



WNC Recovery
POWERED BY GROWNC

Governor's Advisory Committee on Western North Carolina Recovery

Cullowhee, North Carolina

March 14, 2025 | 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Today's Agenda

Call to order | *Sen. Corbin & Mayor Manheimer, Co-Chairs*

Welcome | *Melissa Canady Wargo, WCU*

WNC Recovery Updates | *Matt Calabria, GROW NC*

Emergency Management Update | *Will Ray, NCDPS/EM*

Transportation Update | *Wesley Griffith & Alyson Tamer, NCDOT*

Discussion | *Brett Howard, FEMA and Col. Brad Morgan, USACE*

Remarks | *Governor Josh Stein*

Legislative Requests | *Matt Calabria, GROW NC*

Federal Requests | *Jim McCleskey & delegation staff representatives*

HUD Action Plan | *Secretary Lee Lilley*

Stephanie McGarrah & Jonathan Krebs

Telecommunications Infrastructure | *Secretary Teena Piccione*

Next Steps & Adjourn



Welcome to Cullowhee

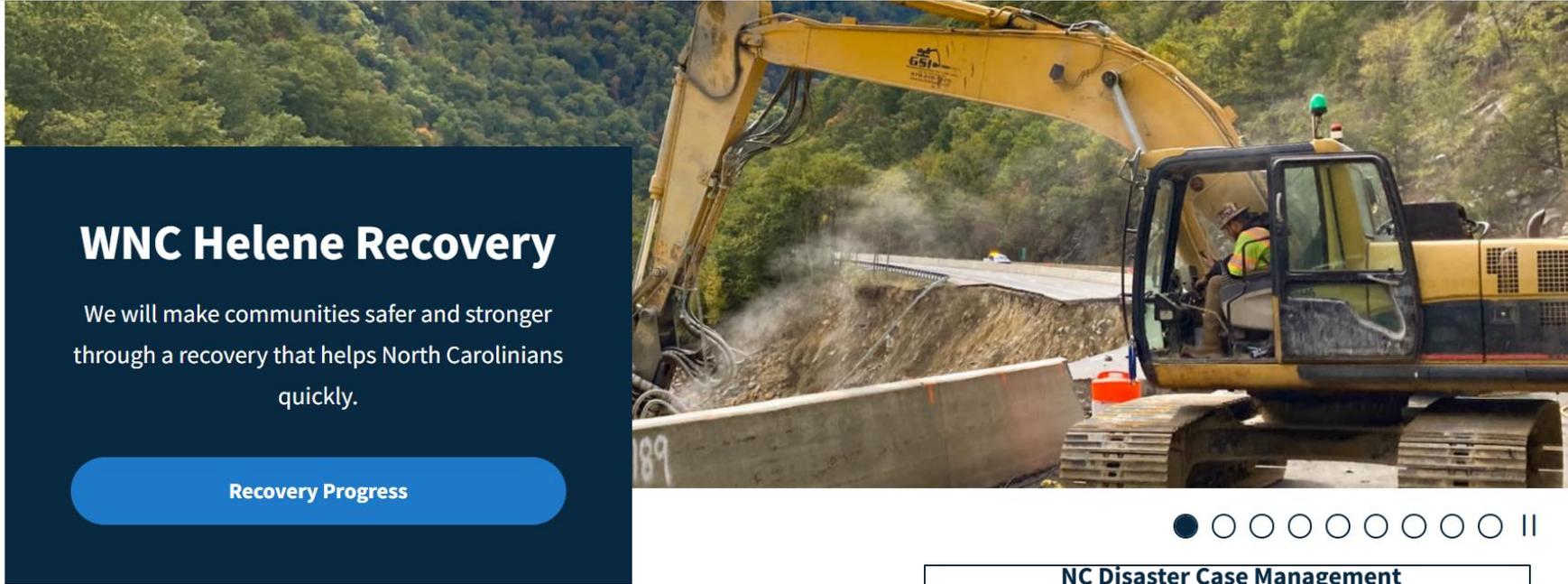
WCU Chief of Staff
Melissa Canady Wargo

Photo credit: WCU



Updates from the Governor's Recovery Office for Western North Carolina

Director Matt Calabria



Our ask of the Advisory Committee:

Visit the new GROW NC website and dashboards. Share broadly within your networks & communities. Provide us with your feedback. Inform residents of resources available.

Helene Recovery in the News



FEBRUARY 28, 2025

Unusual material allows NCDOT to build fast after Helene

North of Asheville, the Hobson Branch Road bridge over Ivy Creek has been rebuilt in a little more than four months.



FEBRUARY 28, 2025

After Helene, NC restaurants struggle, but one barbecue business found its footing

As restaurants across Western North Carolina continue to face significant challenges in



FEBRUARY 21, 2025

Former UNC coach Roy Williams helps with Helene relief

Last month a few companies teamed up with former UNC head coach Roy Williams to give the call of a lifetime,



FEBRUARY 18, 2025

Governor Stein Invites Public Input on Housing Recovery Plan for Western North Carolina

Governor Josh Stein invites North Carolinians to

NC Disaster Case Management

What is Disaster Case Management

After Hurricane Helene, the North Carolina Disaster Case Management Program (NC-DCM) is designed to guide survivors through the recovery process. After you complete the initial needs survey, a

How You Can Help in the Helene Recovery

Coordinated Opportunities

Get involved with one of these opportunities to support recovery in western North Carolina.



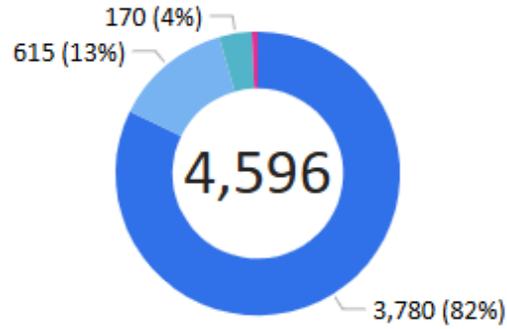
Upcoming Deadlines

Find important deadlines and reach out to the groups listed here to begin your recovery process.

- March 10: Timely filing deadline for Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) ⌵
- April 7: Deadline to apply for FEMA individual assistance ⌵
- April 27: Deadline extended to apply for SBA Physical property disaster loans ⌵

Temporary housing

Households (HH) currently receiving temporary housing assistance in WNC

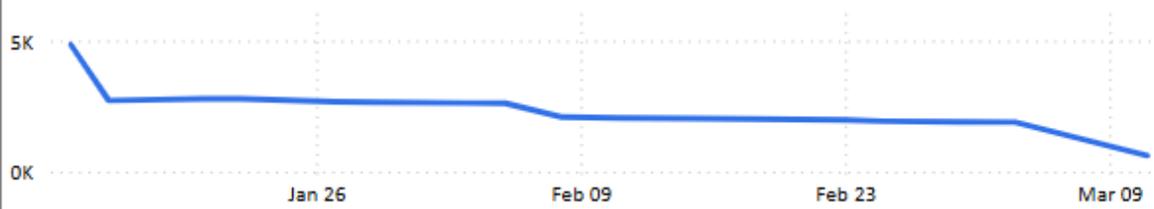


- Rental assistance
- Transitional shelter (hotels)
- Direct housing (mobile housing & trailers)
- Direct lease

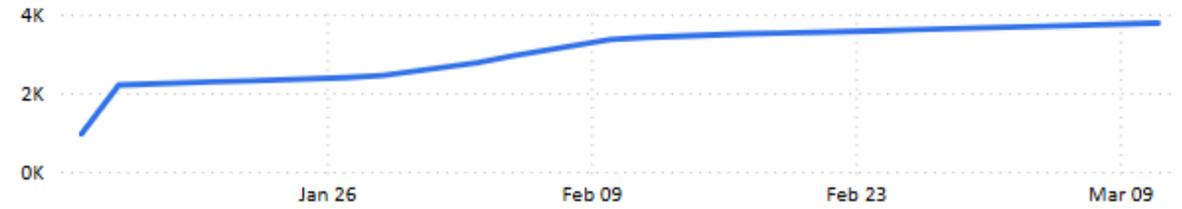
Quick takeaways

- 4,500+ households are currently receiving temporary housing assistance
- We've seen a nearly 4X increase in houses receiving rental assistance since early January
- Direct housing has increased 1.8X since early January

Transitional sheltering assistance (hotels), # HH ⓘ



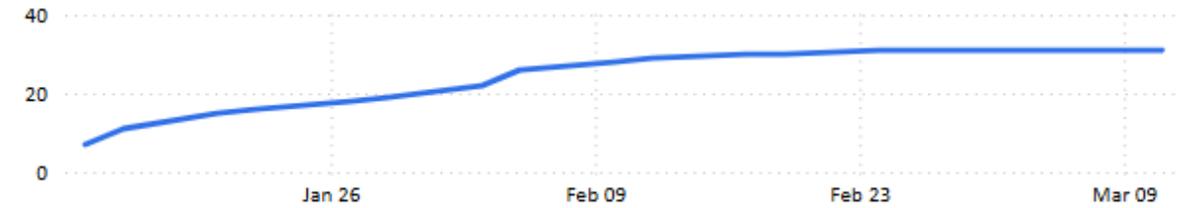
Rental assistance, #HH ⓘ



Direct housing (mobile housing and trailers), # HH ⓘ



Direct lease, # HH ⓘ



Our goal is to ensure access to temporary housing that meets the needs of displaced families and individuals. Over time, our goal is to see a decline in temporary housing as residents of western North Carolina successfully move into safe, permanent homes.

Source: North Carolina Department of Public Safety / FEMA

Debris removal

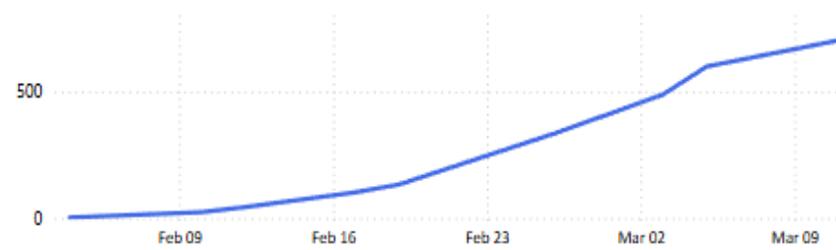
Cubic yards of right of way debris removed



Cubic yards of waterway debris removed



Private parcels cleared of debris



FEMA defines 'critical debris' as debris impacting public rights of way or waterways. Critical debris is the top priority for the joint debris removal mission. Debris estimates range significantly – the information displayed in this dashboard is the best presently available to the state.

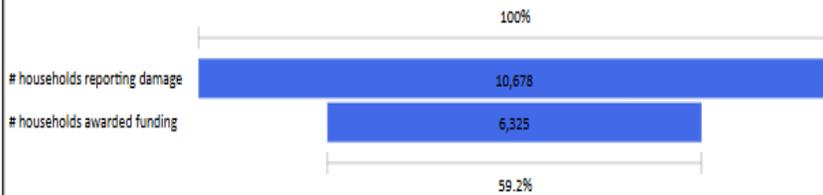
Source: North Carolina Department of Public Safety / FEMA

Quick takeaways

- 5.3M CY of debris removed
- Debris removed increased 1.7X since early January
- 93% of water systems are restored to normal operations
- 6,000+ households received funding for private road and bridge repair

Private road and bridge repair

FEMA Individual Assistance (IA) grants for private roads and bridges

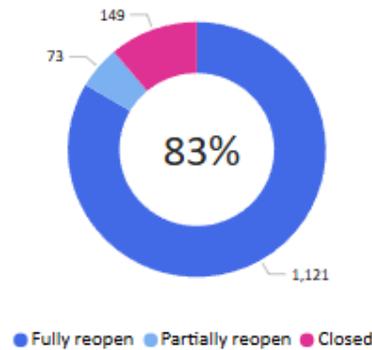


Current private roads and bridges data reflects FEMA IA awards for Private Road and Bridge repairs only. The State of North Carolina is beginning additional programs to support private road and bridge repair, and metrics for those programs will be reported as they become available.

Source: North Carolina Department of Public Safety / FEMA

Public road repair

All public roads in WNC by status

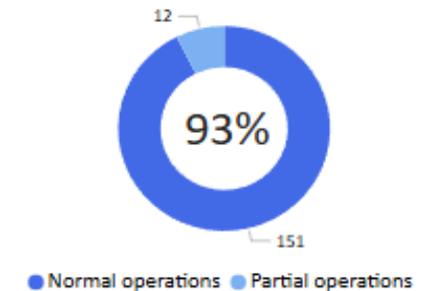


Source: North Carolina Department of Transportation

Water systems

Affected water systems restored to normal operations

Includes drinking water and wastewater systems



Source: North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality

WNC Small Business Initiative

The Western North Carolina Small Business Initiative provides \$55 million in grants, up to \$50,000 each, to support small businesses impacted by Hurricane Helene and aid economic recovery. It is funded by the State of NC and its philanthropic partners. Applications are selected based on eligibility, geographic distribution, and severity of impact.

7,259
Applications

1,123
Grants awarded

\$26M
Funding disbursed

Source: Dogwood Health Trust | Includes grants from round I and round II

WNC Strong: Helene Business Recovery Fund administered by Mountain BizWorks

The WNC Strong: Helene Business Recovery Fund provides rapid recovery loans to small businesses suffering economic losses related to the impacts of Hurricane Helene. The fund is administered by Mountain BizWorks.

663
Loans approved

\$39M
Funding disbursed

5,605
Western NC jobs retained

152
Pending applications

Source: Golden Leaf Foundation

Helene Cashflow Loan Program administered by the Office of the North Carolina Treasurer

North Carolina is offering \$100 million in interest-free loans to local governments impacted by Tropical Storm Helene; the loans, managed by the Office of the State Treasurer, aim to provide financial relief while local governments await federal aid and are expected to be made available soon. More details are available [here](#).

Quick takeaways

- **\$65M of funding** disbursed by WNC Small Business Initiative and Helene Business Recovery fund, through ~1,800 grants and loans to Helene affected businesses
- **5,605 WNC jobs retained** through the Helene Business Recovery Fund

There are several upcoming deadlines for federal programs to which Helene-affected residents can apply.

After the Governor's advocacy, all four deadlines were extended, giving residents more time to apply.

Please inform residents of these upcoming deadlines across your networks!

- April 7th:** FEMA Individual Assistance: Deadline for residents to apply for FEMA help to defray the costs of damage or losses
- April 7th:** FEMA Public Assistance: Deadline for local, tribal, and state government agencies and certain nonprofit organizations to apply for grants to offset costs associated with response and recovery (e.g., repair and replacement of infrastructure)
- April 27th:** SBA Physical Property loans: Homeowners, renters, nonprofit organizations, and businesses of all sizes are eligible to apply for physical disaster assistance
- June 30th:** SBA Economic Injury Disaster loans: Small businesses, small agricultural cooperatives, and most private nonprofit organizations can apply for economic disaster assistance

Damage caused by Hurricane Helene increased western North Carolina wildfire danger requiring additional mitigation

DRAFT | FOR DISCUSSION

Increased risk

Helene's high winds broke or toppled trees and created extensive blowdown zones¹, causing an influx of heavier fire fuels on WNC forest floors

North Carolina has the potential for a warmer and drier spring than usual, further exacerbating the threat of fires

Potential mitigation

1. **Creating wider firebreaks** (i.e., strips of land cleared or planted with fire-resistant vegetation) to stop wildfire spread
2. **Clearing large debris from forests**, including dead trees, to reduce the fuel load on forest floors
3. **Educating the community on wildfire mitigation strategies**, including protocols on when and how to burn both storm and non-storm related debris

Organizations currently working on wildfire prevention:

- NC Division of Emergency Management
- North Carolina Forest Service
- US Forest Service & FEMA

Last week, GROW NC met with the US Secretary of Agriculture and various agencies about wildfire prevention.

1. Blowdown zones are areas where trees have been felled or damaged by strong winds

2. During La Niña years, the Southeast U.S. tends to experience warmer and drier-than-average conditions, with a higher risk of wildfires and drought

Source: Hurricane Helene Roadside Debris Removal Analysis and Justification | [National Association of Counties: Strategies in wildfire mitigation](#) | [NCDOAC Best practices when burning outdoors \(3/3/2025\)](#) | [Study shows 84% of wildfires are caused by humans](#)

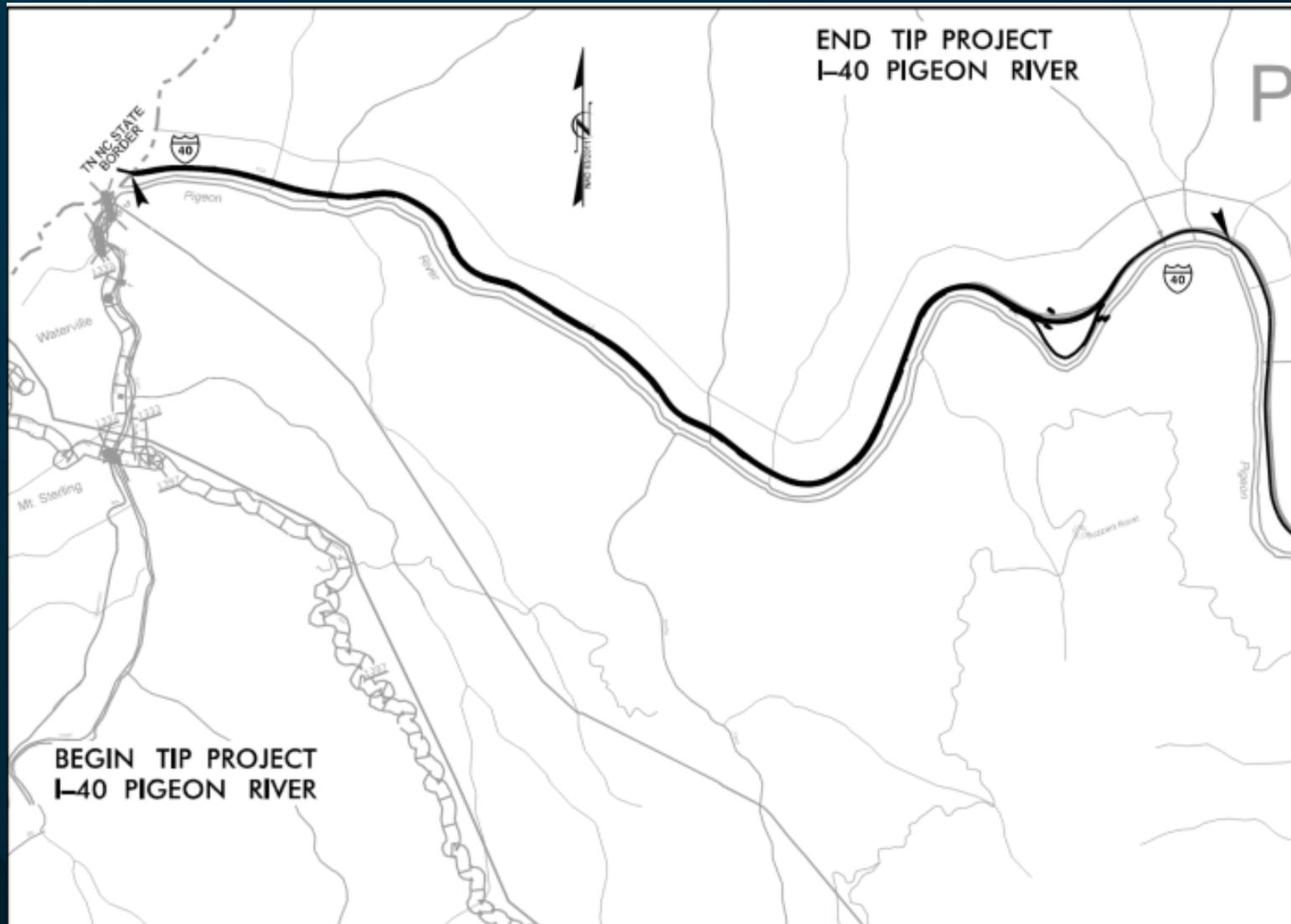
Division of Emergency Management

Director Will Ray

Department of Transportation

Wesley Grindstaff, Division Engineer
Alyson Tamer, WNC STRONG

PRE-STORM VISUALS



VICINITY MAP (NTS)

PRE HELENE



PRE HELENE



PRE HELENE



POST HELENE VISUALS





I-40 DAMAGE NOTES

- 5 Mile Stretch EB Lanes Affected
- Existing Walls Failed
- Major Slope Failures
- Over A Million Cubic Yards of Material Lost
- Helene Storm Event -73,000 CFS
- Emergency Repair Contract to Open Traffic
- CM/GC delivery for Permanent Repairs
- 2 years - \$1 Billion
- NCDOT's 6 Largest Disaster Events - \$618,000 (Fred, Matthew, Florence, etc)











NORTH CAROLINA
Department of Transportation



WNC STRONG

Helene Update and Innovations

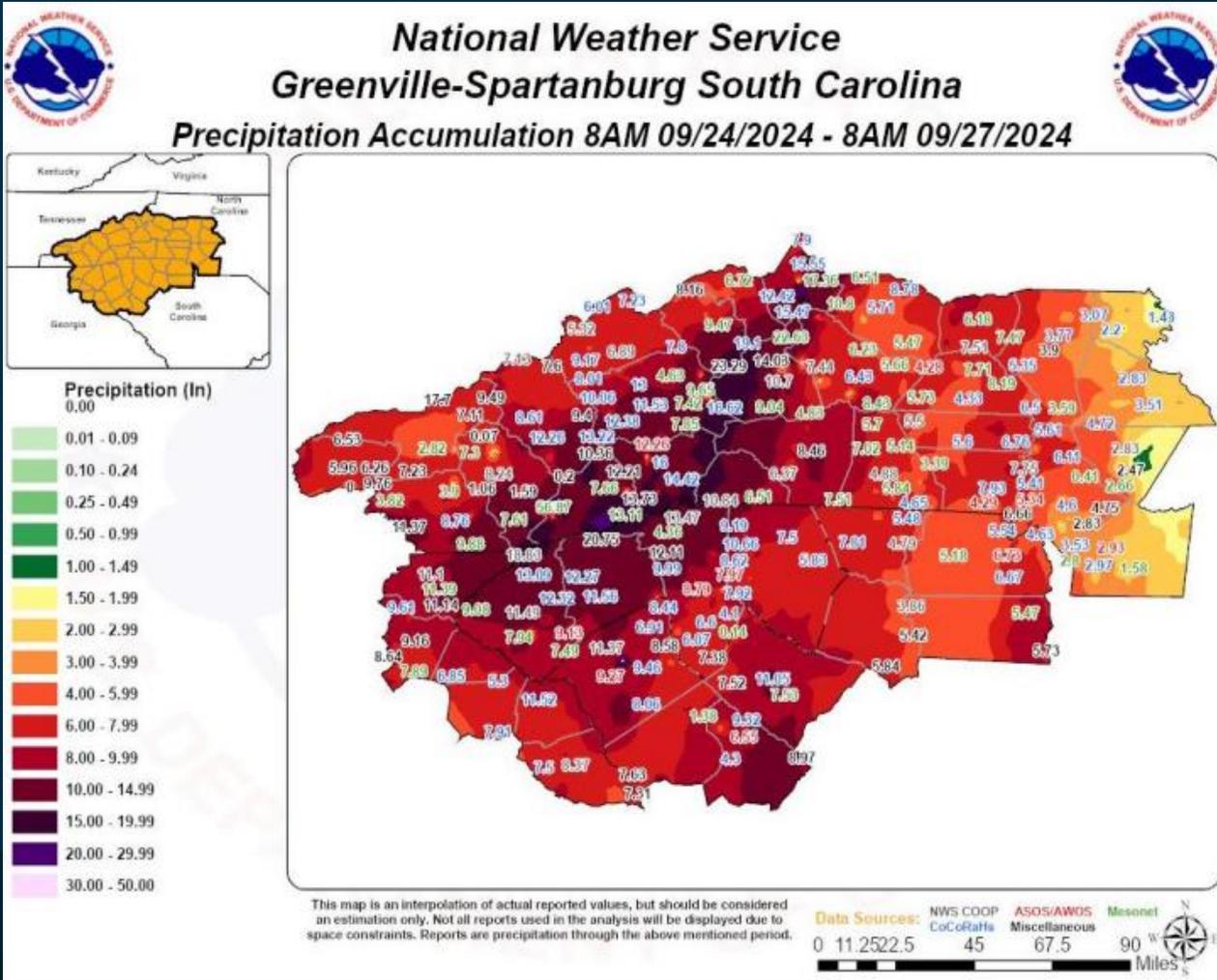
Alyson Tamer, PE, CPM
WNC Strong Program Support Manager

March 2025



Connecting people, products and places safely and efficiently with customer focus, accountability and environmental sensitivity to enhance the economy and vitality of North Carolina

Rainfall Totals During Helene

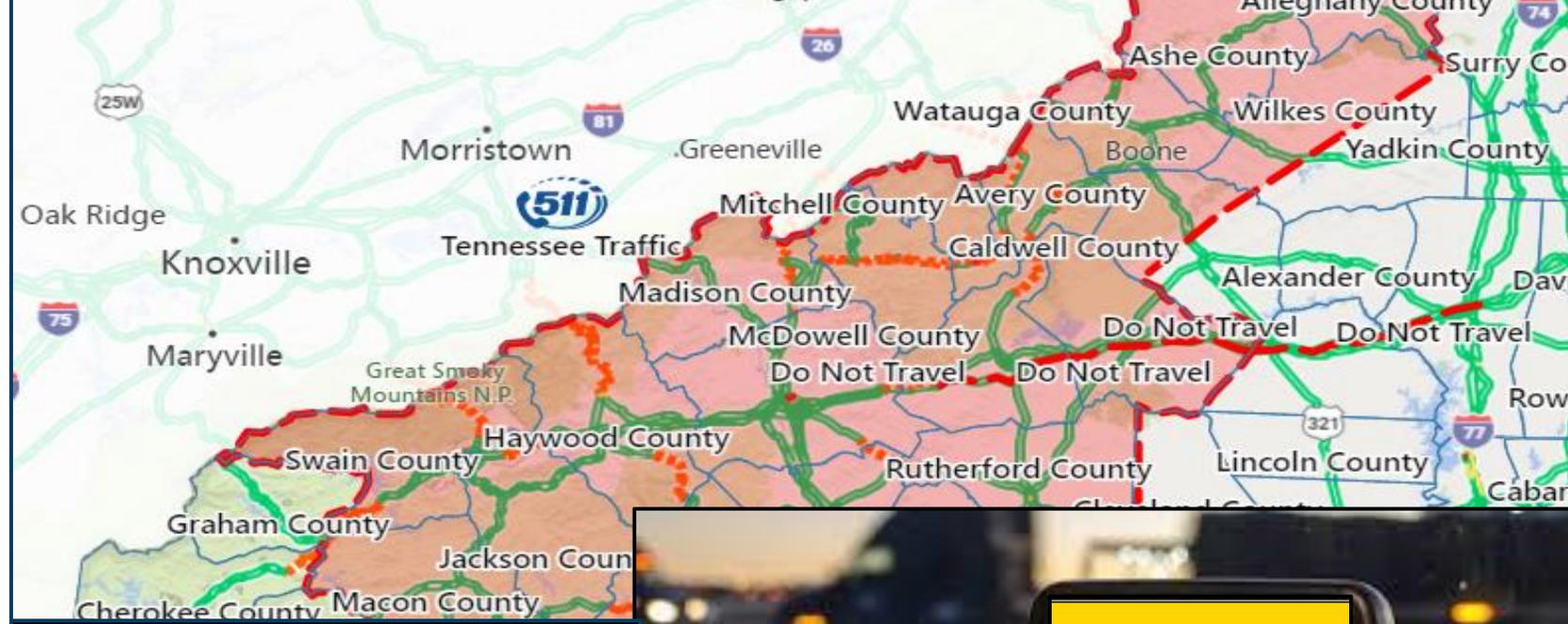


City	County	Rain (in)
Busick	Yancey	29.58
Mt Mitchell St. Park	Yancey	24.2
Spruce Pine	Mitchell	18.23
Davidson River	Transylvania	17.7
Foscoe	Watauga	16.42
Old Fort	McDowell	15.6
Whitehead	Alleghany	15.59
Hendersonville	Henderson	15.11
Swannanoa	Buncombe	14.81
North Cove Pinnacle	McDowell	14.75
Guion Farm	Henderson	14.73
Saluda	Polk	14.58
Highlands	Macon	14.52
Grandfather	Watauga	14.47
Watauga Medical Center	Watauga	10.98
Boone Precip 2 S	Watauga	9.21

"Necessity is the mother of invention"

or

"necessity breeds innovation"



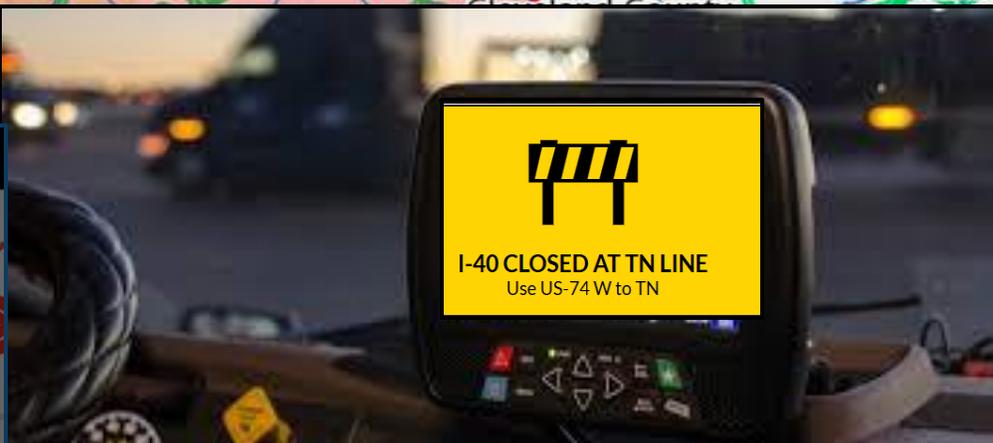

Public Safety Alert
NCDOT: Tractor trailers must stay on the Interstates, otherwise you will get stuck.

Proceed to highlighted route


Warning
All roads in West NC should be considered closed and non-emergency travel is prohibited

Continue drive

Change destination



 **Public safety message**

NCDOT: There are shortages of water, food, gas, power and communications in western NC. Conditions are dangerous. Non-emergency travel is prohibited and local roads remain closed. You cannot get to TN via I-40 or I-26. Use I-77N to I-81S to TN or I-77S to I-85S to SC.

Directions

Charlotte, NC

Knoxville

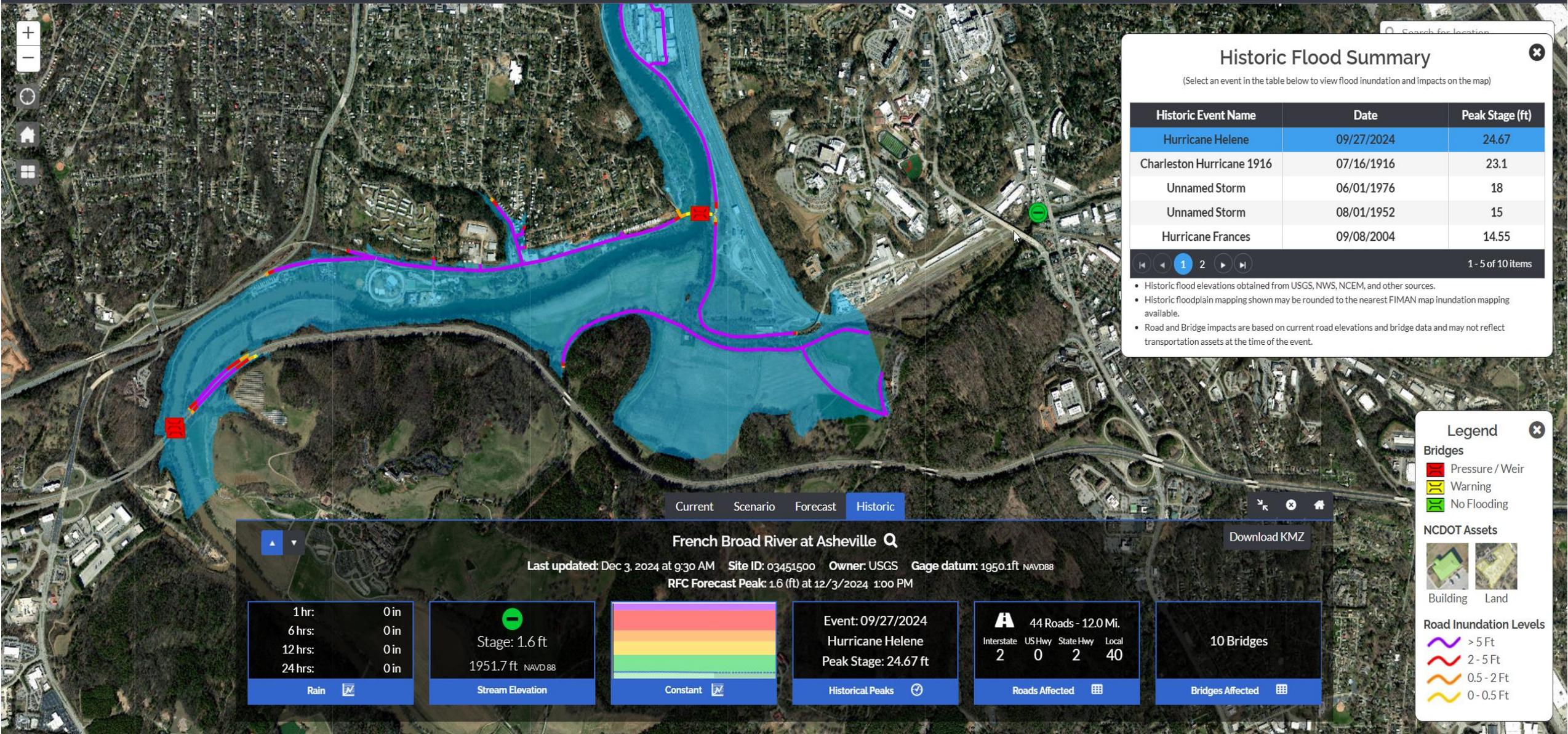
Add Stop

Now  Avoid 

4 hr 45 min
322 miles · Avoids Hurricane Impacted Area
 Tolls required **GO**

4 hr 48 min
247 miles · Avoids tolls
 Route may be affected by Hurricane Impacted Area [More](#) **GO**

5 hr 17 min
351 miles · Avoids Hurricane Impacted Area **GO**



Historic Flood Summary

(Select an event in the table below to view flood inundation and impacts on the map)

Historic Event Name	Date	Peak Stage (ft)
Hurricane Helene	09/27/2024	24.67
Charleston Hurricane 1916	07/16/1916	23.1
Unnamed Storm	06/01/1976	18
Unnamed Storm	08/01/1952	15
Hurricane Frances	09/08/2004	14.55

1 - 5 of 10 items

- Historic flood elevations obtained from USGS, NWS, NCEM, and other sources.
- Historic floodplain mapping shown may be rounded to the nearest FIMAN map inundation mapping available.
- Road and Bridge impacts are based on current road elevations and bridge data and may not reflect transportation assets at the time of the event.

Current Scenario Forecast **Historic**

French Broad River at Asheville

Last updated: Dec 3, 2024 at 9:30 AM Site ID: 03451500 Owner: USGS Gage datum: 1950.1ft NAVD88
RFC Forecast Peak: 1.6 (ft) at 12/3/2024 1:00 PM

1 hr: 0 in
6 hrs: 0 in
12 hrs: 0 in
24 hrs: 0 in

Rain

Stage: 1.6 ft
1951.7 ft NAVD88

Stream Elevation

Constant

Event: 09/27/2024
Hurricane Helene
Peak Stage: 24.67 ft

Historical Peaks

44 Roads - 12.0 Mi.

Interstate	US Hwy	State Hwy	Local
2	0	2	40

Roads Affected

10 Bridges

Bridges Affected

Legend

Bridges

- Pressure / Weir
- Warning
- No Flooding

NCDOT Assets

- Building
- Land

Road Inundation Levels

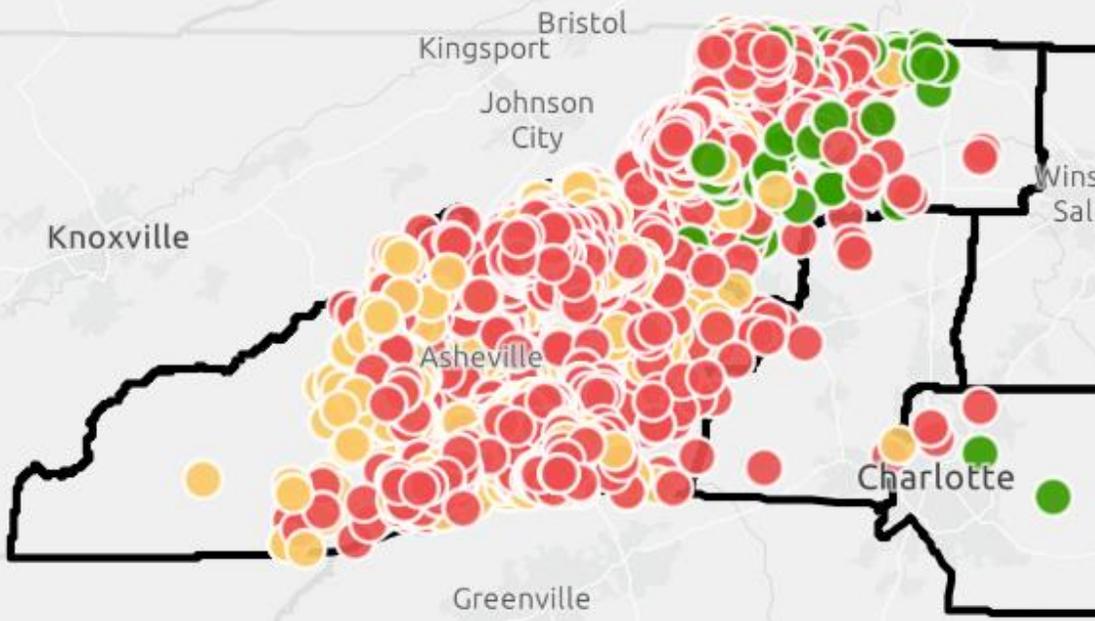
- > 5 Ft
- 2 - 5 Ft
- 0.5 - 2 Ft
- 0 - 0.5 Ft





**Temporary
Across Bridges**

9,400 Damage Sites
1,400 Roads Closed
89% Roads reopened



153 State-Maintained Roads remain closed

● 0 - 49% Complete

● 50-89% Complete

● >90% Complete



Garvey Bridge Rd



NC 81

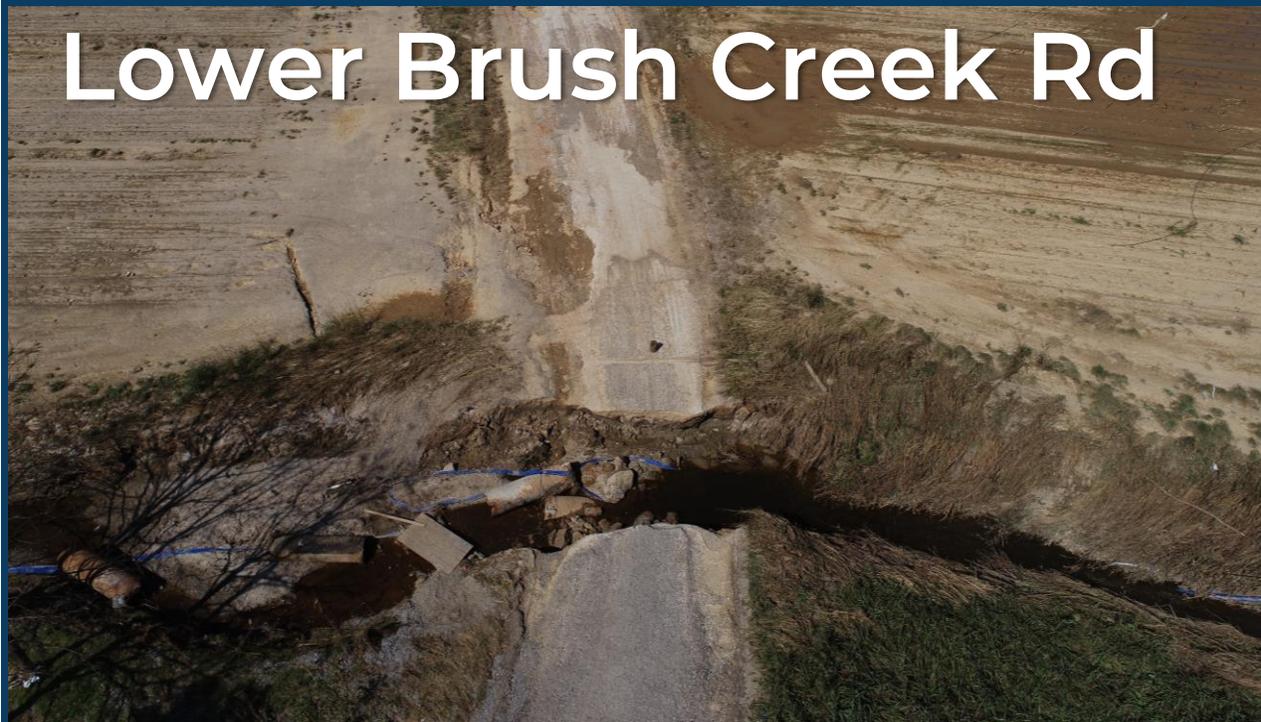
820 Bridges Damaged
232 Bridges complete
15 Permanently Replaced

Gap Creek Rd



904 Pipes Damaged
849 Pipes Completed
6% Remaining

Lower Brush Creek Rd



Garren Creek Rd



Fruitland Rd Henderson County



Filter Plant Rd Haywood County



US 276 S Transylvania County



US 64/US 74

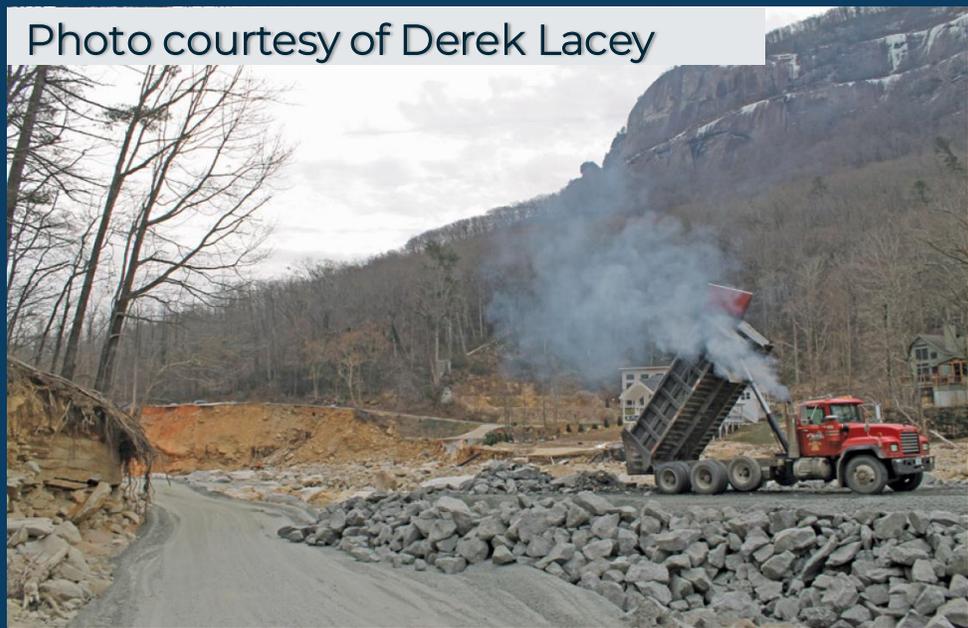


Photo courtesy of Derek Lacey

Major Corridors Damaged by Hurricane Helene

Route	County
I-40 Pigeon River Gorge	Haywood
Toe/Nolichucky	Yancey
US 19W North	Yancey
US 64/74 Chimney Rock	Rutherford
NC 197 Pensacola	Yancey
US 19W South	Yancey
US 74A	Henderson
US 64	Henderson



Mark Gibbs, PE – WNC STRONG Manager
Western Deputy Chief Engineer

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Alyson Tamer, PE, CPM
WNC STRONG Program Support Manager

awtamer@ncdot.gov

Discussion

Brett Howard, FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer
Colonel Brad Morgan, Army Corp of Engineers

Governor Josh Stein

Legislative Requests & Actions

Director Matt Calabria

Federal Requests

**Director Jim McCleskey &
Congressional delegation staff**

Hurricane Helene impacted North Carolina on September 27, 2024 and created a series of pressing needs

\$59.6B

Total estimated damages and needs

\$44.4B

Estimated direct cost

+

\$9.4B

Estimated indirect cost

+

\$5.8B

Strengthening and mitigation

=

106

North Carolinians lost their lives

185K

Homes damaged (estimated)

5K

Miles of state-maintained roads severely impacted

10K

Private roads, bridges, and culverts reported damaged

15M

Cubic yards of debris

Governor Stein requested \$25B in federal funding and policy changes to help meet recovery needs

Details follow

Requested funding would:



Assist the repair and reconstruction of homes



Restore critical infrastructure to keep people safe and spur economic activity



Keep businesses open, protect jobs, and boost local economies



Shore up local governments facing budget shortfalls



Reduce potential future impacts from flooding, wildfires, and severe weather

Requests made by Governor Stein

- 1 \$19.05B in additional funding (e.g., new and additional funding including competitive funding, and funding requested from HR 10545)
- 2 Federal policy and statutory changes
- 3 \$6.24B in eligibility-based funding

Governor Stein requested \$19B in additional funding across several federal agencies

Federal agency	Requested funding (in millions) ¹
Department of Transportation	\$7,720
Department of Housing and Urban Development	\$4,030
Department of Agriculture	\$1,870
Department of Homeland Security	\$1,790
Environmental Protection Agency	\$1,600
Department of Energy	\$1,080
Department of Commerce	\$340
Department of Defense	\$200
Department of Health and Human Services	\$150
Department of Education	\$110
Department of the Interior	\$90
Department of Labor	\$50
Department of the Treasury	\$20
Total	\$19,050

1. Requested funding refers to the total amount of funding requested by North Carolina per federal agency, including new and additional funds requested, competitive funds requested, and allocations from HR 10545 requested. These numbers do not reflect the additional eligibility-based funding expected.

Governor Stein requested a series of federal policy and statutory changes to help accelerate the recovery

EXAMPLES ARE PARAPHRASED

Request type	Examples
Deadline extensions	Extend application deadline for FEMA Individual Assistance for individuals and households by an additional 90 days
Reimbursement changes	Authorize FEMA to reimburse the cost of permanent repairs to private roads and bridges, using a 90%/10% federal-state cost share and increasing the reimbursement cap to \$85,000
Legislative actions	Pass the Disaster Case Management Cost Modernization Act to allow state emergency management divisions flexibility to spread the percentage of allowable management costs from FEMA funding across all open disasters
Program and policy changes	Ensure that HUD publishes a Universal Notice for Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) to enable HUD to rapidly review and approve NC's Action Plan
Infrastructure and environmental recovery support	Expedite review and potential approval from the US Department of Agriculture's Forest Service and the Army Corps of Engineers of special use permit (Form 299) to investigate sites in the Pisgah National Forest for quality rock material to rebuild I-40
Financial and economic recovery support	Grant the request of the Councils of Government/Local Development Districts (LDDs) across the Helene impacted area for \$2 billion in Appalachian Regional Commission funding over five years to support community and economic recovery

Governor Stein's full list of requested federal policy and statutory changes can be found in the appendix

The duration of 100% federal cost-sharing for certain categories of Public Assistance has been extended after past hurricanes

Hurricane	State or territory	Total damage (2024 \$B)	FEMA PA categories receiving 100% federal cost-sharing	Duration (from incident)	
				First announced	Final amendment
Hurricane Katrina (2005)	Louisiana	\$200B	• Category A: Debris removal	72 hours	490 days
	Mississippi		• Category B: Emergency protective measures	72 hours	625 days
Hurricane Maria (2017)	Puerto Rico	~\$115B	• Category A: Debris removal	180 days	270 days
			• Category B: Emergency protective measures	180 days	240 days
			• Category F: Public utilities, e.g., emergency power	N/A	330 days
Hurricane Ian (2022)	Florida	~\$110B	• Category A: Debris removal • Category B: Emergency protective measures	30 days	60 days
Hurricane Helene (2024)	North Carolina	~\$60B	• Category A: Debris removal • Category B: Emergency protective measures	180 days	180 days

100% cost sharing for FEMA Public Assistance (PA) programs has occurred when warranted by the needs of the disaster, and can enable quick and effective recoveries

Department of Commerce: HUD Action Plan & Timeline

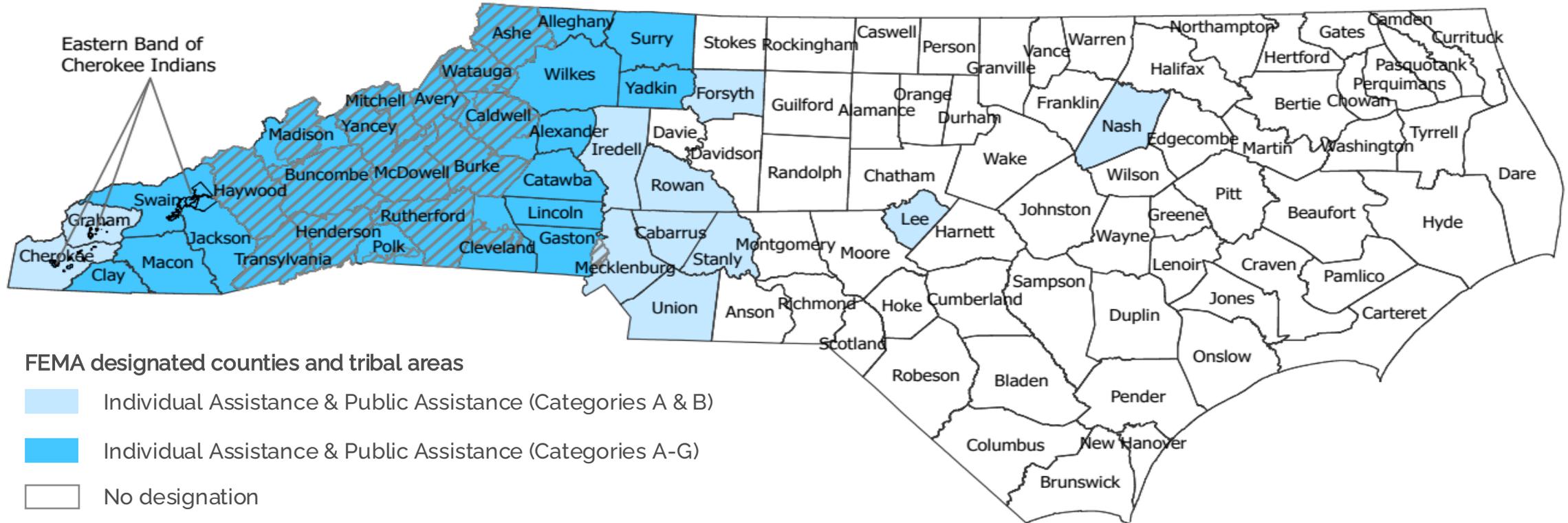
Secretary Lee Lilley

Stephanie McGarrah, Deputy Secretary for Community Revitalization

Jonathan Krebs, WNC Recovery Advisor

HUD-designated Most Impacted and Distressed (MID) areas

FEMA / HUD Helene MID areas



FEMA designated counties and tribal areas

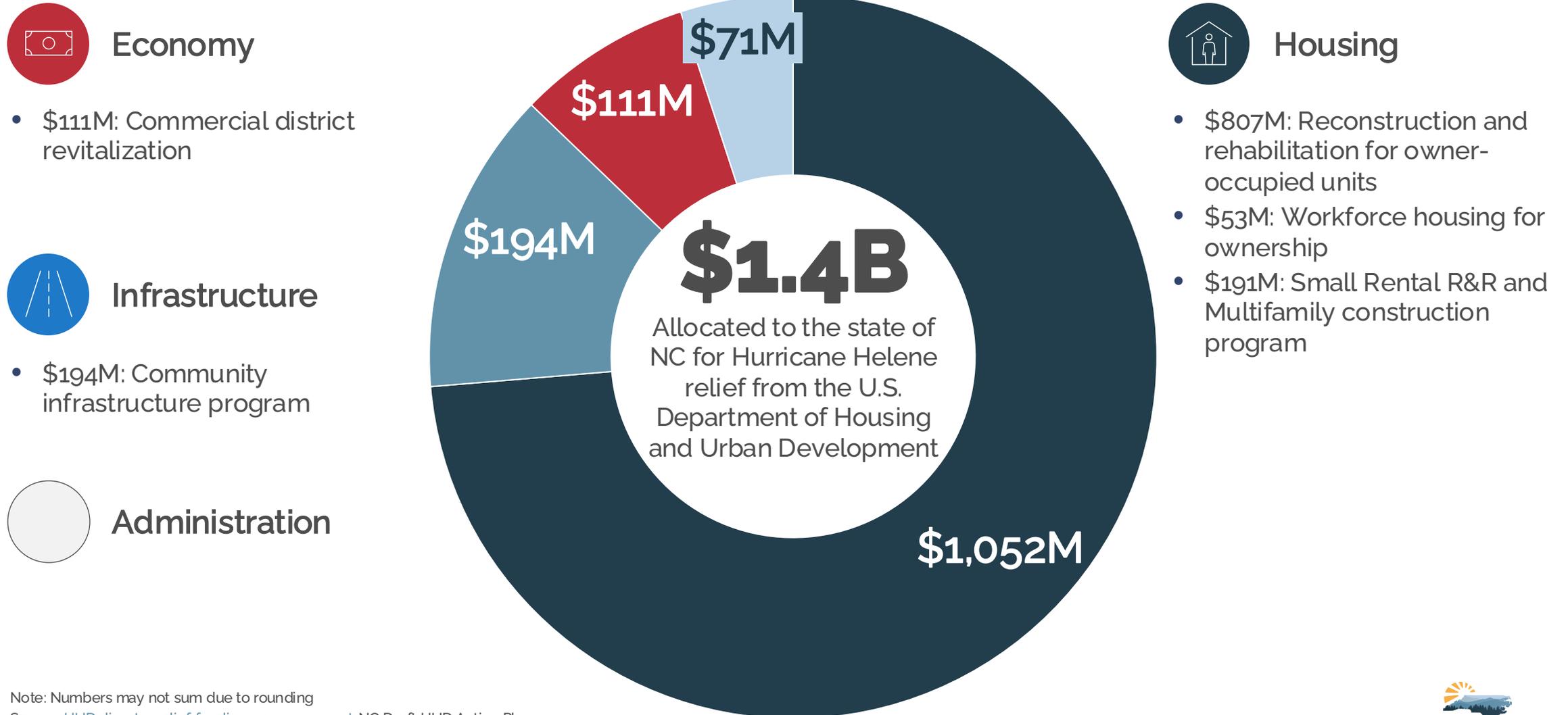
- Individual Assistance & Public Assistance (Categories A & B)
- Individual Assistance & Public Assistance (Categories A-G)
- No designation

HUD Designated Most Impacted & Distressed Areas

- HUD Designated Most Impacted & Distressed Area

The proposed breakdown allocates the majority of CDBG-DR funding to housing, with \$807M for owner-occupied unit reconstruction and rehabilitation

PRELIMINARY



Note: Numbers may not sum due to rounding

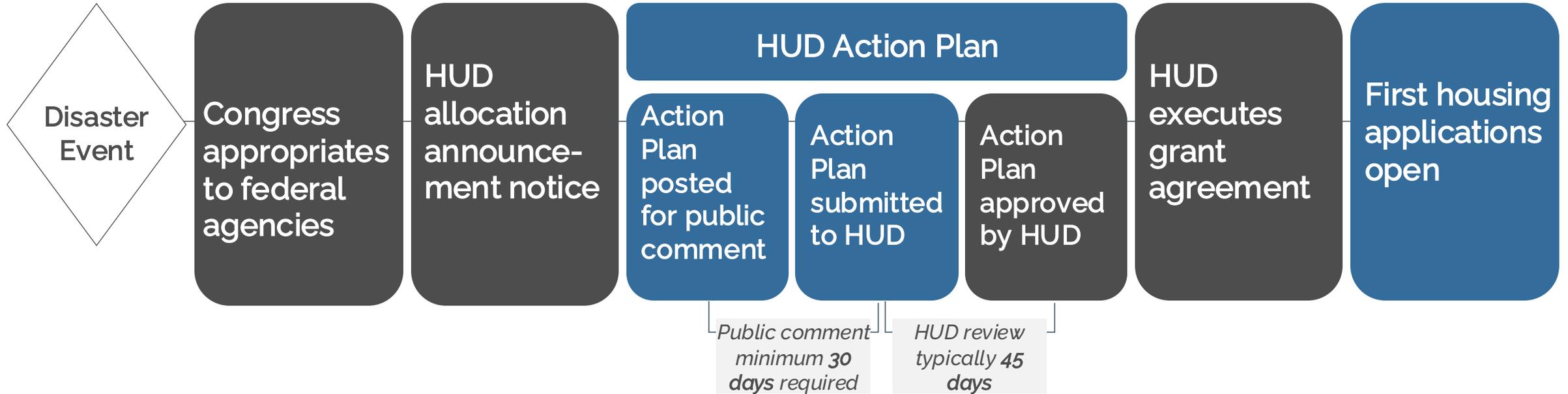
Source: [HUD disaster relief funding announcement](#); NC Draft HUD Action Plan

There are several milestones to complete before a housing recovery program can begin

DRAFT | FOR DISCUSSION

X State responsible for action

X Federal govt. responsible for action



State housing funds that require federal reimbursement will not effectively accelerate this process

NC's Helene housing recovery is generally outpacing the speed of several other recent recoveries

DRAFT | FOR DISCUSSION

State responsible for milestone

Outperforming median of other recoveries examined ↑
 On par with other recoveries examined —
 Underperforming median of other recoveries examined ↓

Milestones to stand up housing recovery (# days after start of FEMA incident period)

Disaster recoveries	Congress appropriates funds	HUD allocation announcement notice ¹	HUD Action Plan opened for comment	HUD Action Plan submitted	HUD Action Plan approved	HUD executes grant agreement	First housing applications open
Other recoveries (NYC/Sandy, TX/Harvey, PR/Maria, CA/2017 fires, FL/Ian)	<i>Range</i> 16 ⁴ - 94	129 - 310	146 - 400	178 - 436	192 - 523	247 - 682	254 - 570 ³
	<i>Median</i> 53	141	232.5	264	336	368	511.5
NC Florence (2018)	<i>Total</i> 28	514	529	553	598	710 ²	677 ²
NC Helene (2024)	<i>Total</i> 87 ↓	118 ↑	146 ↑	~180 ↑ (targeted)	~225 ↑ (targeted)	TBD ↑	~270 ↑ (targeted, spring/summer)

Despite a longer than average period between disaster and initial Congressional Appropriation of funds, North Carolina's progress through key recovery milestones is overall faster than several recent recoveries

Source: NYC SANDY: FEMA DR-4085; HUD Timing and Factors Analysis; HUD Action Plan; HUD Approval Announcement; New York Times Coverage; TX HARVEY: FEMA DR-4332; Appropriation Announcement (PL-115-56); CDBG-DR AAN FRN; TX Action Plan Timeline; HUD approval Announcement; PR MARIA: FEMA DR-4339; Appropriation Announcement (PL-115-72); CDBG-DR AAN FRN; HUD Action Plan; HUD Award Announcement; CA FIRES: FEMA DR-4344; HUD Action Plan; HUD Action Plan Approval Letter; ReCover CA Public Meeting Documents; NC FLORENCE: FEMA DR-4393; HUD Action Plan; CDBG-DR AAN FRN; NCDPS Press Releases; RebuildNC Quarterly Reporting; ReBuild NC Program Timeline; FL IAN: FEMA DR-4673; Appropriation Announcement (PL-117-328); CDBG-DR AAN FRN; Hurricane Ian Home Page and Timeline; NC HELENE: DCR CDBG-DR Timeline; FEMA DR-4827; Appropriation Announcement (PL-118-158); CDBG-DR AAN FRN;

- Using the effective date
- According to publicly available information, the Florence CDBG-DR Grant (P-19-NC-37-0DD2) was executed August 17, 2020, while applications opened on June 15, 2020. Applications may have been opened before funds were distributed due in an effort to offset the significant delays encountered earlier in the process.
- CA HCD Housing program was forecasted to open applications May of 2019
- For California, the Continuing Appropriations Act of 2018 and Supplemental Appropriations Act for Disaster Relief Requirements, 2017 (Public Law 115-56) were signed Sept 8, 2017 (~30 days before the CA wildfires), the \$7.4B in funding the law included for disaster recovery was used for CA's recovery effort (as determined in the eventual HUD AAN).

Department of Information Technology: Telecommunications Infrastructure

Secretary Teena Piccione

Next Steps and Wrap Up

Next meeting:

April 14 at 10 a.m. (virtual)



WNC Recovery

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Appendix

Federal policy and statutory changes requested by Governor Stein

(1/4)

1. Extend for an additional 180 days the 100% federal cost share for FEMA Emergency Work to ensure all the debris is removed. In December, the NC Department of Environmental Quality estimated that about 15 million cubic yards (CY) of debris material will need to be disposed of. However, the NC Department of Public Safety estimated that the total debris removal mission has disposed of only about 4.5 million CY of debris as of February 17, 2025. Delays have been driven by a range of factors, including the protracted ramp-up of the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the topographical and logistical complexity of the western North Carolina region. North Carolina set target deadlines for the US Army Corps of Engineers to assist with resource allocation and operational decisions. Those targets are:
 - Right of Way: first pass by March 1, 2025, and completion by April 1, 2025;
 - Waterway: all visible and hazardous debris removal completion by May 1, 2025, with remaining debris removed by June 1, 2025; and
 - Private and Commercial Property: completion by June 30, 2025.
2. Extend for an additional 90 days the application deadline for FEMA Individual Assistance (IA) for individuals and households who have sustained losses due to the disaster. The state recognizes this might need to be done in 30-day increments. The region's scale of property destruction and the high number of displaced individuals has prevented many eligible applicants from submitting timely submission for aid they desperately need.
3. Authorize FEMA to reimburse the cost of permanent repairs to private roads and bridges, similar to reimbursements for any other permanent work, and use a 90%/10% federal-state cost share. The state also asks that FEMA streamline the process authorizing Public Assistance for private roads and bridges repairs not covered by Individual Assistance awards. Additionally, the state requests that the \$40,000 cap is increased to \$85,000. The state supports North Carolina Congressional Delegation's Restoring Access to Mountain Homes bill.
4. Ensure that the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) publish a Universal Notice for Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBGDR) that enables HUD to rapidly review and approve NC's HUD Action Plan following a period of public comment and adjudication.
5. Extend the SBA loan application deadlines by three more months beyond March 8, 2025, for Physical Damage Loans and beyond June 30, 2025, for Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL). The insufficient SBA funding in the months after Helene hit North Carolina dissuaded many potential applicants from seeking an SBA loan. Allowing additional time for applications would ensure more people and businesses have access to necessary funding to recover from the storm

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6. Increase FEMA funding to remove the \$5 million cap and accelerate the impact of the Community Disaster Loan (CDL) program, similar to the federal government's changes to the program in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. These changes would allow disaster affected local governments to access low or no interest loans of up to 50% of their operating revenue. Additionally, North Carolina requests that the federal government keep the cancellation clause so that loans can be forgiven if the local governments can show lost revenues and/or un-reimbursable disaster-related expenses, that FEMA accelerate the timeline for forgiveness to one year after receiving the loan (as opposed to two or three years), and that FEMA consider canceling repayment of all or part of the CDL if a local government can demonstrate sustained, substantial revenue loss. The state also asks that FEMA disburse CDL funding within 90 days
7. Grant the request of the Councils of Government/Local Development Districts (LDDs) across the Helene impacted area for \$2 billion in Appalachian Regional Commission funding over five years for LDDs to support community and economic recovery. The funding will address recovery for small businesses, housing, local public infrastructure, and other local government needs. LDDs are uniquely positioned to aid localities in their recovery and assist in applying for, tracking, developing, and administering FEMA Public Assistance projects and other funding initiatives. The ARC represents the most flexible and least bureaucratic federal mechanism to assist communities affected by the disaster in Appalachia. Paired with the efficiency of LDDs, this can speed efforts and positively impact communities' recovery
8. Authorize FEMA to reimburse for permanent home repairs. FEMA was previously authorized to do so during Hurricane Harvey and implemented a direct repairs program through FEMA Individual Assistance that expedited housing recovery.
9. Increase US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) reimbursements from 80% to 100% for eligible costs to repair major corridors. This request is similar to what the federal government agreed to do in other major storms, like Superstorm Sandy and Hurricanes Irma, Maria, and Harvey.
10. Pass legislation to ensure that, like in the Disaster Recovery and Reform Act of 2018 (DRRA), SBA loans are not considered a duplication of benefits when an individual is seeking support from CDBG-DR. DRRA temporarily amended section 312 of the Stafford Act such that, for qualifying disasters (i.e., disasters declared between January 1, 2016 and December 31, 2021), an SBA loan was not a prohibited duplication of benefits so long as all federal assistance was used toward losses resulting from a declared major disaster; this amendment sunset in October 2023.

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11. Expand FEMA's RAPID Pay program to allow projects beyond just bridge replacement. The RAPID reimbursement program has been instrumental in speeding up recovery by allowing the NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT) to secure up-front funding for 41 bridge projects. The state requests that FEMA expand the use of RAPID Pay to additional bridge projects, as well as culverts and other eligible roadway projects, such as mudslide damage, guardrail repair, and pipe washouts. North Carolina has requested a waiver for Large Project Notification and asked FEMA to extend Expedited Project Worksheets. Those requests currently reside with FEMA; North Carolina requests approval of those waivers.
12. Expedite review and potential approval from the US Department of Agriculture's Forest Service and the Army Corps of Engineers of special use permit (Form 299) to investigate sites in the Pisgah National Forest for quality rock material to use to rebuild I-40, as well as authorize material storage sites near the construction project.
13. Extend Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) period for payments past the current deadline of March 29, 2025, to September 6, 2025, to ensure that those filing for benefits by the newly extended deadline of March 10, 2025, can still receive all benefit payments – 12 weeks of state payments and 14 more weeks of federal payments.
14. Minimize issues related to duplication of benefits when making CDBG-DR awards by not classifying uses of FEMA Housing Assistance (HA) awards as a duplication of benefit when those uses are not treated as a duplication if the recipient had used Other Needs Assistance (ONA) funding instead. Currently, the limits imposed by HA and ONA definitions create a duplication of benefits issue when the recipient seeks further federal assistance if they used HA funding for reasonable expenses, like transportation or food, instead of using ONA funding.
15. Extend deadlines in the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for the obligation and expenditure of State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds by two years (currently deadlines are 12/31/24 for obligation and 12/31/26 for expenditure).
16. Extend the 12/31/26 expenditure deadline for ARPA capital project funds by two years. Helene left a trail of destruction across over 70 telecommunications and internet providers, crippling their networks with submerged substations, thousands of toppled utility poles, and collapsed transmission towers. Given the extensive repairs needed to restore service, it's clear that providers will require additional time to return to full functionality. To ensure they can rebuild and expand broadband infrastructure, an extension of ARPA funds is essential, enabling them to invest in long-term recovery and growth.
17. Broaden eligibility of Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA 2) funding to include rental assistance for natural disaster victims, including those who were homeowners but are displaced from their homes.

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18. Prioritize the reconstruction of infrastructure and the restoration of national forests within Helene-damaged national parks. North Carolina requests that the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the US Forest Service strategically utilize existing funds and funds Congress appropriated in HR 10545 for these purposes. Investments will support the preservation of natural resources, ensure visitor safety, and revitalize local tourism, which is essential to North Carolina's economy. According to a 2023 National Park Service report, visitors to the state's national parks spend \$2.6 billion annually and support close to 39,000 jobs. Of particular concern is the Blue Ridge Parkway, the majority of which remains closed in North Carolina as of February 18, 2025. The Blue Ridge Parkway alone attracts approximately 16 million visitors to North Carolina annually.
19. Provide exemption from Build America, Buy America (BABA) requirements for all disaster related federal spending in disaster declared counties. While North Carolina recognizes the value of the BABA requirements in supporting key US industries, the increased cost, complexity, and time needed to comply is likely to slow critical aspects of Helene recovery. North Carolina requests that CDBG-DR and Rapid Unsheltered Survivor Housing (RUSH) expenditures be exempt from this legislation. Extending this exemption to other disaster funding sources would further expedite recovery.
20. The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) has also incurred damage and has needs as a result of Hurricane Helene. North Carolina is asking for the federal government to support the tribal lands in their recovery and provide swift funding and technical assistance. The EBCI will be eligible for FEMA IA, PA, and HMGP funding, as well as SBA disaster loans. Additionally, the state anticipates tribal lands will require funding from programs like the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Emergency Management Program and Tribal Climate Resilience Program, the Historic Preservation Fund within the Department of Interior, the US Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Disaster Assistance and Emergency Watershed Protection Program.
21. Implement a system akin to FEMA's RAPID Pay program at FHWA to ease cash flow burden and allow reimbursement upfront based on mutually agreed upon expense amounts.
22. Pass a bill to change FEMA reimbursement practices to ensure reimbursements for State Active-Duty costs, including domestic disaster response, incurred by a State's National Guard are returned to that particular National Guard, and not to the General Fund of the U.S. Treasury.
23. Pass the Disaster Management Cost Modernization Act, amending the Stafford Act to allow state emergency management divisions flexibility to spread the percentage of allowable management costs from FEMA funding across all open disasters.