

Recommendation for Landslide Hazards Programs by the Governor's Advisory Committee on Western North Carolina Recovery

At the May 12 meeting of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Western North Carolina Recovery, Dr. David Korte, Landslide Mapping Program Manager for the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ), presented on the landslide activity in western North Carolina during and following Hurricane Helene, the susceptibility of the region to future landslides, and the need for mitigation efforts. Dr. Korte described additional resources – including funding, training, and staff capacity – necessary to support the state's Landslide Hazards program as the State of North Carolina plans for, seeks to mitigate, and responds to future landslides. Members of the Advisory Committee expressed interest in making a recommendation in support of NCDEQ's Landslide Hazards Mapping program and a Landslide Early Warning System.

Consequently, at its June 9 meeting, the Advisory Committee voted to recommend that the North Carolina General Assembly provide funding for the following:

Landslide Hazards Mapping - \$6,100,000

Provides \$1.4 million in recurring funding and \$4.7 million in nonrecurring funding for landslide mapping in 15 unmapped counties¹, and remapping in nine counties across western North Carolina². These funds will also enable the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality to meet unprecedented demand from counties and the public for landslide and sinkhole response services. The funds will create teams of three people. One team will specialize in geotechnical engineering assessment and one team will specialize in first response by training with first responders. Both specialized teams perform inventory mapping to advance mapping completeness when not responding to landslides.

Landslide Early Warning System - \$600,000

Provides \$600,000 in nonrecurring funding for the creation of a western North Carolina-wide landslide early warning system. The service will provide county emergency management with the capability to issue targeted area specific landslide warnings, evacuation statements, and resource staging during extreme weather events. Outcomes for this request include reduction in landslide fatalities and injuries, improved resource targeting and staging for emergency services, and resident and emergency services awareness of conditions for potential landsliding and actions necessary when a warning is issued.

Twenty-four North Carolinians lost their lives to landslides during Hurricane Helene. The Advisory Committee believes that these resources would position North Carolina to more effectively plan for, respond to, and protect residents against future landslides.

¹ Allegheny, Ashe, Avery, Burke, Caldwell, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Madison, Mitchell, Swain, Wilkes, Yancey

² Buncombe, Cleveland, Henderson, Macon, McDowell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania, Watauga