

Cooper: Mark Robinson, other candidates are using Helene disinformation to 'sow chaos'

October 15, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Adam Wagner, News & Observer | Section: north carolina | 872 Words OpenURL Link

Disinformation and misinformation are harming the ability of storm-battered communities in Western North Carolina to receive federal aid at the time they need it most, Gov. Roy Cooper and FEMA Administrator Deanna Criswell said this week.

The remarks come after a man was arrested and charged with going armed to the terror of the public after allegedly roaming Rutherford County and saying he was going to harm FEMA workers. Criswell decided to pause door-to-door canvassing efforts in the area, which have since resumed.

"Frankly, it's heartbreaking to see words or acts of hatred toward anyone, let alone federal responders who are here to help people in this critical time. So let me be clear: I take these threats seriously and the safety of these responders is, and will remain, a priority for me and my team," Criswell said.

As of Tuesday morning, FEMA had approved more than 77,000 applications for its Individual Assistance program in the Helene-impacted counties, with survivors receiving more than \$99 million. More than 171,000 people have applied for aid, said Lucas Hitt, a FEMA spokesman.

Cooper pointed to the storm happening about a month before an election as a key reason for the volume of inaccurate and outright false information that has been spread about the storm and response.

"Candidates are using people's misery to sow chaos for their own political objectives, and it's wrong. This is a time where we all need to pull together to help the people of Western North Carolina and it's disappointing when candidates, knowing full well what they're doing, are continuing this kind of disinformation filled with lies," Cooper said Tuesday.

Disinformation is the intentional spread of false or misleading information, while misinformation is false information shared without intent.

Former President Donald Trump, the Republican nominee for president, has singled out Cooper, a Democrat, for criticism. Trump has amplified false claims that Cooper and President Joe Biden have "gone out of their way" to avoid sending aid to Helene-damaged parts of Western North Carolina that are more likely to vote Republican.

Trump has also falsely claimed that FEMA is only giving Helene survivors \$750 in assistance. The \$750 payment is an immediate, urgent payment to help people impacted by the storm meet daily needs like baby formula, food or gasoline. Even after people receive that payment, FEMA said, the agency will continue to consider eligibility for other funds.

Cooper also called out Mark Robinson, North Carolina's lieutenant governor and the Republican nominee in the governor's race. Immediately after Helene, Robinson started to claim that Cooper was failing the people of North Carolina, a claim he has repeated persistently as he's campaigned and helped organize a donation drive.

"He needs to stop it, and there are other people who need to stop this disinformation which is ending up hurting people who've lost everything," Cooper said.

North Carolina's Department of Public Safety has made law enforcement available to coordinate with officials on the ground, including FEMA employees and other volunteers who may be threatened, Cooper said.

People still missing

There are now 95 confirmed deaths from Tropical Storm Helene in North Carolina, N.C. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kody Kinsley said Tuesday.

The state has also formed a task force that will work with local law enforcement to review missing persons reports and see how many people are still unaccounted for after the storm. As of Tuesday, 92 people had been reported missing and have not been found, Cooper said.

"I want to caution that this is not a definitive count because the task force is continuing its work. The number will continue to fluctuate as more reports come in and others are resolved," Cooper said.

Cold weather coming

As temperatures have started to dip in Western North Carolina, the state is working to send cold-weather items like heaters, blankets and coats to the region.

In Buncombe County, a weather station at UNC-Asheville's campus recorded a 36-degree Fahrenheit temperature at 8 a.m. Tuesday. That the second time since Helene hit on Sept. 27 that the station has recorded a temperature below 40 degrees.

"We've seen a shift from the type of commodities that were the focus two weeks ago, kind of food and water, and are now moving into more of that cold-weather gear," said N.C. Emergency Management Director Will Ray, adding the state is working to fulfill those requests "as quickly as possible."

The state is working with the National Guard and Department of Transportation to make sure that people who have lost their homes are able to stay warm, Ray said. That also includes finding room in shelters or more stable temporary housing.

There are still 13 shelters open in Western North Carolina housing more than 500 people and 80 pets, Ray said.

About 4,600 people with storm-damaged homes are staying in hotels via FEMA's Transitional Sheltering Assistance program.

"We're trying to get every available option on the table to support those that have been impacted, particularly related to housing," Ray said.

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Under the Dome: Candidates flock to NC in final election push, Robinson to give update on CNN probe

October 15, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Emily Vespa, News & Observer | Section: politics government | 769 Words OpenURL Link

Good morning and welcome to the Under the Dome newsletter. I'm Emily Vespa.

As North Carolina's early voting is set to begin Thursday, campaigns are making a final push to court voters in our major battleground state.

Vice President Kamala Harris greeted an electric crowd Sunday at a campaign event in Greenville, where she drew a stark contrast between herself and her Republican presidential opponent, report Tammy Grubb and Avi Bajpai.

The Democratic presidential nominee told those gathered at East Carolina University that if elected, her plans would include:

Middle-class tax cutsHelping first-time homebuyersExpanding the federal child tax creditAdding home healthcare coverage to Medicare

Harris started her speech by acknowledging the damage Hurricane Helene left as it tore through Western North Carolina. Harris packed relief supplies for the region on Saturday night in Raleigh. A week prior, she met with an Asheville family displaced by the storm, reports Tammy Grubb.

Also on Sunday, GOP vice presidential nominee JD Vance paid a visit to Charlotte Motor Speedway for a NASCAR race. He'll be back in the state Wednesday for a rally in Wilmington.

Tim Walz, the Democratic vice presidential nominee, will stop in Durham and Winston-Salem on Thursday, reported ABC11, The News & Observer's media partner.

ROBINSON TO SHARE LEGAL UPDATE ON CNN INVESTIGATION

After an explosive CNN report last month tied Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson to racist and sexually explicit comments on a porn website - which the GOP gubernatorial nominee denied authoring - U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis gave Robinson a deadline to disprove the allegations, a deadline that has passed.

Robinson announced he had hired a legal team to investigate what he said were CNN's "false smears," but he's been mum on its findings.

This morning, Robinson will hold a news conference on the investigation, which he previously said would enable the campaign "to use every legal means to hold CNN accountable for their lies."

Keep an eye out for our coverage of that later today.

And in case you missed it over the weekend, here's more on the departures from Robinson's campaign and staff from Dawn Baumgartner Vaughan.

STATE SUPREME COURT CANDIDATES TALK PARTISANSHIP, PHILOSOPHY

The candidates for the North Carolina Supreme Court traded their thoughts on partisanship and judicial philosophy at a forum Friday, Kyle Ingram reports. Democratic Justice Allison Riggs and Republican Court of Appeals Judge

Jefferson Griffin are running for a seat on the state's highest court, which currently has a 5-2 Republican majority.

Though the race is partisan, at the decision of the General Assembly, both candidates said they'd leave partisanship aside when making decisions.

When it comes to judicial philosophy, Griffin said he favors a strict interpretation of the law, though he said he has agreed with judges who espouse different views in the past.

Riggs said she sees the concept differently. "I want to be joined with smart critical thinkers, folks who are willing to discuss with different approaches and avoid group think," she said. "So I embrace a judicial methodology, not a judicial philosophy."

WHAT ELSE WE'RE WORKING ON

This week, former North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory will help launch a group dedicated to building confidence in elections. He's leading efforts to establish a North Carolina chapter of RightCount, a nonprofit that works to educate voters on elections integrity. Read more on McCrory's mission from Danielle Battaglia. Kyle Ingram takes a look at the life cycle of an absentee ballot in NC, from requesting the ballot to when it's eventually counted. Lowell Simon, a Democratic candidate for N.C. House, was arrested last week after a deputy saw him remove political signs from a roadside in Moore County, which is against state law during an election period. Tammy Grubb has the details.

WHAT ELSE WE'RE READING

Robinson's campaign used several photos protected by copyright for its official website without permission, which could prompt legal troubles, WUNC reported Friday.

VOTER GUIDE

In the latest candidate questionnaires from our 2024 NC Voter Guide, see what candidates for U.S. House District 1 have to say about the issues, and learn more about their biographies.

One candidate answered our questions:

Democrat Don Davis

Today's newsletter was written by Emily Vespa. Check your inbox tomorrow for more #ncpol.

You can sign up to receive the Under the Dome newsletter at newsobserver.com/newsletters. Want your friends to get our email, too? Forward them this newsletter so they can sign up. We want to know what you would like to see in the Under the Dome newsletter. Do you like highlights from the legislature? Political analysis? Do you have a question you'd like The News & Observer team to answer? Tell us here. You can also email us at dome@newsobserver.comDon't forget to follow our tweets and listen to our Under the Dome podcast for more developments.

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Who's the Triangle's top dog? Meet the 'foster fail' crowned the cutest pup in our contest

October 15, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Chyna Blackmon, News & Observer | Section: local | 1137 Words OpenURL Link

We could all use some photos of a cute dog right now.

After taking in dozens of nominations for picture-perfect pups, one has come out on top as the winner of The News & Observer's cutest dog contest.

Out of 81 furry friends around the Triangle, one small pup with a big personality collected the most votes in our competition: Boogie, a 3.5-year-old rescue dog from Durham.

boogieBoogie, a 3.5 year old pup from Durham voted the cutest dog in the Triangle area.

Meet Boogie

Boogie, also nicknamed Boogie Woogie, Boogie Woog and Perfect Boy, is a mix between a miniature American shepherd and poodle with a "splash of lab," according to his pawrent, Liza Darnell.

boogieBoogie, a 3.5 year old pup from Durham voted the cutest dog in the Triangle area.

"I actually started off saying I would foster Boogie but within a week, I was like, 'No, this is my dog,'" she said. "Boogie is a foster fail... He's my only. I'm single, no kids, so we are together and having fun all the time."

Originally named Buddy, the pup was rescued and renamed by Darnell earlier this spring after she got him from CrisisDogsNC. At the time, he wasn't in the best shape but now, six months later, he's happier and healthier in his forever home.

"I don't know much about where he came from before that." she said.

boogie n&o cutest dog contestA photo of Boogie when his owner first rescued him from CrisisDogsNC.

"When I got him, he had been completely shaved down. He was really matted. The rescue organization got him, and he was about 15 pounds. Now he's 24 pounds, so he's put on a good amount of weight and healthy weight, and his hair is all grown out and floofy."

Since then, the little dog has made quite a big impact even outside of his home and around his community downtown.

boogie n&o cutest dog contestBoogie, a 3.5 year old pup from Durham voted the cutest dog in the Triangle area.

Boogie's favorite places

Darnell says he loves walking around the warehouse district, different breweries, Central Park and even prancing around Duke East Campus to "greet all the students who are missing their dogs from home."

"He is just incredibly friendly," Darnell explained. "My last dog was 14, and I had to put him to sleep last summer, and he was toothless and tried to bite everyone and was not friendly, but still my perfect dog.

"So it's wonderful to have this one who just wants to cuddle with everyone, and when everyone we meet says, 'Oh

my gosh, that is the cutest dog I've ever seen. What is he? Where did you get him? Can I have him?' So it's a delight to walk him around."

boogie n&o cutest dog contestBoogie, a 3.5 year old pup from Durham voted the cutest dog in the Triangle area.

But Boogie isn't just a friendly face to strangers. Darnell says her "incredibly cuddly" playful pup is also a big fan of seeing his own reflection in the mirror.

"Often in the morning I wake up to him talking to himself in the mirror having full conversations with whimpers, gurgles and the occasionally happy bark," she explained. "He'll go on for several minutes. I think it's his daily self pep talk."

boogie n&o cutest dog contestBoogie, a 3.5 year old pup from Durham voted the cutest dog in the Triangle area.

While Darnell obviously has a soft spot for her fluffy pup, she says her family, friends and even neighbors were excited about Boogie taking the official title of the cutest dog around the Triangle.

"I think it's absolutely true, and it would be true whether we had the award or not," she told The News & Observer. "There are so many cute dogs in the Triangle. This is just an enormous honor. He's got a big entourage of very heavy voters, from my friends and building, and my mom and family. So they're all very, very thrilled as well."

boogie n&o cutest dog contestBoogie, a 3.5 year old pup from Durham voted the cutest dog in the Triangle area.

The News & Observer's cutest dog contest finalists

There were 20 lovable finalists for our contest. Here are the names and ages of the other 19, along with their favorite hobbies or fun facts:

Gulliver (3.5) is a chiweenie from Raleigh. He loves sniff-safari excursions and olfactory educational experiences. Goose (4 months) is a miniature bernedoodle from Raleigh. His favorite hobbies are meeting new people and dogs, and eating things that aren't food. Lucy (9) is a pug from Raleigh. She is a three-time cancer survivor who loves loves barking at the trash truck, eating strawberries, taking naps, and watching the Carolina Hurricanes play hockey on TV.Pepper (1.5) is a pug from Raleigh who loves to play fetch more than anything. Evanston (3) is a schnoodle from Morrisville. He was named after his owners' college town. Tahoe (6) is a terrier from Chapel Hill who loves to sunbathe. Wallace (6 months) is a golden retriever from Raleigh who loves to run after tennis balls but not retrieve them. Uki (5) is a husky, pit bull and boxer mix from Raleigh who loves going on long walks and meeting people. Olive (6) is a miniature beagle. She was rescued from a breeding operation after being forced to deliver several litters. Her human says her hobby is "making a variety of interesting odors." Marple (4) is a foxhound mix from Chapel Hill. Her owner says: "Living with Marple is like living with a grad student. She is always on alert, trying to stay on top of what is happening, who is doing what and nervous when things change." Ted (15) is a mutt from Durham. He loves eating peanut butter, and he always licks his paws after eating it. Sara (13) is a beagle, boxer and lab mix. She was a rescue from the Wake County SPCA. Poque (4) is a cocker spaniel from Cary. Pogue loves hiding biscuits. Coco (11) is a golden retriever. Her human says "she loves to sneak into the back creek when we're not watching." Lacey (1.5) is a miniature schnauzer from Apex. She likes to play fetch with a tennis ball and loves belly rubs. Gio Versace (6 months) is a papillion from Cary who likes watching WRAL. Bodhi (14 months) is a Welsh terrier from Cary. His favorite hobby is playing with his older brother, Loki. Tyrion (7) is a Pekingese from Raleigh who likes watching football and napping. Benji (1) is a miniature dachshund from Cary. His human says "he is a tiny, cuddly, people lover but has a bark triple his size!"

Stay tuned for our next cutest pet contest, which will feature the area's adorable cats and kittens!

After thousands of votes, meet the winner of The Charlotte Observer's cutest dog contest

Support these Western NC artisans + Helene storm victims at 2024 NC State Fair

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Foundation offering relief grants for nonprofits

October 15, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: FROM STAFF REPORTS | Section: News | 245 Words OpenURL Link

On Wednesday, the Gateway Wellness Foundation announced emergency relief for nonprofits who have been impacted by Hurricane Helene.

"At Gateway Wellness Foundation, we recognize that our nonprofit partners are critical to our region's relief and recovery efforts, and we are proud to partner with the Dogwood Health Trust to provide an initial disaster relief grant opportunity to support your Hurricane Helene emergency response efforts," reads an announcement from Gateway.

Gateway Wellness Foundation is providing emergency relief to those affected by Hurricane Helene in the form of grants to nonprofit organizations in Burke, McDowell, Polk, and Rutherford counties.

Funds may be used to provide direct assistance to individuals affected by Hurricane Helene and/or support the applicant organization in recovering from or responding to Hurricane Helene. Grant funds are intended to cover the costs of providing emergency relief services to individuals or eligible organizations affected by the storm.

Grants will be accepted and awarded on a rolling basis.

Please submit only one request for funding at this time.

The recommended maximum grant request is \$25,000. Requests in the range of \$5,000-\$10,000 are more likely to be fully funded.

Organizations applying for a grant must be:

- "• A community-based nonprofit designated by the IRS as a tax-exempt 501©(3) organization, a faith-based organization, or a public agency serving individuals and families that were affected by Hurricane Helene. "
- Serving the following counties: Burke, McDowell, Polk, Rutherford.

If you have any questions or connectivity is an issue, please contact Sarah Morse: s.morse@gatewaywf.org.

Gateway's Disaster Relief Grant Opportunity webpage: gatewaywellnessfoundation.org/hurricane-relief-efforts-grants/.

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Former Greensboro school a possible shelter

October 15, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: KEVIN GRIFFIN Staff Reporter | Section: News | 443 Words OpenURL Link

The Federal Emergency Management Agency will soon be taking control of the former American Hebrew Academy in Greensboro for potential use in Hurricane Helene recovery efforts.

The agency confirmed the plans in a statement.

"As part of our effort to ensure that every available resource is mobilized, FEMA will soon sign an agreement with the Department of Health and Human Services to transfer the Greensboro Facility in North Carolina, previously operated by HHS, to FEMA," according to the release. "The Greensboro facility will be another resource to ensure that FEMA has access to a wide array of assets and resources should they be needed for the recovery."

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services had earmarked the property at 4334 Hobbs Road for use as a facility housing migrant teens without parents or guardians.

However, the site has not been used for that purpose so far. Last week, officials such as Greensboro Mayor Nancy Vaughan raised the possibility of using the site as a potential shelter for people displaced by Helene.

U.S. Rep. Kathy Manning, who has also been advocating for the site as a possible resource in the recovery, said in a statement Wednesday that she was pleased the agencies were coming to an agreement.

"In this moment of urgent need for food, health services and housing for our neighbors in western North Carolina, I am fully committed to mobilizing resources swiftly and ensuring they reach all those impacted by this unprecedented storm," Manning said via the statement.

It is not clear how many people the site might hold as a shelter, though it was set up to accommodate 800 residents and 1,500 workers when it was slated to serve as the migrant teen center.

When asked about the possibility of the site being used as shelter, some neighbors said they had not heard about that possibility.

One neighbor who lives near the property who declined to give his name said he felt it would be an inappropriate use. The neighbor said the site was suitable for use as a school but not much other than that.

"Anything beyond that, especially anything that requires special services or special care especially with either younger populations or older populations, it's not suited for that in the middle of a residential district," the neighbor said.

However, at least some of the neighbors were more supportive of the idea of the site being used for hurricane response.

Melba Brown said she had not heard about the site being possibly used as part of the storm response but that she would be in favor of the idea.

"I think it would be a great idea for people that don't have anywhere to go from the hurricane," Brown said.

kevin.griffin@greensboro.com

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Morganton's greenway, ball fields, parks ravaged by flooding. It may take millions to repair.

October 15, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: Chrissy Murphy | Section: Government Politics | 701 Words OpenURL Link

As Hurricane Helene approached, Morganton parks and recreation officials moved equipment like mowers and golf carts to higher ground at Catawba Meadows Park.

Andrew Tallent, assistant director of Morganton's parks and recreation department, said staff expected flooding similar to Hurricane Frances in 2004. Flood water was about 2 feet deep in the field house near the ball fields in 2004.

Flood waters ended up being more than 7 feet deep after Hurricane Helene swept through as a tropical storm. The flooding filled the concessions stand with water and ruined the room where brand new baseball and softball equipment was stored. Mowers, golf carts, Gator utility vehicles and maintenance machines were flooded and now won't start. The ball fields were left covered in silt.

Bleachers were thrown on top of dugouts. Fencing around the fields was mangled by the water and debris. Sinkholes swallowed some of the ground around the fields.

Morganton Parks and Recreation Director Bryan Fish said the smell was rancid when staff first made it into the flooded park. He said the combination of the contaminants in the water plus the wet food from the concessions stand sent a putrid odor throughout the building.

Catawba Meadows wasn't the only park that took a hit.

On the Catawba River Greenway, sand covers the path in some parts. An ice machine was carried from the Town Tavern area all the way to the greenway at Catawba Meadows, where it still sat nearly two weeks after the storm.

Trees fell on different parts of the greenway. Bridges and boardwalks over or near the river have been damaged.

Pieces of the greenway boardwalk behind the River Village shopping center were torn apart and mangled, moved by the flooding and current.

The water was so high and powerful at the Catawba River Soccer Complex, next to the greenway and behind the Ingles grocery, that the soccer goals were lifted over the fencing, which was also battered.

"I was devastated, probably a little emotional," Fish said. "But the times we're in right now? Yes, the ball fields are not in great shape and are going to need some work, but there's people who have lost homes and possibly family members to the storm. So in comparison, it's not as bad as some other people may have it."

Fish estimated repairs for Catawba Meadows could cost millions of dollars. City Manager Sally Sandy said the city's insurance, including flood insurance, plus FEMA funding would help, but it will take time before the city knows exactly how much repairs will cost.

For now, the city is in the cleanup phase. Fish said city staff have been suiting up in gloves, masks and boots to clean out the buildings hit hard by flooding.

"It's been a full team effort," Fish said.

It could be months before Catawba Meadows can be reopened.

The city has reopened the following parks:

Freedom Park (Independence Boulevard)Martha's Park (Collett Street)Martin Luther King Jr. Park (Alphabet Lane off Bouchelle Street)Skate park (King Street near Collett Street)Carbon City Park (Carbon City Road near Morganton Department of Public Safety Station No. 2)

Until the other parks can be fully assessed for safety, the city asked people to stay out of the parks and off the greenway. Sandy said the storm damage could be dangerous.

"We know how important our facilities are for people, so we're going to do our best to make this as short a time as possible. But it is going to take some time, and we ask for people's patience. ... We don't need to add more tragedy to this event," Sandy said.

She said once the damaged parks and the greenway have been evaluated, the city will look at reopening each park in phases. There may be opportunities to volunteer to help with cleaning up the parks sometime in the future, Sandy said.

Seeing the dedication of city employees and community members has been a light in a dark place throughout the storm, Sandy said.

"I could not be prouder of the city of Morganton employees and their response to this disaster, or more grateful to all of the outside help and our community's offers of help," Sandy said. "In the face of the devastation, those are the sides of this that let you know how much good is still out there."

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Burke looks to get help with storm expenses

October 15, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: SHARON MCBRAYER smcbrayer@morganton.com| Section: News | 429 Words OpenURL Link

Since Hurricane Helene hit Burke County as a tropical storm, the county's bills have started to rack up.

The county hired a hauling service to pick up storm debris throughout the county. The estimated cost of debris removal is \$3 million to \$5 million, Burke County Manager Brian Epley said. The county will likely start getting billed for the service in the next month.

Another expense: County employees have worked overtime on storm-related issues. There are 156 county employees working on storm management who have been working 18 hours a day doing regular jobs in addition to storm management, Epley said. The team has worked at least 12 days straight without a day off.

The county also bought supplies such as ice and generators that failed because of flooding.

The county may get some of those expenses reimbursed by FEMA, Epley said. To get those reimbursements, the county is looking to contract with a firm to guide it through the process.

The county is seeking bids for comprehensive disaster recovery management services. The county would work with the service for up to three years, with two additional one-year optional renewal periods. The closing date for the bid requests is Oct. 24, according to county documents.

"The FEMA process for us may go on for two years," Epley said.

He said there are so many things to consider when it comes to getting reimbursed for storm damage, including tracking time county staff spend working on the storm, debris removal, all the emergency response and administrative work.

Epley said there are a variety of applications the county has to fill out on the FEMA website, be approved, and then go through a complicated process of submitting invoices for reimbursement. Many counties impacted by the storm will go through the process, Epley said.

"There are a tremendous amount of regulatory compliance metrics that have to be done appropriately to ensure that we govern, rebuild the right way and remain whole financially for what we do," Epley said. "And so this RFP will allow us to onboard (a firm) who's an expert in this industry, who can advise us on what's in our best interest, and then anything we pay to them contractually we also can file reimbursement for it. We expect to get that back."

Need FEMA assistance?

For burke county residents who suffered damage due to the storm, the FEMA hotline 800-621-3362 is available every day from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.

You can also visit DisasterAssistance.gov, or use the FEMA app.

To find other resources and information on recovery from the storm, the county has a webpage dedicated to it at www.burkenc.org/helene.

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Donate money instead

October 15, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC)
Author: SARAH C. JOHNSON sjohnson@hickoryrecord.com BILLY CHAPMAN wchapman@hickoryrecord.com| Section: News| 861 Words
OpenURL Link

Send money, not water.

That's the advice Catawba County United Way Executive Director Mark Bumgarner offered Wednesday for people wanting to aid people in the portions of North Carolina ravaged by Hurricane Helene.

At one point, the Catawba County United Way had four drop-off sites for donations. As of Wednesday, all sites have been closed to donations.

Bumgarner said donations were stacked to the ceiling in every room of the Catawba County United Way office building. Volunteers would send out the donations. As soon as the mountain of items disappeared, new donations would arrive to take their place.

"We are actively turning people away with donations now. Not because we want to but because we have to,"
Bumgarner said. On Wednesday, there were still piles of items throughout the Catawba County United Way offices.
Bumgarner said the Catawba County United Way also has two warehouses full of items such as toiletries,
nonperishables and bottled water.

Bumgarner said the Catawba County United Way sent supplies in small amounts to pocket communities near Marion and Hendersonville that still needed help on Wednesday.

"There is the possibility that we may need to warehouse things for just a small amount of time until the need develops again, or we see if the need develops again," Bumgarner said. "I certainly can't rule out that if we discover that western North Carolina truly has what it needs, and that's not going to be an issue, then depending on what happens in Florida (as Hurricane Milton approaches) some of these things get sent to Florida. I don't know those answers yet, it's still too fluid."

Bumgarner said the response made him proud to live in Catawba County.

Bumgarner said he appreciates that people still want to help. He said the best way to help now is to send money. Bumgarner said checks can be brought to Catawba County United Way. Monetary donations can also be given to the United Way of North Carolina, the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army and the Samaritan's Purse.

"If you're not sure about who a legitimate partner is, feel free to call us and we'll give you tools for you to research organizations for yourself before you make a donation," Bumgarner said. The Catawba County United Way can be contacted at 828-327-6851. The office is located at 2760 Tate Blvd. in Hickory.

McDowell County

Our neighbors to the west in McDowell and Burke counties are recovering from flooding.

McDowell County suffered devastating flooding, especially in Marion and Old Fort, during Hurricane Helene.

Burke County experienced major flooding as well in Morganton and Glen Alpine. Areas along the Catawba River were ravaged by the intense overflow.

McDowell County has stopped accepting donations of supplies, according to the county's Hurricane Helene

information website mcdowellcares.org.

Money can still be donated to McDowell County by visiting mcdowellcares.org.

Burke County

Burke County has stopped accepting donations, too. "Our donation room is full of surplus supplies, and the number of individuals seeking assistance through donations continues to decrease now that power is rapidly restored," Burke County officials said in a news release on Monday.

Burke County said their donation center at 2128 S. Sterling St. stopped taking donations at 8 p.m. on Tuesday. The county said donations can be restarted at any time if the need arises.

"Thanks to your incredible outpouring of support, the community is saturated with clean water, food, hygiene supplies, blankets, and other items," Burke officials said. "Burke County will continue to warehouse the surplus supplies and to serve as a western North Carolina resource hub."

If Burke County citizens need help getting supplies, they can still contact one of four fire departments: George Hildebran Fire/Rescue, Longtown Fire Department, Enola Fire Department, Brendletown Fire/Rescue station 1 or the Jonas Ridge Fire Department.

"The community is returning to work, school and their daily responsibilities," Burke County said. "This requires relief eff orts to transition from short-term, life-sustaining eff orts to a more long-term relief strategy that supports housing, food and economic insecurities."

Anyone who wishes to donate money toward relief in Burke County can send money to the Community Foundation of Burke County. The group set up an emergency relief fund to provide grants to local nonprofits providing resources for housing, food and economic insecurities created by hurricane Helene. As of Monday, the fund had raised more than \$100,000. The fund will provide grants of up to \$10,000, according to the foundation's website.

FEMA rumors

"There's things out there like FEMA is confiscating items or supplies, there's no truth at all to that," FEMA spokesperson Nate Custer said, referring to a rumor that FEMA is taking donated items and not disbursing them to affected communities. "We always say, particularly for people outside the affected area, a cash contribution is the most effective way (to help)."

Custer said people should give to the Red Cross or other established organizations. Custer also said well-intentioned deeds may not be helpful.

"People get a pick-up, get a few neighbors, get a few supplies in a truck and head on down to western North Carolina," Custer said. "That's difficult with the roads, they're not sure where to go, there's a problem in not knowing exactly where to drop those (donations off)."

Sarah Johnson is the courts and breaking news reporter for the Hickory Daily Record.

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East Burke football falls to Bunker Hill in 1st game back

October 15, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: FROM STAFF REPORTS | Section: News | 700 Words OpenURL Link

CLAREMONT — The East Burke football team dropped a Catawba Valley 2A Conference road game in its return following a three-week period of inactivity due to Hurricane Helene, falling 34-12 at Bunker Hill on Friday night.

The Cavaliers (1-4, 0-2 CVAC) were led on the ground by running backs Caden Buff (8-42-1) and Zayne Newman (11-24). Quarterback Carter Bennett completed 8 of 16 passes for 93 yards and a touchdown with one interception, hitting targets Barger Shook (386-1) and Nathan Rees (3-15).

The EBHS defense was led by Cannon Morrison (11 tackles, one for loss), Jordan Fox (six tackles, one for loss), Ossie Burkeen (five tackles, one for loss) and Zac Bennett (four tackles, interception, two pass breakups).

VOLLEYBALL

East Burke 3, West Caldwell 0: The Lady Cavaliers (11-9, 7-6 CVAC) earned a conference sweep at home in Icard on Thursday, winning 25-10, 25-20, 25-5.

Offensively, EBHS was led by Karlie Chester (nine kills, ace), Addy Fortenberry (five kills, two aces, 20 assists), Kyndal Morrison (five kills), Raegan Carter (three kills), Amanda McLean (two kills), Ashaunah Reinhardt-Phillips (two kills, ace, assist), Ella Beth Oxentine (two kills, assist) and Sarah Angel (assist).

EB's defensive leaders were Hermione Garro (10 digs, 10 receptions), Fortenberry (six digs, two blocks), Bree Winkler (five digs, five receptions), Angel (four digs, reception), Morrison (three digs, two blocks, reception), Reinhardt-Phillips (three digs, two receptions), Oxentine (three digs), Giselle Martinez (three digs, reception), McLean (two digs), Chester (two digs, two receptions), Carissa Towery (two digs, three receptions), Hayden Lowman (two digs), Carter (dig, two receptions) and Lindsay Erskine (two receptions).

South Caldwell 3, Freedom 0: The Lady Patriots (3-16, 0-7 NWC) fell in straight sets in conference play on the road in Sawmills on Thursday, losing 25-16, 25-21, 25-12.

Offensive leaders for FHS included Kaitlyn Hagmann (six kills, two aces), Ava Whitaker (six kills), Mia Furches (kill, ace), Kaitlyn Taylor (ace, assist) and Kennedy Denton (nine assists).

On the defensive side, Freedom was led by Hagmann (six digs, block), Emma Buchanan (three digs), Denton (two digs), Cassidy Taylor (two digs), Whitaker (dig, two blocks), Kaitlyn Taylor (dig), Madelyn LeMaster (four blocks) and Furches (three blocks).

Hendersonville 3, Patton 1: The Lady Panthers (14-6, 4-5 Mountain Foothills 7 1A/2A Conf.) fell below .500 in league play with a four-set loss on the road in Hendersonville on Thursday, falling 12-25, 23-25, 26-24, 24-26.

No more details were available at press time.

St. Stephens 3, Draughn 0: The Lady Wildcats (13-5) were swept in nonconference play on the road in Hickory on Thursday, falling 25-12, 25-23, 25-14.

No more details were available at press time.

Patton 6, Chase 0: The Panthers (11-3-1, 4-0 MF7) remained undefeated in league play with a shutout victory at home in Morganton on Thursday.

Each PHS goal was scored by a different player as Gabino Vasquez, Jimmy Monzon, Noah Krogel, Tony Vicente, Jacob Batz and Trevin Lavoie all found paydirt. Vicente, Vasquez and David Bernabe recorded assists for the hosts, who outshot the Trojans 28-2.

Isai Jimenez recorded his fourth straight clean sheet in goal to start conference play.

Alexander Central 8, Freedom 0: The Patriots (4-9, 0-3) lost a conference game on the road in Taylorsville for the second straight day on Thursday, getting blanked both times.

No more details were available at press time.

JV FOOTBALL

Bunker Hill 14, East Burke 6 (OT): The JV Cavaliers (1-4, 0-2 CVAC) were denied their first league victory with an overtime loss at home in lcard on Thursday.

The EBHS rushing attack was led by Jesiah Rees (17-61-1), Leelan Pyatte (4-25) and Cash Wittenberg (7-22). Quarterback Nathan Martin completed 9 of 12 passes for 55 yards, finding receivers Rees (6-20), R.J. Williams (1-23) and Pyatte (2-12).

Defensively, EB was led by Martin (five tackles), Gabe Metcalf (five tackles), Easton Wilson (four tackles, interception) and Jaxson Wiley (three tackles, blocked punt).

Alexander Central 41, Freedom 6: The JV Patriots (4-2, 0-1 NWC) lost their conference-opener on the road in Taylorsville on Thursday.

Leading the offense were rushers Izaiah Thomas (2-50-1), Noah Francis (1-18), Christian Chapman (2-14) and Trent Davis (29). Additionally, quarterback Joe Tate completed a 45-yard pass to Francis.

Davis (eight tackles), Hayden Laws (eight), Francis (seven) and Rico Gonzalez (seven) led the Freedom defense.

The News Herald sports department can be reached at sports@morganton.com.

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RETURN TO ACTION

October 15, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: JUSTIN EPLEY Sports editor | Section: Return To Action | 575 Words OpenURL Link

H.S. FOOTBALL

The schedule was scrambled and the venue unexpected, but the Freedom and Alexander Central football teams emerged from a three-week hiatus forced by damage from Hurricane Helene to finally play their Northwestern 3A/4A Conference-opener.

The return to action after the extended layoff went in the Cougars' favor as they earned a 30-20 victory on Friday night in a game played at Patton High School following severe flooding at the FHS football stadium.

Here are some key numbers from the Week 8 loss for the Patriots (3-3, 0-1 NWC) in Morganton:

- 0 Completed passes for Alexander Central. The Cougars won the game despite going 0 for 3 through the air. The visitors racked up 346 yards and four touchdowns on 61 rushing attempts for the night. Quarterback Wade Queen did run for 39 yards on nine carries.
- 1 Varsity football games played at Patton's stadium so far this season. With the Panthers inactive due to low participation numbers this fall, Friday night's game was the first varsity football contest played on Enola Road this year. The Patriots will host a second and final home game at PHS this coming Friday taking on South Caldwell in their last home contest of the regular season.
- 2 Wins in a row for Alexander Central over Freedom, whose all-time lead in the series was trimmed to 29-9 with Friday's loss. It's the first time in at least 20 years that the Patriots have lost back-to-back games to the Cougars. FHS won three straight over ACHS from 2004-06 and 200812 and two straight from 2018-19 and 2021-22.
- 3 Rushing touchdowns for Freedom. Normally potent through the air, all three of the Patriots' trips to the end zone on Friday came on the ground, including a 10-yard reverse by Justice Dominguez in the first quarter to make it 14-6, a 38-yard keeper by quarterback Kaden Davis in the third period to make it 20-13 and a 1-yard dive by Jaiden Belin in the fourth frame to bring the score to 27-20 with 8:36 to play.
- 24 Distance in yards on Elijah Bolick's game-winning field goal for the Cougars. Bolick booted the sealing kick through the uprights with just 1:12 left in the contest.
- 35:26 Game-leading time of possession from Alexander Central. Led by countless chain-moving runs by the Cougars' offense, the visitors were stingy with the ball, allowing the Patriots' offense to possess it for just 12:34. ACHS was 7 of 13 of third down while Freedom was just 1 of 6.
- 73 Yardage on Jeremiah Whitaker's game-breaking rushing touchdown for Alexander Central in the third quarter. The running back ripped off the game's longest play just after Freedom had closed within 20-13 to start the second half. Whitaker finished with 95 yards on 12 carries, also scoring on a 3-yard run in the first quarter to make it 14-0.
- 133 Passing yards for Freedom's Davis. Though the hosts didn't have a touchdown through the air, Davis was 12 of 20, connecting with receivers Dominguez (5-49), Tiras Walker (2-44), Kobe Johnson (3-20) and Kaleb Pearson (2-20). Davis also threw two interceptions, including one on the Patriots' last-gasp drive with just seconds to play.
- 162 Game-high rushing yards for the Cougars' Sawyer Chapman-Mays, who did it on 30 carries and scored touchdowns of 1 yard in the first quarter and 2 yards in the second period to put Alexander Central ahead 7-0 and

206, respectively.

Justin Epley can be reached at jepley@morganton.com or sports@morganton.com.

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Helene shows value of fiscal restraint

October 15, 2024 | News-Topic, The (Lenoir, NC) Author: John Hood Columnist | Section: Archives | 651 Words OpenURL Link

RALEIGH — The devastation wreaked on North Carolina by Hurricane Helene will take weeks to assess, months to clear out, and years to repair or rebuild. Second only to the value of the lives lost will be the exorbitant fiscal and economic costs of our recovery.

Our state government is reasonably well-prepared to shoulder its share. Our federal government is not.

Last week, the General Assembly authorized an initial \$273 million withdrawal from North Carolina's rainy-day fund to cover initial recovery expenses and changes in elections administration. Gov. Roy Cooper signed the bill.

That's only the first tranche of state expenditure. Lawmakers will return to the capital more than once before year's end, then commence regular session in early 2025. They'll appropriate much more money for various reconstruction efforts, from academic campuses and government offices to highways, bridges, water systems, and other infrastructure.

North Carolina has lots of money set aside. The rainy-day fund itself still contains about \$4.5 billion. Other accounts and our unreserved credit balance contain billions more. I don't mean to minimize the storm's staggering costs. I'm just pointing out that the General Assembly won't have to cut other programs, raise taxes, or borrow money to fulfill its responsibilities.

Congress is another story. Over the past couple of decades, presidents and lawmakers of both parties have run massive federal deficits and made exorbitant spending promises that far exceed any reasonable expectation of revenues at economically sustainable tax rates.

In a recent Reason magazine piece, Veronique de Rugy of the Mercatus Center pointed out that the federal debt now exceeds \$28 trillion — \$2 trillion more than last year and \$6 trillion more than when the Biden-Harris team entered the White House.

"This debt stands at 100% of America's gross domestic product, which, other than a one-year exception at the end of World War II, is the highest ratio we've ever had," she wrote. "Unlike in 1946, today's debt is only going to grow. Indeed, debt-to-GDP took a nearly 30-year dive to reach 23% in 1974. Today, federal debt is projected — under the rosiest scenarios — to rise to 166% in 30 years."

In other words, every dollar Congress authorizes and the executive branch distributes for hurricane relief in North Carolina is, in effect, a borrowed dollar. It represents a debt to be paid in the future, not a gift.

Of course, North Carolinians aren't the only ones who must pay each dollar back (with interest). Decades ago, our politicians essentially nationalized the provision of relief and reconstruction after natural disasters. I don't think that was wise. States and localities ought to make their own preparations and save their own money to handle future emergencies.

But at this point, I'm not sure how to extricate ourselves from this process. If Congress passed a law next year to slash federal disaster relief and then Kansas gets clobbered by tornados, their taxpayers could reasonably complain that they helped clean up after North Carolina's disaster and then didn't get their "turn" at withdrawing funds for their own.

The next best thing, then, is for future Congresses and presidents to take their budgeting responsibilities more

seriously. As I've pointed out many times, the opportunity to bring federal revenues and expenditures closer to alignment without painful adjustment has long since passed. The gap is too large.

It can't be substantially closed by eliminating "waste, fraud, and abuse." Nor can it be substantially closed by "tax hikes on the wealthy." Contrary to popular misconception, the United States already has one of the most steeply progressive tax codes in the developed world. According to the left-wing Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, the bottom quintile of American taxpayers pay an average of 17% of their income in federal, state, and local taxes. The middle quintile pays 26%. The wealthiest 1% pay 35%.

Washington's fiscal recklessness should be one of the top voting issues this year. Alas, it isn't. But ignoring the problem won't make it go away.

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Residents can apply for help buy food

October 15, 2024 | News-Topic, The (Lenoir, NC) Author: STAFF REPORTS | Section: Archives | 476 Words OpenURL Link

Caldwell County residents impacted by Hurricane Helene can apply for help buying food through the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP). Residents can apply in person at the Old Walgreens located at 621 Harper Avenue, Lenoir, according to a press release from the county.

The Center will be open Oct. 18-24 from 8 a.m.-4 pm. Monday through Friday and from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, according to the press release.

To be eligible for DSNAP, a person must:

Live in Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Clay, Cleveland, Gaston, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Lincoln, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes and Yancey Counties.Be a member of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians living in zip code 28719Have suffered losses/damages related to Hurricane Helene, such as damage to property or loss of income. Have proof of identity and proof of residency (if available). Have income and resources below certain levels. Not currently be receiving benefits through the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) program. People receiving FNS can also get extra help buying food, but do not need to fill out a D-SNAP application. They can get more information about how to get the extra help on the FNS webpage.

Eligible households will be notified within three days of completing the application and receive a one-time benefit on a special debit card (called an Electronic Benefits Transfer, or EBT card) to help buy food. The exact amount will depend on household size, income and disaster losses. While there are income eligibility standards, a number of considerations are taken into account. Individuals above these limits may still be eligible dependent on disaster expenses, so everyone who needs support to purchase food to begin their application by calling the DSNAP Virtual Call Center at 1-844-453-1117, according to the press release.

The benefits are good for up to nine months. Benefit cards will be available for pick up in Caldwell County at the former Walgreens location in downtown Lenoir or residents can get the EBT card mailed to them overnight at the address on the application.

Residents can also apply by calling 1-844-453-1117, Friday, Oct. 18, through Thursday, Oct. 24. Phone lines will be answered weekdays from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. and on Saturday and Sunday from 9 a.m.-noon. To help with call volume, residents should call on the day assigned by the first letter of their last name, according to the press release.

Oct. 18 — A-G

Oct. 19 — H-M

Oct. 20 — N-S

Oct. 21 — T-Z

Oct. 22 — Open to all

Oct. 23 — Open to all

Oct. 24 — Open to all

Residents can also use the online ePASS Pre-Registration Tool, which opens on Tuesday, Oct. 15 and close on Thursday, Oct. 24. Once the pre-registration is completed, applicants will be issued a confirmation number and will need to call 1-844-453-1117 between Oct. 18 and Oct. 24 to complete the interview part of the application.

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Letter to the editor

October 15, 2024 | News-Topic, The (Lenoir, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Archives | 245 Words OpenURL Link

Before Hurricane Helene hit our area, Dan Bishop was the only Congressman from North Carolina who voted AGAINST fully funding FEMA. Now that the afternath of the hurricane is showing us how much the people in our state have been affected by winds and floods, we need FEMA to be there for our people. Dan Bishop's NO vote is having its effect on the people here.

Now, Dan Bishop is running for NC Attorney General. His vote against the needs of the people of this state should be hanging like an albatross around his neck If he doesn't care any more than that for the needs of the people of this state, he shouldn't be in a position to protect us as AG, either.

President Biden has asked Congress to appropriate more money for FEMA following the destruction of Hurricanes Helene and Milton, but the Republicans in the House are more interested in campaigning for re-election than in seeng to the needs of our people. Everyone needs to complain to Rep. Virginia Foxx for this dereliction of responsibility to her constituents and to the people of our state and the hurricane victims in other states, as well.

We need people in Congress who will represent the interests of their constituents rather than seeking their own political advantage. Shame on Rep. Foxx and all the Republicans in Congress for this distortion of priorities. That's just one reason I plan to vote for Chuck Hubbard for Congress.

Thomas E. Blanton

Sawmills

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County Approves Resolution To Aid Helene Recovery

October 15, 2024 | Pilot, The (Southern Pines, NC) Author: ELENA MARSH || Staff Writer | Section: News | 492 Words OpenURL Link

Moore County was quick to mobilize relief efforts after Hurricane Helene ravaged the mountains, and now county commissioners are following suit.

To assist response to the devastation caused by the storm last month in western North Carolina, Commissioners Chairman Nick Picerno proposed that the N.C. Association of County Commissioners initiate an adopt-a-county program whereby counties east of I-77 "adopt" counties west of I-77 to support them in their recovery efforts.

The resolution is meant to help create a way for counties to form a "buddy system" for government necessities and other supplies. As an example, early in the same meeting, commissioners approved a laptop purchase contract for 110 Dell laptops. The current laptops in the Department of Social Services met update criteria based on age of the device. The old laptops, which often get donated if they still work, could potentially be saved and sent to a county to help them get back on track with county functions.

The resolution was sent to Kevin Leonard, the executive director of the N.C. Association of County Commissioners in Raleigh.

"The Moore County Commissioners, like so many others, have been deeply troubled by the unprecedented and devastating impacts of Tropical Storm Helene on our Western North Carolina Counties," reads the resolution.

" ... To supplement the aid that has been offered, the Moore County Board of Commissioners proposes the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners consider implementation of an "Adopt-a-County" program whereby counties east of I-77 "adopt" counties west of I-77 and support their respective adopted counties through the very long recovery and rebuilding process."

Further examples of support in the resolution include technical assistance by employees to their affected Western North Carolina counterparts, deployment of resources, and collaboration on solutions for recovery.

In other business the county commissioners:

* Approved a resolution supporting Operation Green Light for Veterans. For the first two weeks in November, residents and businesses are encouraged to display a green light in their windows showing support for veterans in the country and abroad.

Approximately 200,000 service members transition to civilian communities annually. An estimated 20 percent increase of service members will transition to civilian life in the near future and, studies indicate, that 44 to 72 percent of service members experience high levels of stress during transition from military to civilian life making them a high risk for suicide during their first year after military service.

Picerno called for green lights to be placed in the courthouse windows during the period between Nov. 1 and Nov. 15.

* Approved a call for a public hearing to review an economic development incentive agreement between the county and Reliance Packaging, located in Aberdeen.

Reliance Packaging is looking to expand its facility located at 155 Anderson St., in accordance with the terms of the county's economic incentive grants guidelines. The company plans to make an estimated capital investment in real

and personal property of \$7.4 million and create 32 new jobs with an average wage of \$53,000.

Contact Elena Marsh at (910) 693-2484 or elena@thepilot.com.

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ELENA MARSH | | Staff Writer, 'County Approves Resolution To Aid Helene Recovery', *Pilot, The* (online), 15 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3EE74799DC950



Storm response by local, federal and state resources continues in western North Carolina

October 15, 2024 | Robesonian, The (Lumberton, NC) Author: David Kennard The Robesonian | Section: news | 1070 Words OpenURL Link

RALEIGH — An "unprecedented response" to damage caused by Hurricane Helene continues in western North Carolina. State, federal and local response workers "are working around the clock" to get assistance into the region, according to a state report released Monday by Gov. Roy Cooper's office.

"Law enforcement is working to ensure the safety of responders amid reports of threats and misinformation," the report stated.

Yet, FEMA officials reportedly remain in communities and will resume door-to-door operations to help people impacted by these storms recover as quickly as possible following reports of threats on the ground.

Cooper said he has directed the Department of Public Safety to work with local law enforcement to identify "specific threats and rumors and coordinate with FEMA and other partners" to ensure the safety of all involved.

"State, federal and local response workers, including FEMA, are working around the clock to bring assistance to western North Carolina," said Governor Roy Cooper. "We know that significant misinformation online contributes to threats against response workers on the ground, and the safety of responders must be a priority. At my direction, the North Carolina Department of Public Safety is helping partners like FEMA to coordinate with law enforcement to ensure their safety and security as they continue their important work."

North Carolina National Guard and Military Response

About 3,500 soldiers and airmen are working in western North Carolina, according to Monday's report.

Joint Task Force-North Carolina, the task force led by the North Carolina National Guard is made up of Soldiers and Airmen from 12 different states, two different XVIII Airborne Corps units from Ft. Liberty, a unit from Ft. Campbell's 101st Airborne Division, and numerous civilian entities are working side-by-side to get the much-needed help to people in Western North Carolina, the report stated.

According to the state report, National Guard and military personnel are operating 11 aviation assets and more than 1,200 specialized vehicles to advance the missions.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is helping to assess water and wastewater plants and dams, according to Cooper's statement.

FEMA Assistance

- More than \$96 million in FEMA Individual Assistance funds have been paid so far to Western North Carolina disaster survivors and more than 160,000 people have registered for Individual Assistance. Approximately 4,600 households are now housed in hotels through FEMA's Transitional Sheltering Assistance.
- 1,000+ FEMA staff are in the state to help with the Western North Carolina relief effort. In addition to search and rescue and providing commodities, they are meeting with disaster survivors in shelters and neighborhoods to provide rapid access to relief resources. They can be identified by their FEMA logo apparel and federal government identification.
- The Major Disaster Declaration requested by Governor Cooper and granted by President Biden now includes 27

North Carolina counties (Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Clay, Cleveland, Gaston, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Lincoln, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mecklenburg, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes and Yancey) and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

- North Carolinians can apply for Individual Assistance by calling 1-800-621-3362 from 7am to 11pm daily or by visiting www.disasterassistance.gov, or by downloading the FEMA app. FEMA may be able to help with serious needs, displacement, temporary lodging, basic home repair costs, personal property loss or other disaster-caused needs.

Help from Other States

- More than 1,500 responders from 38 state and local agencies have performed 135 missions supporting the response and recovery efforts through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). This includes public health nurses, emergency management teams supporting local governments, veterinarians, teams with search dogs and more.

Beware of Misinformation

According to Monday's report from the governor's office, North Carolina Emergency Management and local officials are cautioning the public about false Helene reports and misinformation shared on social media.

NCEM has launched a fact versus rumor response webpage to provide factual information in the wake of this storm. FEMA also has a rumor response webpage.

Food, Water and Commodity Points of Distribution

Efforts continue to provide food, water and basic necessities to residents in affected communities, using both ground resources and air drops from the NC National Guard, according to a progress update on Monday.

Food, water and commodity points of distribution are open throughout western North Carolina at ncdps.gov/Helene.

Shelters

A total of 13 shelters are open in western North Carolina supporting more than 560 people.

Storm Damage Cleanup

Property damaged in the storm qualifies for assistance through Crisis Cleanup at 844-965-1386.

Power Outages

Across western North Carolina, approximately 19,000 customers remain without power, down from a peak of more than 1 million. Overall power outage numbers will fluctuate up and down as power crews temporarily take circuits or substations offline to make repairs and restore additional customers, according to Monday's report.

Road Closures

- Travel remains dangerous, with hundreds of roads closed. Many of these roads are primary routes connecting the region.
- NCDOT has posted at ncdot.gov an interstate detour map for those traveling in the region. North Carolinians can visit DriveNC.Gov for the latest roadway conditions. NCDOT currently has approximately 2,100 employees and 1,100 pieces of equipment working on approximately 6,700 damaged road sites.

Fatalities

Ninety-five storm-related deaths have been confirmed in North Carolina by the Office of Chief Medical Examiner, according to Monday's report from the governor's office.

"We expect that this number will continue to rise over the coming days," Cooper said. "The North Carolina Office of the Chief Medical Examiner will continue to confirm numbers twice daily."

Volunteers and Donations

- Due to dangerous road conditions and the need to maintain open routes for emergency operations, travel to Western North Carolina is difficult. Consider the following options for donations and volunteer opportunities:
- If you would like to donate to the North Carolina Disaster Relief Fund, visit nc.gov/donate. Donations will help to support local nonprofits working on the ground.
- For information on volunteer opportunities, please visit nc.gov/volunteernc Additional Assistance
- "There is no right or wrong way to feel in response to the trauma of a hurricane," Cooper said on Monday. "If you have been impacted by the storm and need someone to talk to, call or text the Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990. Help is also available to anyone, anytime in English or Spanish through a call, text or chat to 988. Learn more at 988Lifeline.org."
- If you are seeking a representative from the North Carolina Joint Information Center, please email ncempio@ncdps.gov or call 919-825-2599.
- For general information, access to resources, or answers to frequently asked questions, please visit ncdps.gov/helene.
- If you are seeking information on resources for recovery help for a resident impacted from the storm, please email IArecovery@ncdps.gov.

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David Kennard The Robesonian, 'Storm response by local, federal and state resources continues in western North Carolina', *Robesonian, The* (online), 15 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3869C41C12090>



John Hood: Helene brought out the best in Carolinians

October 15, 2024 | Rocky Mount Telegram: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 652 Words OpenURL Link

As we mourn the deaths and grapple with the destruction inflicted on our state by Hurricane Helene, I submit that the storm has brought out much that is good about North Carolina — and much that is vile about social media.

I'll start with the positive. Residents of the mountain counties most affected by Helene have fought heroically for their lives, their families and their neighbors, often against long odds and terrifying threats. They haven't fought alone. Others from across North Carolina and beyond flocked in to help.

We've only just begun to collect their stories of prudent planning, daring rescues and dogged determination. These tales feature the likes of Hendersonville's James White, who led more than a dozen neighbors sheltering in his home to safety with ropes and lifejackets, as well as Eddie Hunnell, recently moved to North Carolina from Colorado, who leapt into the swollen New River to save a stranger, Lesley Worth, separated from her husband by the raging stream.

At larger scale, hundreds of churches, charities, companies and volunteer networks sprang to the assistance of their fellow Carolinians. So did law enforcement, fire and rescue teams and emergency response personnel from counties, municipalities, state agencies and other public authorities.

On the ground, we've seen a great deal of cooperation across jurisdictional and political boundaries. Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler, for example, sent North Carolina Forest Service staffers familiar with the rugged terrain to guide National Guard units into position. On Oct. 7, Democratic and Republican appointees on the State Board of Elections voted unanimously to empower local boards in 13 hard-hit counties to modify the locations and hours of early-voting sites and other election procedures — but only by bipartisan votes of those boards, a prudent constraint to reassure a jittery public.

Democratic mayors have worked closely with Republican county commissioners to coordinate relief. Gov. Roy Cooper, U.S. Sens. Thom Tillis and Ted Budd, lawmakers from both parties — all have pitched in to comfort victims, survey damage, coordinate responses and convey timely, accurate information to the public.

That's not to say there haven't been miscues and disagreements. Tillis and Budd questioned the pace at which military personnel from Fort Liberty and other bases were deployed into the devastated counties after the storm. Others have criticized the adequacy of the response by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

While it will take some time to sort out all the claims and counterclaims, it's not too early to label these issues as legitimate topics for debate.

Unfortunately, much of the "debate" unfolding on social media over the past week has been anything but legitimate. Whether spreading wacky conspiracy theories about lithium mines and weather control or uttering grotesque slanders about Kamala Harris and Joe Biden intentionally "letting" Republican voters "drown," a host of very-online, supposedly conservative provocateurs and hacks have made a bad situation immeasurably worse.

Here's what a real conservative leader, state Sen. Kevin Corbin, had to say.

"PLEASE help stop this junk," wrote Corbin, who represents North Carolina's eight westernmost counties. "It is just a distraction to people trying to do their job.

"Folks, this is a catastrophic event of which this country has never known. It is the largest crisis event in the history

of N.C. The state is working non-stop. DOT has deployed workers from all over the state. Duke [Energy] has 10,000 workers on this. FEMA is here. The National Guard is here in large numbers."

Some incendiary memes are likely the product of misunderstandings, such as emergency officials redirecting volunteers away from dangerous roadways or relief agencies refusing certain donated items they aren't equipped to store or distribute. Others may well be the result of bad calls made in good faith, in stressful conditions, by officials with incomplete information or inadequate training.

Can policymakers properly second-guess such decisions after the fact? Of course! That time will come. Right now, our immediate challenges remain rescue and relief — challenges our fellow North Carolinians have met with magnificent resilience.

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Robinson files \$50M defamation suit against CNN

October 15, 2024 \mid Rocky Mount Telegram: Web Edition Articles (NC)

Author: Bill West | Section: Local | 1115 Words

OpenURL Link

The Republican nominee for governor Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson announced Tuesday that he is suing CNN for defaming him in connection with the network's KFile investigative report Sept. 19 about part of his past personal life.

The report alleged that Robinson had posted lurid sexual and pro-authoritarian remarks via a pornographic website from 2008-12 and that he had also referred to himself online as a Black Nazi. Robinson has denied the allegations.

In addition to CNN, the lawsuit names as another defendant — Louis Love Money, a musician who gave an interview to an online publication alleging Robinson had decades ago been a frequent customer of pornographic video stores in his home city of Greensboro.

The lawsuit calls for a trial court jury to decide whether Robinson should be awarded no less than \$50 million as compensation.

"In a malicious hit job so well timed to be uncanny, they have published disgusting lies about Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson in what appears to be a coordinated attack aimed at derailing his campaign for governor and has already inflicted immeasurable harm to his family, his reputation and his good name," the lawsuit argues.

According to the lawsuit, CNN "chose to publish despite knowing or recklessly disregarding that Lt. Gov. Robinson's data — including his name, date of birth, passwords and the e-mail address supposedly associated with the NudeAfrica (pornographic website) account — were previously compromised by multiple data breaches."

The lawsuit argues that anyone could have purchased or used Robinson's information to create accounts on the internet.

The lawsuit also argues that after the CNN story broke, NudeAfrica shut down the forum section of its website where the alleged posts had supposedly been archived — and that the owner of NudeAfrica has ignored all attempts to be contacted.

The Associated Press reported Tuesday that a CNN spokeswoman declined to comment. The suit was filed in N.C. Superior Court in Wake County. Robinson and one of his attorneys, Jesse Binnall, spoke Tuesday at an extensive news conference in Raleigh.

Video posted by news media organizations showed Robinson saying that he believes what this amounts to is "a high-tech lynching" of a candidate who has been targeted from day one by people who disagree with him politically and want to see him destroyed.

"And so, we are glad to take these first steps to fight back against what we consider to be one of the greatest examples of political interference in this state's history — and quite possibly this nation's history," Robinson said.

Binnall on camera said of CNN that he believes "a left-wing media outlet" is going to do everything they can to stop his client from being governor "because they know that this man has the ability to connect with voters in a way that quite frankly scares them."

The online publication The Assembly, in a story published Sept. 3, quoted Money, who had worked in several of Greensboro's windowless, 24-hour video-pornography stores, as saying that Robinson had been a frequent

customer in the 1990s and early 2000s.

The publication also quoted Money as saying that Robinson had come in as often as five nights a week to watch pornographic videos in a private booth.

Robinson, via a campaign spokesman, denied those claims.

The lawsuit filed by Robinson also states that Money had released a music video via YouTube Aug. 11 falsely accusing him of owing money for a bootleg pornographic video that Money had supposedly produced for him.

Money told The New York Times in an interview Tuesday that the only reason he put the song out and did interviews is because he wanted publicity for his band, Trailer Park Orchestra.

"And thank you, Mark!" Money was quoted as saying.

Robinson's filing of the lawsuit Tuesday came a day after he spoke at the Edgecombe County Republican Party's headquarters in downtown Tarboro.

Robinson spoke about recovery efforts in western North Carolina in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, as well as policies on education and drug abuse in communities.

Robinson said that his goals were to ensure that residents were prepared for the winter and to ensure "that every single solitary citizen is able to get to the polls to vote."

Regarding the education system, Robinson said that critical race theory and diversity, equity and inclusion efforts "need to go" and he advocated for the return of classical education, history, reading, mathematics and science.

Generally, critical race theory is a way of thinking about the nation's history through the lens of racism. Diversity, equity and inclusion efforts generally describe policies and programs that promote the representation and participation of different groups of individuals.

Robinson blamed teachers' low pay on government funds going toward bureaucrats.

"We have people at the top that have forgotten what it's like to be a teacher or have never been in the classroom," he said. "We don't need people writing policies that don't understand what it's like for our current teachers."

Robinson is completing his first four-year term as lieutenant governor. His main opponent in the Nov. 5 general election is the Democratic gubernatorial nominee N.C. Attorney General Josh Stein.

During Robinson's speech at the Edgecombe County GOP headquarters, he criticized Stein for deciding to join a dozen other attorneys general in a bipartisan effort to sue the social media app TikTok and parent company ByteDance Ltd. Stein has made clear that he believes TikTok is designed to be addictive to children.

Robinson said that he believes Stein should focus on issues of substance abuse and drug trafficking and highlighted fentanyl as one of the more dangerous substances that result in fatalities for children.

One way Robinson said he planned to improve public safety if elected governor would be to implement a state security council.

"One of their first missions will be to combat the influx of drugs into the communities," Robinson said.

Robinson said that the council would be composed of sheriffs, police chiefs, state troopers, FBI agents and N.C. National Guard service members.

"When you go to the polls, you're not going to vote for personalities, you're not going to vote for politics," he told the gathering at the Edgecombe County GOP headquarters. "Remember to think about policies that will make our state great and will make our nation great."

Robinson and Stein are competing to succeed Gov. Roy Cooper, a Democrat and a Nash County native who is barred by state law from seeking a third consecutive four-year term as the state's chief executive.

Cooper, in a video of a news conference Tuesday posted by Charlotte television station WCNC, was asked about Robinson filing the lawsuit.

Cooper said that he has said for years that he believes Robinson should step down "because of extreme positions that he has taken in his attacks on people."

"I don't think he's qualified," Cooper said of Robinson being lieutenant governor.

In August 2023, Cooper endorsed Stein to succeed him.

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Volunteers make nearly 3,000 sandwiches for Helene victims

October 15, 2024 | Sanford Herald, The (NC) Author: NANCY MCCLEARY NMCCLEARY@SANFORDHERALD.COM| Section: News| 377 Words OpenURL Link

What began as an effort to prepare 500 sandwiches for Hurricane Helene victims in Western North Carolina turned into a community event with nearly 3,000 sandwiches prepared.

Jill and James Jones, owners of the Debonair Chef Kitchen and Café on Rand Street, put the plan together.

"As a people-centered company, our core mission has always been to put people first," Jill Jones said. "When we heard about the devastation, I knew we had to act. I thought 'If we can't physically be there to help, we can at least make sure people have something to eat.' "

She used Facebook to help get the word out, then turned to emails, texts and calls to her family, friends and the local community for support.

"And so, the TDC Sandwich Brigade was born," Jones said.

Three days later, the project launched with a goal of 500 sandwiches that would be delivered with notes attached.

It took 18 minutes to make 500 sandwiches.

A new goal of 750 sandwiches was set, according to Tara Jamerson, one of the volunteers.

"In 30 minutes, the goal was blown out of the water with 1,000 sandwiches made and no one wanted to stop," lamerson said.

When the project came to an end about three hours later, the 80 volunteers had 2,950 sandwiches. They were taken up and delivered, Jamerson said.

"We were amazed by the overwhelming response," Jones said. "The support, love and care that went into every single sandwich and every heartfelt note left us deeply moved. It was truly a moment of warmth, compassion and hope, and our hearts are still full from this incredible outpouring of love."

Preparing sandwiches wasn't all the volunteers did.

"They also gave donations that were crucial to reach the nearly 3,000 sandwiches. The Debonair Chef purchased 1,000 and the volunteers purchased 1,950," Jones said.

The Joneses and volunteers learned the next day that one of the volunteers was Rod Ashby, the husband of Kim Ashby of Sanford, who was swept away by flood waters in Avery County and hasn't been seen since.

Ashby didn't come alone — he was accompanied by 19 members of Kim's family, Jones said.

"They came to help, even in a time they are hurting and waiting on answers," she said. "They are a beautiful family, and our hearts and prayers go out for them."

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NANCY MCCLEARY NMCCLEARY@SANFORDHERALD.COM, 'Volunteers make nearly 3,000 sandwiches for Helene victims', *Sanford Herald, The* (online), 15 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C39812B560B410>



High school football power rankings

October 15, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC) Author: Joe L Hughes II; Gaston Gazette | Section: Sports | 705 Words Page: B1 OpenURL Link

Here's a look at the top eight high school football teams in Cleveland, Gaston and Lincoln counties following Week 8, as ranked by the USA Today Network.

1. South Point

(5-0, 3-0 Big South 3A)

Last week: defeated Kings Mountain, 28-21

The scoop: A week after rallying for a win over Crest, the South Point football team put together another strong effort Friday night to earn a key road win at Kings Mountain. The Red Raiders rushed for 337 yards, helping them to hold the football for almost 32 minutes. Senior standout Chyance Ford played a huge role, rushing for 194 yards and two touchdowns

Next: at Ashbrook (6-1, 3-1 Big South 3A)

2. Crest (5-1, 2-1 Big South 3A)

Last week: defeated North Gaston, 42-6

The scoop: After four trips to the end zone in Week 8, senior running back Aiden Carson now has 14 total touchdowns this fall. He's scored in each of the Chargers' six games. However, all eyes will be on who actually hands him the football — is it senior starter Turner McSwain, or Virginia football recruit Ely Hamrick, who transferred to Crest from A.C. Reynolds following Hurricane Helene?

Next: at Forestview (1-6, 1-3 Big South 3A)

3. Ashbrook

(6-1, 3-1 Big South 3A)

Last week: defeated Stuart Cramer, 44-0

The scoop: The Ashbrook defense continues to play at a high level, posting its third shutout of the season Friday night with a 44-0 win over Stuart Cramer. However, of the Green Wave's six wins, only one has come against a team which goes into Week 9 with a winning record. It has an opportunity to change that Friday, a win over South Point also potentially flipping the Big South 3A title race on its head.

Next: vs. South Point (5-0, 3-0 Big South 3A)

4. North Lincoln (6-1, 3-1 Western Foothills 3A)

Last week: defeated St. Stephens, 48-14

The scoop: Friday night didn't have all the gaudy numbers one has come to expect from North Lincoln this fall.

However, the Knights averaged close to eight yards per carry, with four of their backs scoring touchdowns in a winning effort. Should North Lincoln win out, it could earn Western Foothills 3A's second automatic playoff berth and a potential home game to start the postseason.

Next: vs. Foard (0-5, 0-2 WFAC)

5. Shelby (5-2, 3-0 Southern Piedmont 1A/2A)

Last week: Idle

The scoop: Shelby was idle for Week 8, getting healthy and mentally prepared for the home stretch toward the postseason. Opponents have not scored on the Golden Lions since the fourth quarter of its Sept. 13 win at Olympic, Shelby scoring 217 unanswered points. In the same stretch, quarterback Lan Farmer has completed 23 of 27 passes for 688 yards and 13 touchdowns.

Next: vs. Bessemer City (5-3, 3-1 SPC)

6. Kings Mountain

(4-2, 2-1 Big South 3A)

Last week: lost to South Point, 28-21

The scoop: Kings Mountain's four-game win streak came to an end Friday night, dealt a 28-21 loss to South Point. Quarterback T.J. Armstrong and wideout Jayden Gash have become a potent connection, the two linking up 21 times for 471 yards and three touchdowns this fall. Health is of greater concern: Key contributors such as wideout William Vaughn and defensive standout Eli Lipscomb are each playing through lower body injuries.

Next week: at Stuart Cramer (1-5, 0-3 Big South 3A)

7. East Lincoln (5-2, 2-2 Western Foothills 3A)

Last week: defeated Foard, 35-0

The scoop: East Lincoln has feasted against lesser competition this fall, each of its five wins against teams with losing records. In its two matchups against teams with winning marks, the Mustangs have allowed a total of 76 points in losing causes. Its next test against a winning team won't come until Nov. 1 in a matchup with rival North Lincoln.

Next: at St. Stephens (1-6, 1-3 WFAC)

8. Burns (5-2, 3-0 Southern Piedmont 1A/2A)

Last week: defeated Thomas Jefferson, 61-0

The scoop: Burns has run roughshod over league competition, outscoring Highland Tech, Bessemer City and Thomas Jefferson by a combined tally of 165-8. The Bulldogs' passing attack is coming along nicely as well, starting quarterback Marshall McGowan throwing five touchdown passes thus far in Southern Piedmont 1A/2A play.

Next: at East Gaston (3-4, 2-1 SPC)

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US sees millions of climate refugees - Many moving to new locations over flooding

October 15, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC) Author: Andrea Riquier; USA TODAY | Section: News | 811 Words Page: A8 OpenURL Link

Images from Florida, battered by two once-in-a-generation storms in a matter of weeks, are prompting a reckoning by Americans across the country.

"Will Florida be completely unlivable/destroyed in the next few years?" one Reddit user wondered.

On Oct.7, science writer Dave Levitan published an essay titled "At Some Point You Don't Go Back."

As many wonder why people still live there, a report from data analytics provider First Street offers some answers. Americans are perhaps more aware of the risks of a volatile climate than it might seem, and have been migrating in response to its effects for many years. The catch: the vast majority of those moves have been local, to higher ground across town or to the city next door, where better infrastructure may mean it doesn't flood as often.

As the threat has multiplied, however, the report's authors say it's now safe to assume that many parts of Florida have reached a "tipping point" at which moving a few blocks uphill isn't enough, and so many residents are leaving the area permanently that the population could decline.

"I do think there are places where we are approaching tipping points and we will begin to see larger migration movements," said Jeremy Porter, head of climate implications research at First Street, which released the report last winter.

"In Florida, the fact that homes are seeing longer 'time on the market' and lower 'sale to list prices' is indicative of declining demand and population outmigration," Porter said in a recent email exchange with USA TODAY.

Florida's real estate woes are well documented.

"Of the dozen markets where prices have fallen over the past 12 months, seven are in Florida," real estate data company ICE noted in its October Mortgage Monitor. Challenging market conditions throughout the state may be in large part due to the difficulty in obtaining affordable property insurance. In some areas like Jacksonville and Cape Coral, premiums are up nearly 80% since 2019.

Contract signings are also down in Florida, recent Redfin data showed. While Hurricane Helene probably accounted for some of the decline in recent weeks, sales activity also plunged 13% compared to a year ago in Fort Lauderdale and 15% in Miami, both of which are located on the eastern coast and are so far unaffected by storms.

But as First Street data show, Florida isn't the only place climate migrants are fleeing. At the micro level, more than 800,000 census blocks in the U.S. – or 7.4% of all blocks – have already passed local "tipping points" and are seeing outright population declines. These "Climate Abandonment Areas" have had a net loss of more than 3.2million people between 2000 and 2020 that can be directly attributed to flooding, the research shows.

Many of these areas are familiar to locals: parts of Staten Island, New York, that see constant "sunny day flooding," for example, or Bexar County, Texas, home to San Antonio – and an area not typically known for being waterlogged, Porter says.

"In Bexar County, TX, 17.1% of all blocks are declining in population and have high flood risk above the 'tipping point,' making them Climate Abandonment Areas even though the county as a whole has grown significantly

between 2000-2020," First Street's report says.

First Street's data suggests that climate risk is already having a significant impact on local economies even if people aren't fleeing in droves. Its model shows that many parts of the country that have seen the most growth despite being most exposed to extreme climate – the Houston metro area, for example – would have attracted even more people if not for the known risks.

In fact, the "thousand-year storms" that get so much attention may not be as perilous as consistent, low-level flooding, Porter said.

"Say you're stuck in your house, you know, twice a month every month out of the year. That slowly erodes the infrastructure in the area, and people start to avoid the area because it gets reputationally branded as an area that floods."

The 3.2 million Americans who have already left home because of climate concerns are just the beginning, First Street believes. Millions more are likely to leave in the coming decades.

Porter said he thinks Americans will soon start to take climate risk into account when house hunting just like they do school quality and walkability.

"What we're going to see in the form of climate response is smarter ways of thinking about information like climate risk within cities," he said

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