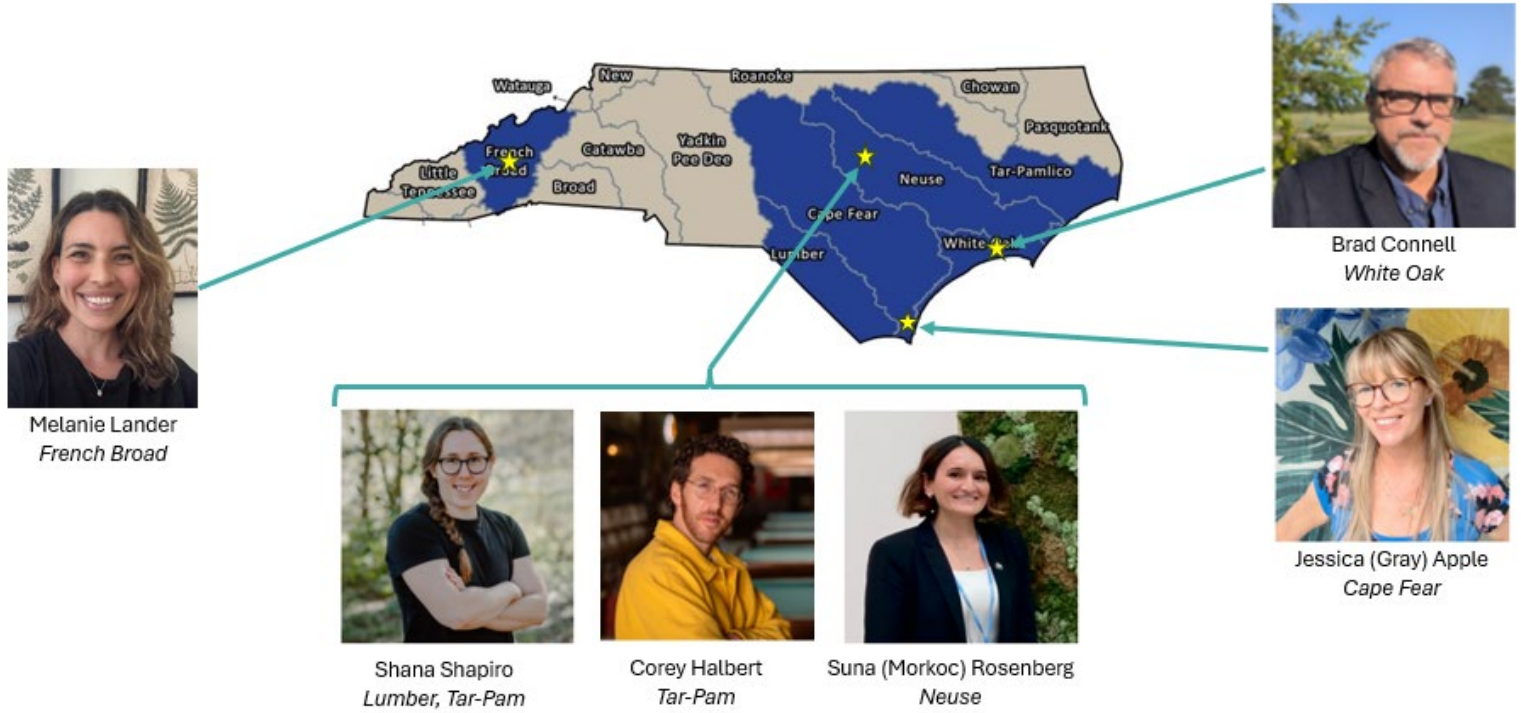
2026 Legislative Session - Budget

Funded:

$850,000 Staff

(1- year time limited)

$4.5M Implementation





Program Needs

Permanent positions for staff

Statewide Expansion
For WNC, expansion into the Broad and Catawba river basins

Future Tool Maintenance & Improvements

Project Development (Feasibility, E&D)



Near-Term Next Steps

Public Solicitation for action implementation

~$14 Million Dollars

Proposed projects must be included in a Blueprint Local Action Plan

Upcoming Engagement Opportunities

Monday, October 26

In-Person, Waynesville
4:00 - 7:00 pm

589 Raccoon Rd.
Haywood County Center

Regional Strategy Review and Feedback:

Pigeon River Sub-Basin

Tuesday, October 27

In-Person, Burnsville
4:00 - 7:00 pm

S. Main Street
Town Center

Regional Strategy Review and Feedback:

Nolichucky Sub-Basin

Thursday, November 5

In-Person, Mills River
4:00 - 7:00 pm

124 Town Center Dr.
Council Chambers

Regional Strategy Review and Feedback:

French Broad Sub-Basin

January-February

Virtual, Public Meeting

Draft River Basin Action Strategy Overview

Public Input Period

Sign up here to get future meeting notices!



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Sign up here to get future meeting notices!

DEQ
North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality

Recovery Updates

Matt Calabria & Emily Gangi, GROW NC



North Carolina's Commitment

An unprecedented recovery effort for the state

State Funding

- $3.1 billion in Helene-related appropriations, including $855 million set aside for state-federal match

Federal Funding

- About $10 billion awarded or disbursed

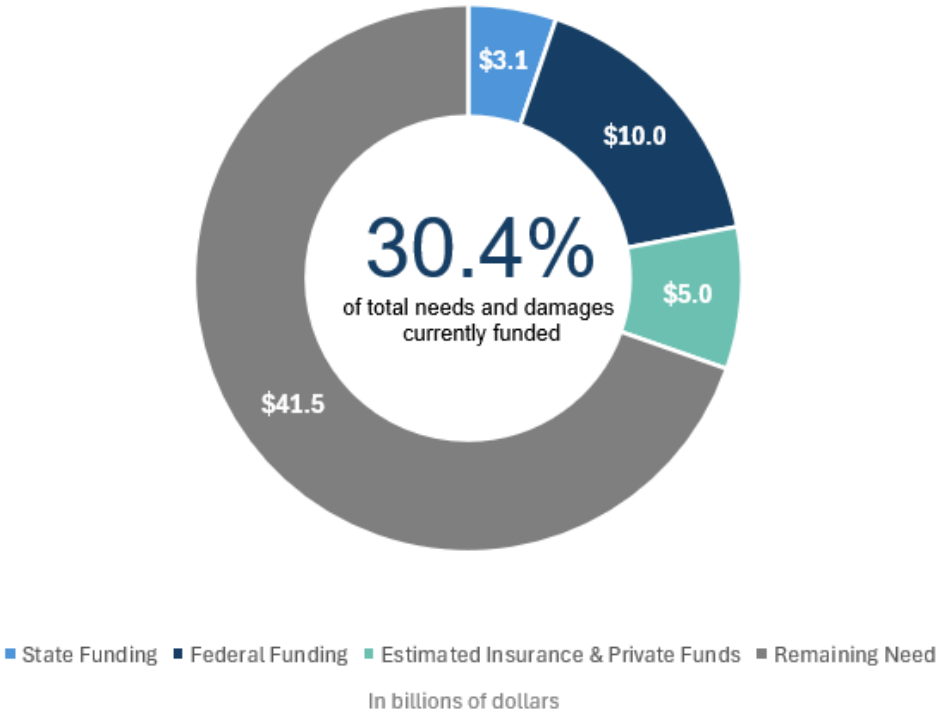
Private Funding

- $3.6 billion in private insurance
- At least $1.4 billion in philanthropic funds and private donations

Impact of Hurricane Helene

$59.6 Billion

Total estimated damages and needs caused by Hurricane Helene in North Carolina



Source: OSBM Damage Needs Assessment, https://www.osbm.nc.gov/hurricane-helene-dna/open

Renew NC Single-Family Housing Dashboard

10/18/2026 5:23:15 PM
Latest Data Refresh

Applications in Progress But Not Submitted	Total Applications Submitted	Total Active Applications	Inactive or Ineligible Applications
2,189	7,924	2,160	5,764

Application Submission Deadline

January 31, 2026

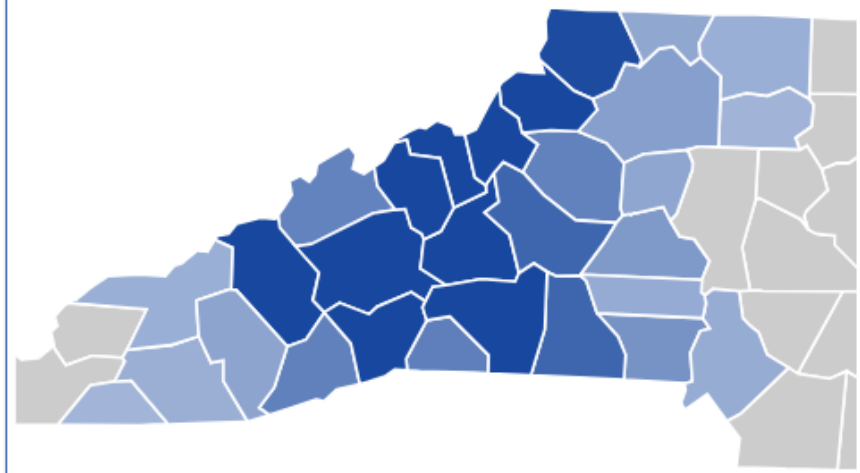
Verified Eligible Phase and Priority

Phase	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Total
Phase 1	1,086	176	89	14	1,365
Phase 2	161	52	10	5	228
Phase 3	160	7	N/A	N/A	167
Phase 4	365	12	N/A	N/A	377

Hover over the information bubble for Phase and Priority definitions.

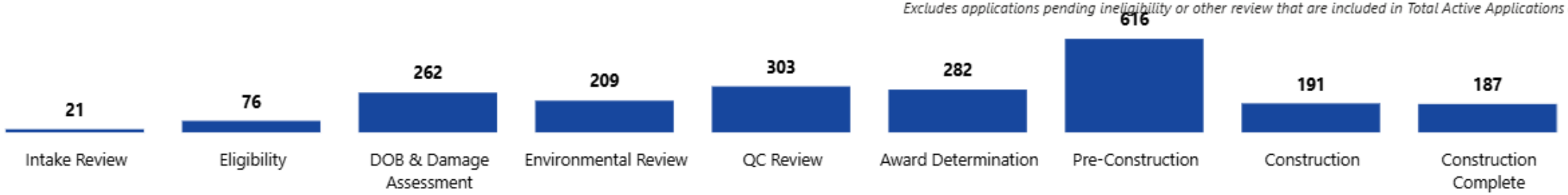
Applications will be processed beginning with Phase 1, followed by Phase 2, etc.

Applications by County



Active Applications by Workflow Status

Excludes applications pending ineligibility or other review that are included in Total Active Applications count..



Positive Feedback From Homeowners

Unsolicited letters of gratitude received by the NC Division of Community Revitalization

> The design, the cabinets, the appliances, the look, the porches, the color of the roof and siding. Even the way you recommended I turn it. My house that has become a home is perfect for me.

> Your staff never made the house feel like "just another project." You listened, you understood, and you walked beside us through every step of the journey. In a time filled with loss… your compassion reminded us that humanity, kindness, and genuine care for others still exist in this world.

> I cried after entering her home when I saw the quality of work done. It was done by someone who cared and took pride in their work. Today that is hard to find.

Applications Open:
Multi-Family Construction and Repair Program

- Who the Program Serves: Multi-family rental properties with five or more units
- Eligible Applicants: For-profit, non-profit developers, public housing authorities, local governments, and joint ventures between these entities. Must be located in HUD- or State-MID areas.
- Eligible Uses of Funds: New construction and substantial rehab of multi-family units.
- Award range: $500,000 to $15M per project.
  Approximately $70M available.

Prescreening is still available and strongly encouraged for interested applicants.

Deadline: November 2, 2026

For more info: bit.ly/RenewNC-Multi-Family-Housing



Applications Open: Workforce Housing for Ownership

- Who the Program Serves: The program will fund the development of affordable workforce housing units to provide homeownership opportunities to LMI households at or below 80% AMI in the HUD-MID areas.
- Funding Available: $53,380,000 in CDBG-DR funding
- Eligible Applicants: Local governments, public, private, or non-profit organizations, and Community Development Housing Organizations (CHDOs)/ Community Based Development Organizations (CBDOs). Must be located in HUD-MID areas.
- Eligible Uses of Funds: New construction of units for purchase by LMI households. Approach may include repurposing of existing buildings.
- Award range: $2 million - $5 million



Application deadline: December 13, 2026

For more info: bit.ly/RenewNC-Workforce-Housing

Applications Open: Helene Local Government Capital Grant Program Round II

Governor Stein recently announced $65 million to support local governments and volunteer fire departments in their recovery efforts from Hurricane Helene. The Office of State Budget & Management will administer the Helene Local Government Capital Grant Program to repair, renovate, or replace infrastructure damaged by the hurricane.

Eligibility: Units of local government, federally recognized tribes, and volunteer fire departments with infrastructure needs created by Hurricane Helene. Projects must be in FEMA-designated areas and be ineligible for FEMA Public Assistance. Grant award amounts will be based on statutory caps per recipient and county.

Deadline: November 23, 2026



More info: osbm.nc.gov/grants/helene-local-government-capital-grant-program

WNC Recovery
POWERED BY GROWNC

Disaster Recovery Funding for Child Care Providers

The NC General Assembly appropriated $10M in state funding for child care providers through local Smart Start organizations in the region.

- State funding is still available to help offset storm related damages, losses, and recovery costs associated with Hurricane Helene.
- Providers who already received funding from a local partnership may apply again if they still have funding needs.
- Applications for the state funding are handled by local Smart Start organizations to eligible child care providers.



How To Apply

Child care providers can reach out to their local Smart Start organization or email helenerecovery@smartstart.org.

Applications Open: Disaster Funding to Support Child Care Supply and Construction Planning

- The application window is open for $20 million to build and expand childcare programs in communities impacted by Hurricane Helene and Tropical Storm Debby.
- NCDHHS is seeking applications from institutions in the NCCCS and the UNC System that serve disaster-affected counties and are interested in renovating or establishing childcare centers on government-owned (state or county) campus land through renovation and construction activities or purchase of modular units.
- Of the state's 58 community colleges, 16 already have childcare on campus, and about 10 of the 17 UNC System campuses have some form of childcare on site.
- Deadline: November 2, 2026



For more information: DHHS Funding Opportunity

Disaster Recovery National Dislocated Worker Grant

- A 12-month No-Cost Extension has been granted and extends the program until 10/10/2027.
- Purpose: A workforce development grant that supports temporary disaster relief employment, as well as employment and training services, to help reduce the economic and employment impacts caused by a disaster.
- Eligible Applicants: Anyone who has been laid off or terminated or has been unemployed for 13 consecutive weeks.
- Eligible Activities: The activities carried out for this grant include disaster recovery, general labor and humanitarian positions, employment and training, and supportive services.
- To apply, residents should contact their local NCWorks Career Center.

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT of COMMERCE

For more information: NC Dislocated Worker Grant

USDA Single-Family Housing Rural Disaster Home Repair Grants

Applications are available year-round while funding is available and are processed in the order in which they are received.



- Maximum grant award of $32,420.
- Available to very-low income and low-income homeowners.
- Homes must be owner-occupied and located within an eligible rural area.
- Grant recipients must certify there is no duplication of benefits with other funding or awards. Contact a USDA home loan specialist in your area.
- A homeowner is qualified to apply if:
  - Property was damaged in an authorized Presidential Disaster Declaration since 2022, such as Helene, and;
  - The home must be homeowner occupied (occupancy after repair can be authorized).

Find program information and apply: bit.ly/Rural_Disaster_Home_Repair

Application Open: WNC Prepared and Resilient Communities Grant Program

The NC Community Foundation (NCCF) Disaster Relief Fund is accepting applications for the WNC Prepared and Resilient Communities Grant Program. Through this program, NCCF aims to support efforts that build the ability of Helene-impacted communities to anticipate, withstand, recover from and adapt to disasters in a timely manner. Approximately $6M is available; grant awards are not expected to exceed $100,000.

Preference will be given to applicants supporting preparedness and resilience in the most severely impacted counties: Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Cleveland, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania, Watauga and Yancey. *Applications focused on recovery efforts are not eligible for this grant program.*

NCCF will host 3 virtual information sessions.

- Thursday, October 22, 2:00pm
- Friday, November 13, 12:00pm
- Thursday, December 3, 10:00am

Deadline to apply: 12pm (noon), Tuesday, December 14, 2026

NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

For more info and to register for an info session: https://bit.ly/3TPveyZ

FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program

Local governments and NCEM began processing and submitting HMGP applications within months after Helene, with the first voluntary property acquisition application submitted to FEMA in February 2025. FEMA approved the first voluntary acquisition in January 2026.

After FEMA approves an HMGP application, state officials must procure vendors to perform the work. Once vendors are procured for voluntary home acquisitions, NCEM will contact homeowners to schedule a kickoff meeting, where the future management of the project will be outlined and timelines for work will be shared.

As of September 15, 2026, NCEM submitted the following to FEMA:

- 892 properties for voluntary acquisition, with >600 approved by FEMA
- 466 properties for voluntary elevation, with zero properties approved by FEMA
- 86 infrastructure applications, with zero projects approved by FEMA

Acquisitions have been approved by FEMA so far in Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Catawba, Cleveland, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, McDowell, Mecklenburg, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania, Watauga, and Yancey counties.

For updates on the status of applications submitted to FEMA: bit.ly/HMGP-updates

Wrap Up and Next Steps

Matt Calabria, GROW NC

Next meeting: **Monday, November 16**, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.
(In person, Lake James State Park, Nebo, NC)



Stay Connected

GROW NC is sharing recovery news, resources, progress metrics, and more.

