

NC governor's race: When and how Robinson's campaign staff quit

October 13, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Dawn Baumgartner Vaughan, News & Observer | Section: politics government | 1146 Words OpenURL Link

Welcome to the governor's race edition of our Under the Dome politics newsletter. I'm Dawn Vaughan, The News & Observer's Capitol bureau chief.

There was an exodus of campaign and official staff for the Republican candidate for governor, Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson, in the wake of the bombshell CNN report in September, which he denies.

The News & Observer has learned more about how his staff left, and asked Robinson about it as well.

Robinson staff quit after he rejected offers to clear allegations

A source familiar with the campaign and LG office departures told The N&O that the campaign staff quit during a meeting with Robinson about the status of the campaign, on the Sunday after the CNN report.

Robinson had turned down multiple offers from staffers over multiple days, before the meeting, to use technology to help clear him of the allegations in the CNN report, the source says. A few days after the campaign staff quit, so did half of his official staff.

WRAL-TV first reported Robinson turned down offers for IT help to respond to CNN's allegations that he made hateful, racist and sexually explicit comments on a pornographic website, including referring to himself as a "Black NAZI" and supporting the return of slavery.

Robinson spokesperson Mike Lonergan denied that to WRAL. "That is entirely false. Lt. Gov. Robinson is in the process of retaining aggressive legal counsel to investigate who did this and how; we will leave no stone unturned, and will use every legal means to hold CNN and whomever else is involved accountable," Lonergan said.

While Robinson hired a law firm and said he was going to sue CNN soon, the campaign has not yet announced a lawsuit.

Robinson has spent the past few weeks back out on the campaign trail and helping the Franklin County Sheriff's Office with Hurricane Helene relief efforts in Western North Carolina.

In a speech to voters at a campaign event in a Dollar General parking lot in Hillsborough on Oct. 4, Robinson criticized his opponent in the governor's race, Democratic Attorney General Josh Stein, for various things. Taking questions from reporters at the campaign event, Robinson didn't want to talk about the recent departures.

Nearly all of his campaign staff quit within days of the CNN story, and a few days after that, half of the lieutenant governor's office staff also quit, including top officials.

At the campaign event, I asked Robinson how the departures came about, and if he asked his office staff to stay.

"No, I didn't ask them to stay. They chose to leave. The term is coming to an end. They chose to move on, and we moved on as well," Robinson said, then criticized being asked about it the week after the storm, going on to say that the Franklin County sheriff deserves more recognition.

"You like to highlight what was supposedly said 15 years ago on some website or something, that I didn't say, but let's highlight the fact that there's been a very poor response to [Helene], and people are suffering because of it,"

Robinson told reporters.

The N&O and our colleagues at the Charlotte Observer have reported extensively on all aspects of storm relief and recovery. You can read our dozens of stories at newsobserver.com/topics/helene-nc and in print.

Berger didn't want to talk about Robinson; Moore focused on own race

Robinson presided over the Senate session on Wednesday, when senators unanimously passed a Helene relief bill that Cooper then signed into law on Thursday.

It was the first legislative session since the CNN fallout for Robinson. Reporters talking to Senate leader Phil Berger on the floor after session asked him about the scandal, and if Berger would keep his endorsement of Robinson.

Berger told reporters he'd answer the question "at some other point" and wanted to talk about the Helene relief bill that day.

I also asked House Speaker Tim Moore during his post-session talk with reporters if he still endorsed Robinson after the CNN report and the staff departures.

Here's what Moore said:

"I'm not going to change my endorsement," Moore said. "I've had a conversation with him. He tells me that those allegations aren't true. And so I've not drilled down, or cross-examined or anything like that, but my focus is on, really is on, of course, I'm running for Congress. I have my own race. I'm trying to help Laurie Buckhout, who's running (for Congress) in northeastern North Carolina, which is the really one competitive seat in North Carolina. And still as the speaker of the House, I'm focused on ensuring that the members running in here are in good shape, and that we maintain our supermajority."

I asked about Republican U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis saying that Robinson should show evidence to disprove it or sue over it.

"I don't know what else to say about it," Moore said. "I've just, I've talked to him, he's made his statements. I know he hired counsel to try to work through it, and I suspect that that process will take care of itself. And I think that, you know, the lieutenant governor has answered questions, has made his statements, and I'll leave it to him to make those statements and to run his race, and I've really got to focus on my race and the races of the state House."

Imagn-24360632.JPGNorth Carolina Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson speaks with media outside the Ag Center Shelter near the Asheville Regional Airport in Asheville, NC, during the aftermath of flooding caused by Hurricane Helene on Sept. 29, 2024.

That same afternoon, one of Robinson's social media posts criticized Republicans, but didn't specify who he was referencing.

"If Republicans opposed radical leftists as much as they opposed each other, imagine how much more successful we would be. Cut the intra-party crap and vote for Republicans up and down the ballot. This isn't about personality, it's about policy," Robinson wrote.

The General Assembly has another session scheduled before the election. They will reconvene on Oct. 24 to pass more Helene relief.

Stay informed about #ncpol

Don't forget to follow our Under the Dome tweets and listen to our Under the Dome podcast to stay up to date. Our

new episode posts Monday morning, and I'm joined by my legislative team colleagues Kyle Ingram and Avi Bajpai to talk more about the Helene relief bill and what's coming next.

We also have an Under the Dome: Live! event coming up, recording the podcast in front of an audience. I'll be interviewing N.C. Central University political science professor Jarvis Hall as part of an election preview. It starts at 11:30 a.m. on Monday, Oct. 21 in the School of Education Auditorium on the NCCU campus in Durham. Register online for the event.

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. You can also email me questions you may have about the governor's race at dvaughan@newsobserver.com.

Under The Dome embed (2022)

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Now is the time to relocate problem-prone I-40 in western NC - Opinion

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Richard Stradling's report on failure-prone Interstate 40 west of Asheville reminds us that the highway's steep and narrow route along the Pigeon River has been the scene of recurring rock slides and scouring by floodwaters since its construction in the wrong place more than half a century ago. It will take many months to rebuild yet again.

The crucial east-west transportation artery should never have been built along the wild, jagged, remote Pigeon. Instead, I-40 should curve gently along the French Broad River valley. Yes, that river also flooded in Hurricane Helene. But its valley is wider, its elevation lower, and its slope more gradual, making the route into Tennessee far more accessible and repairs easier. It's time to re-route vital I-40 more sensibly along the French Broad.

Matthew Eisley, Raleigh

Rainy day fund

North Carolina has a rainy day fund of about \$4.75 billion. Well, that rainy day is here. No doubt much of the infrastructure repair and other costs will be covered by FEMA and other federal funds. Many current emergency needs are being addressed by charitable groups. But the state is well funded for both state infrastructure repairs and for helping individuals. It will be critically important to ensure those funds are expended as needed, but expended wisely.

Robert D. Brown, Cary

Building codes

I totally agree with Ned Barnett's "In Western NC, a lack of flood insurance deepens the damage." Our state legislators are more concerned about their developer friends when they do things like override Gov. Roy Cooper's veto of Senate Bill 166, which reshaped the state Building Code Council. Keep that in mind when you vote this November.

Daniel Oldman, Chapel Hill

Please vote

I believe most of us wish to live in a caring, compassionate world. In this election we have an opportunity to help make that wish come true.

Hurricane Helene is a powerful reminder of how Americans support each other and the importance of having a government comprised of experienced people dedicated to serving all of us with decency, skill and fairness. I urge everyone to become objectively informed and to vote wisely. Be wary of politicians whose ads disparage and demean an opponent. Pay attention to what candidates' records say about them, what they claim they will do and how.

Please vote – not only for what's best for you, but also for what you believe is best for our country. Listen to your heart. Let your better angels guide you as you vote.

Michael Glaser, Hillsborough

Trump projecting

Thank you for "Shame on Donald Trump for worsening NC's Helene tragedy with political lies."

The irony is that Trump's projecting, as usual. He's claiming that his opponents are doing what in fact they're not doing, but he is. When he accuses Gov. Roy Cooper and President Joe Biden of "going out of their way to not help people in Republican areas," what he really means is in 2018 Trump refused to release federal funds to fight wildfires in California, which he lost in the 2016 election, until someone showed him that his supporters were in danger. What he means is in 2020 he refused to respond to calls for help from Democratic governors because they criticized his handling of the COVID crisis. Just a few weeks ago, he threatened to withhold firefighting assistance from California again.

These are our tax dollars, not Trump's personal funds to punish or reward other politicians he likes or doesn't like. The very best use of that money is when we can help our neighbors in need.

Linda Falcao, Raleigh

Young voters

The writer is the NC Director of NextGen America

This year, Millennials and Gen Z together will form the largest and most diverse voting bloc in history, representing nearly one-fifth of the electorate. With over 40 million Gen Z voters, including 8 million newly eligible since 2022, our collective power is immense. In North Carolina, people aged 18-35 make up nearly a quarter of the electorate. Our generations face significant challenges - threats to reproductive rights, an urgent climate crisis and an economic system that often feels stacked against us. Young people must make their voices heard this November. We hold the power to create lasting change.

Brennan Steele, Charlotte

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Photos: Vice President Kamala Harris campaigns in NC

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Vice President and Democratic Party presidential nominee Kamala Harris stopped at East Carolina University in Greenville, N.C. Sunday for a campaign rally featuring several Democrats.

Earlier in the day, Harris attended church services at Koinonia Christian Center Church in Greenville.

Harris also spoke about rumors rampant on social media after the remnants of Hurricane Helene battered Western North Carolina, saying the people behind those rumors are "trying to gain some advantage for themselves."

Here are photos from the event:

HARRISGVILLE-NE-101324-RTW_10.jpgVice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic Presidential nominee acknowledges her supporters as he departs a rally on Sunday, October 13, 2024 at Minges Coliseum in Greenville, N.C.

HARRISGVILLE-NE-101324-RTW_8.jpgSupporters of Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic Presidential nominee, concludes her remarks during a rally on Sunday, October 13, 2024 at Minges Coliseum in Greenville, N.C.

HARRISGVILLE-NE-101324-RTW 9.jpg

HARRISGVILLE-NE-101324-RTW_12.jpgVice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic Presidential nominee, soaks up the applause from a packed house at Minges Coliseum on Sunday, October 13, 2024 in Greenville, N.C.

HARRISGVILLE-NE-101324-RTW_11.jpgSupporters of Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic Presidential nominee, show their support as she arrives for a rally on Sunday, October 13, 2024 at Minges Coliseum in Greenville. N.C.

HARRISGVILLE-NE-101324-RTW_7.jpgVice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic Presidential nominee, delivers remarks during a rally at Minges Coliseum on Sunday, October 13, 2024 in Greenville, N.C.

HARRISGVILLE-NE-101324-RTW_6.jpgSupporters of Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic Presidential nominee, applaud her arrival at Minges Coliseum on Sunday, October 13, 2024 in Greenville, N.C.

HARRISGVILLE-NE-101324-RTW_4.jpgVice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic Presidential nominee, arrives for a rally on Sunday, October 13, 2024 at Minges Coliseum in Greenville, N.C.

HARRISGVILLE-NE-101324-RTW_14.jpgChildren line the front row to catch a glimpse of Vice President Kamala Harris during a rally at Minges Coliseum on Sunday, October 13, 2024 in Greenville, N.C.

HARRISGVILLE-NE-101324-RTW_1.jpgSupporters of Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic Presidential nominee, hold posters of her prior to her arrival at a rally on Sunday, October 13, 2024 at Minges Coliseum in Greenville, N.C.

HARRISGVILLE-NE-101324-RTW_13.jpgMusic form a DJ moves supporters of Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic Presidential nominee, as they await her arrival on Sunday, October 13, 2024 at Minges Coliseum in Greenville, N.C.

HARRISGVILLE-NE-101324-RTW.jpgSupporters of Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic Presidential nominee, react to a message on women's rights as they await her arrival on Sunday, October 13, 2024 at Minges Coliseum in Greenville, N.C.

HARRISGVILLE-NE-101324-RTW_2.jpgRachel Hunt, candidate for North Carolina Lt. Governor, acknowledges the crowd after delivering remarks, prior to the arrival Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic Presidential nominee, on Sunday, October 13, 2024 at Minges Coliseum in Greenville, N.C.

HARRISGVILLE-NE-101324-RTW_3.jpgCongressman Don Davis addresses the crowd prior to the arrival of Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic Presidential nominee, on Sunday, October 13, 2024 at Minges Coliseum in Greenville, N.C.

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'It is time to turn the page.' Kamala Harris attacks Trump, lays out plans at NC rally

October 13, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Tammy Grubb and Avi Bajpai, News & Observer | Section: election | 1736 Words OpenURL Link

Kamala Harris attacked her Republican opponent Sunday in Greenville in ways that echoed Donald Trump's own past criticism of her and Joe Biden.

A roar went up from the crowd as the vice president and Democratic presidential nominee entered the Williams Arena at East Carolina University's Minges Coliseum. Many had waited hours to hear her roughly 25-minute speech.

Harris opened her remarks by reflecting on the damage from Hurricane Helene, noting, "in times like this, we stand together as one nation. That is who we are."

She then launched into the differences between what she called Trump's focus on the past and her vision for the future, and questioned why the former president has not released his medical records, appeared for a "60 Minutes" interview or agreed to a second debate. Harris appeared last week on the CBS news show and released her medical records over the weekend.

"Why does his staff want him to hide away?" Harris asked. "Are they afraid that people will see he is too weak and unstable to lead America?"

Trump and others attacked President Biden's mental fitness when he was the Democratic candidate, then criticized Harris for ducking media interviews once she replaced Biden.

"It is time to turn the page, because America is ready to chart a new way forward, ready for a new and optimistic generation of leadership, which is why Democrats, Independents and Republicans are supporting our campaign, because they and we know we need a president who works for all the American people," Harris said Sunday.

Harris' rally at ECU followed visits earlier Sunday with a local church congregation and Black farmers.

Harris lays out plan, Trump fears

HARRISGVILLE-NE-101324-RTW_4.jpgVice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic presidential nominee, arrives for a rally on Sunday, October 13, 2024 at Minges Coliseum in Greenville, N.C.

Harris told the Greenville crowd she has a plan, in comparison to Trump's "concept of a plan," a reference to his remarks at their Sept. 11 debate.

She would pass a middle-class tax cut, help first-time homebuyers and entrepreneurs, expand the federal child tax credit and add home health care coverage to Medicare, Harris said, and address other key issues, from abortion and a woman's right to choose to gun violence, voting rights and LGBTQ+ rights.

Photos: Vice President Kamala Harris campaigns in NC

"So much is on the line in this election," Harris said, reminding the crowd that the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled a president is in many cases immune from criminal prosecution for acts committed while in office.

"I do believe Donald Trump is an unserious man, but the effects of him being back in the White House would be brutally serious. Just imagine Donald Trump with no guard rails," she said.

He would "weaponize" the U.S. Department of Justice against his political enemies, she added, as some of her supporters in the crowd broke into chants of "lock him up," replicating the chant that was common at Trump rallies when he ran against Hillary Clinton in 2016.

Harris turned to the section of the crowd that was leading the chant and interrupted them, saying with a chuckle, "Hold on, here's the thing, let's let the courts handle that, and let's handle November."

Democrat in tossup race throws support behind Harris

HARRISGVILLE-NE-101324-RTW_3.jpgU.S. Rep. Don Davis addresses the crowd prior to the arrival of Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic Presidential nominee, on Sunday, October 13, 2024 at Minges Coliseum in Greenville, N.C.

U.S. Rep. Don Davis threw his full support behind Harris at the beginning of Sunday's rally, to booming cheers from the crowd. State Sens. Kandie Smith and Rachel Hunt, who is running for lieutenant governor, also appeared at the rally.

As a son of Eastern North Carolina, Davis said, "the path to stop Project 2025 and the path to the White House comes through Eastern North Carolina." Trump has been tied to the conservative plan for the next Republican president, despite denying his involvement.

"The stakes are high," said Davis, a Snow Hill Democrat running for reelection in a swing district in the northeastern part of the state. "This election is the most consequential in our lifetimes. ... Vice President Harris and Gov. (Tim) Walz are fighting for families right here in Eastern North Carolina. They are fighting for lower costs, to protect our freedoms, and they will serve all Americans ... regardless of party."

"But on the other hand, some who are pretty extreme running in support of a pretty extreme agenda, a manifesto called Project 2025," he said.

1013-dondavis-harris-embed

Earlier, Davis greeted Harris at Pitt-Greenville Airport Sunday morning. Harris shook hands with Davis and they spoke for a few minutes after he met her at the bottom of the stairs as she got off the plane. They high-fived, and Harris got in the motorcade for the ride to a Greenville church.

Davis first gave Harris his support for the presidency in July, but not before voting with House Republicans and five other Democratic members to pass a resolution condemning Harris as a failed "border czar."

Immigration is a key policy issue in the 2024 race, with Republicans attacking Harris on her work at the southern U.S. border, and Democrats pointing to Trump's pressure on Republican lawmakers as the reason a bipartisan border bill wasn't approved this year.

Day starts with church service in Greenville

Ahead of the rally, Harris extolled members and visitors at a Greenville church on Sunday to keep their faith and help others in need.

The congregation at Koinonia Christian Center Church stood and cheered as Harris took the stage. The vice president, recounting her conversation with the pastor prior to Sunday's noon service, said "It does my heart and soul good" to be with the congregation.

"In times of crisis - and we're looking at the images of the aftermath of the hurricane - it is easy in these moments of crisis to question our faith, to sometimes lose our faith for a moment, because what we see is so hard to see that we lose faith," Harris said.

She also addressed rumors rampant on social media after the remnants of Hurricane Helene battered Western North Carolina, saying the people behind those rumors are "trying to gain some advantage for themselves."

"The problem with this, beyond the obvious, is it's making it harder to get people life-saving information if they're led to believe they cannot trust" those trying to help, Harris said.

Former U.S. Rep. Eva Clayton, the first Black woman in Congress from North Carolina and a longtime advocate for Eastern North Carolina, attended the service.

Rally at ECU draw support, critics

HARRISGVILLE-NE-101324-RTW.jpgSupporters of Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic presidential nominee, react to a message on women's rights as they await her arrival on Sunday, October 13, 2024 at Minges Coliseum in Greenville, N.C.

Supporters of the vice president began lining up outside the 7,100-capacity arena early on Sunday morning.

Jordyn Strupp, a senior studying political science and business management at ECU who is active with College Democrats on campus and at the state and national levels, said this year's presidential race feels like the "closest it's ever been in North Carolina."

Strupp, 21, who has been knocking on doors around Greenville since last month for N.C. House candidate Claire Kempner, said she believes Harris has a "really good shot" of winning the state.

She said that on campus, very few students - next to none - were still undecided about who they were voting for.

U.S. Rep. Greg Murphy, a Republican from Greenville, called attention to rising inflation, illegal immigration and "two major wars" abroad in a statement issued before Harris arrived. Harris is "tied to the hip of President Biden," he said.

"Her appearance is a reminder that we need to return President Trump to the White House. Eastern North Carolina knows Kamala Harris is not fit for the job and will vote accordingly," Murphy said.

Koinonia Senior Pastor Rosie O'neal noted in introducing Harris that everyone may not have the same political opinions.

"There are things on all sides that we don't agree with, but what I've asked you to do over the years is listen to the issues, then try to get a sense of the direction that the person would take our country in. Then, look at their service history, pray and ask the Lord," O'neal said.

Election Day is 23 days away

Harris warned the crowd before wrapping up Sunday that she is "running as the underdog" in North Carolina at this point. The latest polls show Trump still has a slight lead in North Carolina, which he won in 2016 and 2020.

"Remember always that your vote is your voice, and your voice is your power," Harris said.

The visit to Greenville is part of a sweep this week in Eastern North Carolina that will also include former President Bill Clinton. On Saturday, Harris met with Black faith leaders, politicians and supporters for a private event at The Pit Authentic Barbecue in downtown Raleigh, helping to pack several aid-relief boxes for storm-ravaged Western North Carolina.

IMG_9604.jpgVice President Kamala Harris made a stop at The Pit restaurant in downtown Raleigh, N.C. Saturday

evening, October 12, 2024 in advance of a campaign stop in Greenville, N.C. on Sunday.

North Carolina is one of seven major battleground states that Harris and former President Donald Trump have been crisscrossing in recent weeks. Early voting starts Thursday in North Carolina and runs through Nov. 2. Harris' Greenville visit came 23 days before the Nov. 5 election.

Trump held a town hall in Fayetteville on Oct. 4, where he blasted the Biden administration's response to the storm.

Harris and Trump, and their vice presidential picks - Democratic Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz and Republican Ohio Sen. JD Vance - have included the Tar Heel State in multiple campaign stops this year.

Those visits have been ramping up in the last few weeks, with Vance holding a town hall Thursday with voters in Greensboro, and attending the Bank of America ROVAL 400 race at the Charlotte Motor Speedway on Sunday.

On Saturday, the Trump campaign announced that Vance will hold a rally in Wilmington on Wednesday.

And on Sunday, the Harris campaign announced that Walz will make stops in Durham and Winston-Salem on Thursday as early voting begins, The News & Observer's media partner, ABC-11, reported.

Under The Dome embed (2022)

New Under the Dome newsletter subscriber embed (graybox)

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HELENE RECOVERY CONTINUES

October 13, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: BURKE COUNTY GOVERNMENT | Section: News | 617 Words OpenURL Link

As Burke County reaches the two-week mark after Hurricane Helene's impact, the recovery eff ort continues across government and nonprofit entities to provide residents with access to financial assistance, debris cleanup and clean drinking water. Some updates below are on the new Helene Hub at burkenc.org/Helene.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Disaster Survivor Assistance teams are currently visiting residents throughout Burke County. If you are visited by a FEMA representative, they should be dressed in FEMA attire and have a federal photo identification badge. The teams go door to door in impacted neighborhoods to help people apply for federal assistance, check the status of an application, identify potential needs and make connections with organizations that can provide resources. Disaster Survivor Assistance crews never ask for, or accept, money.

Impacted residents can begin the application for FEMA assistance now. Do not wait to apply. Get started today at DisasterAssistance.gov, use the FEMA App, or call 800-621-3362 any day of the week.

FEMA's disaster assistance offers new benefits for survivors that provide fl exible funding, a simplified process and expanded eligibility for access to a wider range of assistance and funds for serious needs. Some available resources include:

- Money to help pay for essential items such as food, water, baby formula, breastfeeding supplies, medication and other emergency supplies.
- Money to help with immediate housing needs if you cannot return to your home because of the disaster. The money can be used to stay in a hotel, with family and friends, or other accommodations.
- Survivors now have the option to apply for a low-interest SBA loan at the same time they apply for FEMA assistance.
- If you received an insurance payout that did not cover the cost of damage to your home or property, you may still be eligible to receive money from FEMA.
- Keep in mind, FEMA assistance is not a replacement for home, renters or fl ood insurance and will not cover all losses from a disaster.
- You may receive money to repair the portions of your home damaged by the disaster regardless of pre-existing conditions. You can also make repairs that prevent similar damage from future disasters.

Burke County residents should note that FEMA's response to Hurricane Helene has been hampered by misinformation on social media and phishing websites that appear similar to the application website. For verified information and resources related to Hurricane Helene, visit burkenc.org/Helene.

Debris

Clearing debris is a huge part of recovery eff orts in Burke County. Debris pickup services will begin Monday and continue over the coming weeks and months at no cost to residents. To avoid disposal charges, residents should not transport storm debris to the landfill. Anyone transporting debris to the landfill is reminded to secure the load to prevent littering. Separate debris and place it on the side of the road for pickup. Additional information about debris removal is available by calling 828-764-3088.

Donations

Individuals interested in contributing to the recovery eff ort are encouraged to donate to the Burke County Disaster Relief Fund. This fund was established by the Community Foundation of Burke County for nonprofits in Burke County and those serving the county to apply for funding to help community eff orts in assisting neighbors. Nonprofits involved in disaster relief activities can apply for up to \$10,000 in funding.

Wells

Burke County has resources available for residents using well water that may have been impacted by Hurricane Helene. Comprehensive guides on managing wells before, during and after flooding are available to ensure the safety of your drinking water. All wells must be disinfected before they can be tested.

For more information or to request a well test, visit burkenc.org/Helene or call 828-764-9240.

For the latest information and resources related to the Hurricane Helene recovery eff ort, visit burkenc.org/Helene.

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Column: There but for fortune redux

October 13, 2024 | News Reporter, The (Whiteville, NC) Author: Bill Thompson billthompson@nrcolumbus.com| Section: Opinion| 912 Words OpenURL Link

Several months ago I wrote a column about a fella I met who was not doing well. Several things in his life had gone wrong, and he had decided to come back home and essentially start over. The gist of the story was that, if not for our own good fortune, we would be like that man.

That thought recurred this week as I read about the disastrous situation in our North Carolina mountains. We could be in that situation.

I know the first thing you think when you read that is "We have been in that situation." That is true. Hurricanes are much more frequent down here near the coast than they are in the mountains, and total destruction is total regardless of how it occurs. But this event is different.

I was talking to a friend of mine who lives on the top of a mountain in Avery County. She said their little town had been hit hard. Access is limited in every direction. But they were all safe. They had a generator that powered a water pump as well as power to their house and they would be all right. Then she said, "I know y'all are used to this kind of thing down where you live but this is a once-in-a-hundred-years thing for us and we are having a hard time figuring out what to do. But we'll come through it better, working it out together."

I told her we could identify with their situation but we never get used to hurricanes. Admittedly, our hurricanes are a little different from mountain hurricanes. Our hurricanes usually give us plenty of notice that they're on the way, and when they get here, they settle in like an unwanted relative. After the winds die down, the rivers start to rise and cover us with water. In the mountains, the hurricanes are more like a boxer who comes into the ring and delivers a knockout right away.

After I finished talking to Debbie, I thought about how we have survived all kinds of natural disasters right here in North Carolina. We proclaim our diverse climate as one of our biggest assets while we suffer through hurricanes, ice and snow storms, tornadoes, droughts, floods, blistering heat and freezing cold — sometimes in the same relatively short period. And sometimes we take our ability to recover for granted even as we look at the chaos around us. Why? Because we care about our neighbors, and we'll all come together for each other.

I heard some newscasters comparing the mountain hurricane to the destruction of New Orleans and much of Louisiana by Hurricane Katrina. They talked about how long it took for that area to recover. It is still recovering. And, indeed, the recovery of our mountain communities will not be quick. Regardless of what some rumors say, government and military as well as many other organizations have responded, and their efforts are needed and appreciated and doing a tremendous job under most adverse circumstances. But Hurricane Helene victims will recover in the same way that Hurricane Katrina victims recovered: by helping each other.

I am so proud of the folks from Columbus County who are already in the mountains helping with the recovery. But I'm not surprised. Y'all remember all those out-of-state license plates that have shown up here after every major storm we have. The government folks also come, and they do a great job, too, but it's the neighbors who help us see a light at the end of the tunnel, who share our hardships, encourage our efforts and show us that we are not alone in our struggles. They may belong to an organization, but they are caring individuals.

I know that we are in the midst of an election year, but I am disappointed in those politicians who want to make this catastrophe a political issue. Those folks who are in the midst of a rushing river helping a man out of his water-covered car are not going to ask if he is Democrat or Republican. The fellow driving that truckload of food is not going to ask that hungry family who they're going to vote for before he puts down the groceries. Those DOT folks

clearing roads live in North Carolina. The Red Cross folks sewing up injuries don't care who you vote for. That's a neighbor helping because that's what neighbors do.

Neighbors aren't just folks who live down the road. Neighbors are fellow citizens (and maybe some non-citizens) who responded because they care about the human condition and they want to do something about it. Their political persuasion is irrelevant.

Many years ago, when I was attending a session of Leadership North Carolina in Boone, we heard a young mountain girl sing a song she had written about her home. I bought a cassette recording. (It was that long ago!) I thought of it yesterday and played it. I think it speaks to how those folks in the mountains are feeling as they have to leave their homes. This is just a portion of the song.

Standing on the mountain top, the world looks very small.

They are wanting me but they can't see how small I am at all.

Coming down the mountainside to find my way back home.

I want to be where they can see I can't do it all alone.

It's hard to know where I should go

When all my love's down there.

I would guide them back to the mountain top.

It's a lovely view to share.

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What it was, was football: Week 5

October 13, 2024 | North State Journal (NC) Author: Shawn Krest| Section: Article | 851 Words OpenURL Link

What it was, was football: Week Five

A weekly look at North Carolina college football

6: Games postponed or cancelled last week due to Tropical Storm Helene.

By Shawn Krest

North Carolina football teams posted their second winning week of the season. But that good news was outweighed by the impact of Tropical Storm Helene.

Schedule havoc: While college football pales in comparison to the other damage the storm inflicted on the state, Helene impacted five games on the state's college football schedule. Three were cancelled outright: App State's home game against Liberty, Mars Hill at Wingate and St. Andrews' game at Lindsey Wilson. Another game—Brevard against Maryville—was postponed. It's expected to be played at some point, but the date has not yet been determined. Two other games were moved to Sunday. In addition to the extra day, Davidson's game at Presbyterian was moved to become a Wildcats home game. Lenoir-Rhyne against Tusculum was also played on Sunday.

North Carolina's record: 14-11 (66-72 overall)

Last week's winners (ranked in order of impressiveness of the victory—a combination of opponent and performance):

1.

Johnson C. Smith: 42-3 at Bluefield State

2.

NC Central: 37-10 over Norfolk State

3.

Greensboro: 42-23 over Southern Virginia

4.

Duke: 21-20 over UNC

5.

Charlotte: 21-20 at Rice

6.

Livingstone: 15-14 at Lincoln, PA 7. ECU: 30-20 over UTSA 8. Winston-Salem State: 28-14 over Bowie State 9. Lenoir-Rhyne: 37-23 over Tusculum 10. NC State: 24-17 over Northern Illinois 11. Davidson: 48-37 over Presbyterian 12. Barton: 27-14 over Anderson 13. Campbell: 44-41 over Delaware State 14. Chowan: 27-25 over Mississippi College Last week's losers (ranked in order of impressiveness, despite the result): 1. UNC: 21-20 at Duke 2. Catawba: 35-34 to Carson-Newman 3. UNC Pembroke: 14-7 at Glenville State 4. Wake Forest: 41-38 to Louisiana 5. Elon: 27-17 to Richmond 6. Methodist: 40-24 at LaGrange

NC Wesleyan: 30-12 at Belhaven

7.

Fayetteville State: 35-18 at Virginia State

9.

NC A&T, 45-25 at S.C. State

10. Gardner-Webb: 52-21 to Tennessee Tech

11. Shaw: 42-7 at Virginia Union

Off: App State, Western Carolina, Elizabeth City State, Guilford, Mars Hill, Wingate, Brevard, St. Andrews

Remaining unbeatens (4, unchanged from last week):

Duke: 5-0

Johnson C. Smith: 5-0

Lenoir-Rhyne: 4-0

Guilford: 3-0

Winning records (9, up from 6 last week):

Winston-Salem State: 4-1

Davidson: 3-1

NC Central, NC State, UNC, ECU, Livingstone, Shaw: 3-2

Wingate: 2-1

At .500 (5, down from 7 last week)

App State, Elizabeth City State, Barton, Fayetteville State: 2-2

Brevard: 1-1

Losing records (11, up from 10 last week):

Campbell, Charlotte: 2-3

Elon, NC A&T, Gardner-Webb: 1-4

Catawba, Wake Forest, Western Carolina, Greensboro, Methodist: 1-3

Chowan: 1-2

Still winless (4, down from 6 last week):

UNC Pembroke, NC Wesleyan: 0-4

St. Andrews: 0-3

Mars Hill.: 0-2

Chowan and Greensboro got off the schneid this weekend.

Name Game: NC Central beat Norfolk State in the 40th annual Circle City Classic in Indianapolis, an annual showcase of two HBCUs. Duke also took the Victory Bell from UNC in the rivalry game between the two schools.

State title standings: Duke oved into a first-place tie for the Mack Brown Trophy.

2-0 Duke, Guilford, Fayetteville State

1-0 App State, NC State, Wake Forest, Campbell, Wingate, Davidson, Barton, Lenoir-Rhyne

2-1 UNC

1-1 Charlotte, Shaw, Catawba, Methodist

1-2 Elizabeth City State, NC A&T, NC Central, Elon, Western Carolina

0-1 ECU, Gardner-Webb, Winston-Salem State, Mars Hill

0-2 Chowan, UNC Pembroke, Greensboro

State title games this week:

Wake Forest at NC State

East Carolina at Charlotte

Elizabeth City State at Livingstone

NC Central at Campbell

Methodist at NC Wesleyan

Out of state battles for Week Six:

App State at Marshall, Duke at Georgia Tech, Pitt at UNC, Wofford at Western Carolina, Guilford at Hampden-Sydney, NC A&T at Richmond, Gardner-Webb at UT-Martin, Barton at Carson-Newman, Catawba at Anderson, Chowan at Delta State, Bowie State at Fayetteville State, Virginia State at JC Smith, Wingate at UVA-Wise, Mars Hill at Newberry, Marist at Davidson, Lenoir-Rhyne at Emory & Henry, Bluefield State at Shaw, UNC Pembroke at Wheeling, Winston-Salem State at Virginia Union, Brevard at Southern Virginia,

Off: Elon, Greensboro, St. Andrews

Bad neighbors: Virginia teams went 3-1 against N.C. teams last week to improve to 15-6 in the state-vs.-state battle. Bluefield, Presbyterian and Bowie State all picked up their second win against N.C. teams.

All-state performances for Week Five:

Quarterback: Chad Mascoe, Campbell, 18-of-26 passing for 323 yards and 3 touchdowns. De'von Cannon, Greensboro, 20-for-32, 363 yards, 4 touchdowns.

Running backs; Star Thomas, Duke: 30 carries, 166 yards and a touchdown, 2 catches for 45 yards and another touchdown. Demond Claiborne, Wake Forest, 12 rushes for 94 yards, was carted off the field with what was initially reported as a dislocated kneecap. He was announced as out for the game, then returned and ran for a 60-yard touchdown.

Receiver: O'Mega Blake, Charlotte, 5 catches, 153 yards, 2 touchdowns. Jayden Flood-Brown, Barton, 7 catches, 162 yards, 2 touchdowns.

Defensive line: Davin Vann, NC State, 10 tackles, 4 solo, 1 sack, 3.5 TL, 2 forced fumbles. Julian Rawlins, Davidson, 10 tackles, 5 solos, 2.5 TFL, 2 sacks, forced fumble.

Linebacker: Prince Wallace-Bemah, Charlotte, 6 tackles, 5 solo, 2 TFL. Jayden Reeder, Livingstone, 3 tackles, all solo, TFL, interception.

Defensive back: Al-Ma'hi Ali, Charlotte, 6 tackles, all solo, 1 QB hit, 3 pass breakups. Malcolm Reed, NC Central, 7 tackles, 3 solo, 4 pass breakups.

Special teams: Jason Zapata, Livinstone, scored 10 of the team's 15 points with 3 field goals and a PAT.

Wake Forest's Tate Carney (30) celebrates after scoring a touchdown in the Deacs' loss to Louisiana. (Allison Lee Isley / The Winston-Salem Journal via AP)

The post What it was, was football: Week 5 first appeared on The North State Journal.

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Elisabeth Strillacci: In the midst of chaos, a little beauty

October 13, 2024 | Salisbury Post (NC) Author: Elisabeth Strillacci| Section: Opinion| 695 Words OpenURL Link

Elisabeth Strillacci: In the midst of chaos, a little beauty

Published 12:00 am Sunday, October 13, 2024

By Elisabeth Strillacci

We're all reeling a little, or a lot, from the effects of Helene on our family and friends in western North Carolina. Our computers and televisions and newspapers are flooded with photos and descriptions of unimaginable destruction.

We've seen homes swept away or collapsing into roaring waters, trees plowed down, roads crushed and washed away, mud covering land far and wide, and of course, the heartbreaking stories of people being swept away and not yet found.

It's enough to make all of us sad, angry, scared and a little helpless, but we have reacted with typical American grit and determination, gathering supplies, forming volunteer groups, offering services and support. We have turned our emotions into action and will continue to do so as long as there are people who need us.

But we are also on the cusp of fall, so our tree leaves are changing color and falling, the green is slowly beginning to fade, the vibrancy of summer is easing away.

Which can add to what we are feeling, something akin to the weariness we experience at the end of a long, gray winter. We are starving for some beauty, some small reminder that all is not lost, and that there is still a reason to have faith we will come back from this devastation.

And, almost on cue, along comes another view of the northern lights.

This past Thursday night, we got the word, however late, that until about 2 a.m. Friday morning, most of us in North Carolina might be able to see the aurora borealis or northern lights, as we did back in May.

Typically, the northern lights are visible only in the far northern regions of earth, within 1,550 miles of the North Pole, but twice now in 2024, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), a coronal mass ejection from the sun has pushed the lights into our viewing range.

That ejection, or CME, which is a large expulsion of plasma and magnetic fields from the sun, was kicked out Tuesday, and reached our atmosphere Thursday night as the resulting geomagnetic field pushed particles farther across the surface of the earth.

Almost immediately Thursday night, we started to see friends and neighbors sharing photos taken out in their yards — stunning images of the purple, pink and even teal lights washed across the skies.

Experts have said even if you think you aren't seeing much, you should aim your camera upward at the sky and snap a few photos because the camera can capture light the eye cannot see.

I realize these lights don't solve anything. They don't help folks still in dire need in our mountains or in other states impacted by Helene or now by Milton.

But they do remind me, at least, that there is still beauty and surprise and simple joy in the world if we just look. It gives me a moment to breathe, to just absorb something that once again I have no control over, but this time is beautiful.

Hurricanes are beyond our control, as are tornadoes and blizzards and wildfires — and northern lights. To see something lovely come from something we cannot control after being subjected to such trauma from something we also cannot control is a small but oh so wonderful gift.

And it sent me back to work trying to find ways to help with a renewed sense of encouragement and hope.

Someone told me last week I should write a column advising folks to just go outside and play to escape some of the tension and drama in our world right now. Well, this was not my message, but one from the universe, calling us all outside for a moment, if not to play, then at least to just stop for a minute and enjoy nature's light show.

If you got to see it in person, I hope it filled you with some peace, and if you missed it, take a moment to check out some of the amazing photos online.

In the midst of chaos, there is, still, beauty.

Elisabeth Strillacci covers crime, courts, Spencer, East Spencer and Kannapolis for the Salisbury Post.

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Early voting

October 13, 2024 | Sampson Independent, The (Clinton, NC) Author: Chuck Thompson cthompson@clintonnc.com| Section: news news-main top-stories | 601 Words OpenURL Link

On Tuesday, Nov. 5 voters will go to the polls to let their voices be heard through the ballot box. But, you don't have to wait until then.

Early voting is an option that has been a convenient resource for all voters in Sampson County, and across North Carolina, since 1999, when legislation required all 100 counties in the state to establish several voting locations outside of the normal county board of elections office.

Beginning Oct. 17, early voting will begin across North Carolina, and continue until Nov. 2, 2024. That includes Sampson.

"Early voting is a chance for voters who are traveling, or working, that can't make it to vote on election day," said Niya Rayner, director of the Sampson County Board of Elections. "We have three sites for early voting. If you're a voter in Sampson County, you can go to these sites, convenient for you."

In Sampson County, the three places that registered voters can go to cast their ballot early are as follows:

- Sampson County Agri-Exposition Center, in Prestage Hall, located at 414 Warsaw Road, in Clinton.
- Newton Grove Fire Station, 313 W. Weeksdale St., in Newton Grove.
- Harrells Activity Center, 891 Ward Road, in Harrels.

Raynor encouraged voters to use this valuable tool, "It's an opportunity for you to vote, and do it early. You can register same day, at early voting, but you have to vote the same day," she explained.

In order to register and vote on the same day, voters must bring required documentation, which includes a valid driver's license — but if the license address is a different address from a voter's current Sampson County address one must also bring a current water bill, bank statement, or some other proof of residence with the updated address.

"Voting is important; every voice matters," Rayner attested. "People that represent you are the voice of people that they represent."

Rayner also noted the increase in the number of precinct officials that have signed up to help. Sampson County has 162 precinct officials working this year. All officials must be registered voters, and residents of Sampson County.

"I have an amazing team," she said. "These precinct workers are your neighbors, your friends, family, it's a bipartisan team that cares about you coming out to vote."

She said she's had an increase in the number of people wanting to help this year. She also noted that they have a lot of volunteers offering to help in western North Carolina, asking for information on what can be done to help people find a voting location affected by Hurricane Helene.

"We're giving support, sharing encouragement for people of western North Carolina to make it to a voting station. The Sampson Board of Elections has helped organize, getting people to western North Carolina to help make voting possible."

"We just want people, who have the opportunity, to come out to vote," Rayner stressed.

They also have a program for teenagers that are at least 17 years of age, who want to get involved, and learn a valuable experience by working at voting stations, gaining useful information on the voting process, helping their communities, and adding the experience to the college applications.

"We do have a student assistance, with parental permission, that can work at precincts on election day," Rayner added. "Everyone that works has to go through training, so the cutoff day to sign up for the student assistance program is Oct. 25, 2024."

The Board of Elections is still taking names for the student assistance and precincts officials until Oct. 25. Parents, or the student, can call the board of elections to speak with Rayner, or Danielle Malone, at 910-592-5796 for more information.

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Storms surging - As hurricanes get more intense, some say new category needed

October 13, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC) Author: David M. Zimmer; NorthJersey.com| Section: News| 963 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

Hurricanes are classified from Categories 1 to 5 based on sustained wind speeds: The stronger the wind, the higher the category.

In recent years, major hurricanes – Category 3 and above – have been hitting U.S. shores at an unusual rate, according to records kept by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

From 2020 through 2023, the U.S. saw 10 hurricanes make landfall. Five of them, Laura, Zeta, Ida, Ian and Idalia, were major storms.

In 2024, four more storms have made landfall: Beryl, Debby, Francine and Helene. One, Helene, was a major hurricane. Hurricane Milton, which came ashore last week as a dangerous Category 3, made it two.

This rate of intense storms is almost unmatched in the nearly 175-year-old U.S. Hurricane Research Division's record books. One major hurricane made landfall per year during a five-year run from 1957 through 1961, though the record over five years is seven major storms. That was in the early 2000s, when all seven hit in two consecutive years: 2004 and 2005.

Many scientists say global warming is fueling more intense hurricanes, with heavier rainfall, stronger winds and greater flooding from higher storm surges. Warmer ocean waters are powering storms to intensify faster, rain harder and linger longer after landfall. Despite no significant increase in the total number of Atlantic hurricanes compared with 150 years ago, record-high sea surface temperatures are driving predictions of more destructive seasons, like the one that was forecast for 2024.

Reports from the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicate that while the global frequency of tropical cyclones has not increased – and may have even decreased over the past century – storms, particularly in the North Atlantic, are becoming stronger.

The panel found that rising ocean temperatures are leading to a greater proportion of hurricanes reaching dangerous Category 4 or 5 levels. It also raised concerns about hurricanes becoming slower-moving, which can lead to prolonged damage. For instance, Hurricane Harvey stalled over Houston in 2017, dumping over 3 feet of rain in three days and triggering catastrophic flooding. Research suggests that climate change made the extreme rainfall from Harvey three times more likely.

Similarly, a 2023 study conducted by climate scientists at Princeton University found that the flooding and wind damage resulting from hurricanes is rising in the U.S. and the frequency of severe storms will continue to climb. That not only means a higher likelihood of being hit by major hurricanes but a higher probability that multiple powerful storms will strike the same region in quick succession.

This trend has already been evident this century with hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 and hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria in 2017. Helene and Milton continued the trend this year.

A look back at hurricanes

The National Hurricane Center keeps records dating back to the 1850s. However, officials consider the oldest numbers inaccurate and likely underestimated due to limited coastline populations before the 20th century. Since

then, the proportion of major hurricanes making landfall on U.S. soil has fluctuated. The highest proportion of major hurricanes making landfall was in the 1960s, with 50%. The lowest was in the 2010s, with about 21% hitting the coast at Category 3 or more, records show.

Still, there was also a notable dip in the total number of hurricanes that made landfall in the '60s and '70s, and the early 20th century saw higher averages of hurricanes per year compared with the late 20th century. There has been a slight increase again since 2001, records show.

NOAA officials warn that climate change is expected to worsen the impact of hurricanes in the coming decades, even if the storms themselves fail to change significantly. Rising sea levels, driven by global warming, are expected to amplify flooding caused by storm surges. A warmer atmosphere that can hold more moisture is due to cause heavier rainfall. Moreover, warmer ocean waters should power rapid intensification of wind speeds.

Storms get more intense

A 2023 study led by climate scientists at Rowan University found storms this century have been far more likely to intensify from weak storms into major Category 3 or higher hurricanes within just 24 hours than in the late 1900s. The study published in Scientific Reports analyzed data from the National Hurricane Center on all Atlantic tropical cyclones between 1970 and 2020. It revealed that from 2001 to 2020, tropical storms had an 8% chance of intensifying into Category 3 hurricanes or stronger within 24 hours, compared to only a 3% chance between 1970 and 1990.

The study found that intensification was becoming more common along the U.S. East Coast, in the southern Caribbean and in the eastern Atlantic, while the Gulf of Mexico has seen less rapid intensification compared to previous decades.

Hurricane Milton may skew the numbers, however. Milton grew Monday morning in the western Gulf of Mexico from a Category 2 to a Category 5 hurricane. Maximum sustained wind speeds went from 100 miles per hour to 150 mph in about four hours, according to reports from the National Hurricane Center. Within the next four hours, wind speeds had reached 175 mph, according to center reports.

The Saffir-Simpson scale, introduced in the 1970s and used worldwide, is what is used to rate hurricanes. Simply, it measures intensity through the speed of sustained one-minute surface winds. A Category 5 hurricane, for example, has wind speeds of 157 mph or more. The last Category 5 storm to make landfall in the U.S. was Hurricane Michael on Oct. 10, 2018.

Due to climate change, some scientists have suggested a sixth category may be needed. Category 5 hurricanes were once rare, but some recent storms have such high wind speeds that a Category 6 might be more fitting.

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Woman's death leaves void in community

October 13, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC) Author: Rebecca Sitzes; Shelby Star | Section: News | 724 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

A Kings Mountain woman killed by a tree blown down during Hurricane Helene is being remembered for her unwavering kindness, love for others and passion for the outdoors.

Melissa Marlene Neisler Lawrence, 63, died Friday, Sept. 27, the morning of the storm while out walking with Paul Eugene Miller, who was trapped by the tree and taken to Atrium Health Cleveland with injuries.

According to her obituary, the morning she died she had been out helping neighbors during the hurricane.

The community has been mourning her death.

Margot Plonk, whose husband Carl Plonk was Lawrence's cousin, said their children grew up together, and Lawrence was one of her first friends when she moved to Kings Mountain 30 years ago.

Margot Plonk described her friend as fun and honest, always upbeat and positive.

"She didn't say hard words about anybody," Carl Plonk said.

He said their family liked to hunt, including Lawrence, and said she was a better shot than he was and could clean a fish faster than most men.

"There was a lot of fun times." he said.

He said she was deeply spiritual and was in church every Sunday and sang in the choir.

The morning of the storm, Margot said they had texted back and forth with Melissa to check in with her while they were at the beach.

"We both texted that morning to check on her to make sure she was OK after the storm," Margot said. "She sent a film of a tree that had fallen over in her yard."

Carl said he texted her a picture of the ocean, and she responded back, "Oh my God, how gorgeous."

It was one of the last messages she sent.

Lawrence had three children and four grandchildren, who she doted on.

Carl said she was a good listener, knew almost everybody in their small town, and left a void in the community.

A tribute to Lawrence was posted on the city of Kings Mountain's Facebook page, honoring her life.

"A beloved daughter, wife, mother, friend, and neighbor," the post said. "Melissa's life was taken too soon by the devastating impact of Hurricane Helene. As we reflect on the tragic loss of over 200 lives due to this catastrophe, we remember Melissa not just as a statistic, but as a vibrant soul who touched the hearts of many in our city of Kings Mountain."

The tribute said she was known for her unwavering kindness and steadfast support of her community, that she loved her family deeply and found joy in her work.

"Her dedication extended beyond her family; she served on the board of the Kings Mountain Historical Museum, helping to preserve the rich heritage of our community for future generations," the post said. "As we navigate the sorrow of her passing, let us hold close the joyful moments we shared with her. Whether it was her laughter at gatherings, her warmth at community events, or her gentle encouragement in times of need, Melissa's spirit will forever resonate in our hearts. May we continue to let her light shine, allowing her legacy of love, compassion, and service to inspire us all."

The post suggested people make donations in her memory to the Western North Carolina Assistance Fund, ensuring her spirit of giving continued to support those in need.

According to her obituary, Lawrence spent her summers at Lake Waccamaw where her love for the outdoors flourished.

"Melissa was passionate about her many hobbies. She loved fishing, water skiing, swimming and was a master beekeeper as well as an avid crafter," her obituary said. "She loved to sew and worked as a retail supervisor at Carolina Cotton Company, where she prided herself in customer service."

A lifelong member of the First Presbyterian Church, she sang in the choir, helped with the children's program and served as an elder.

"She never met a stranger, was free spirited and a best friend to all. She was very passionate about life, and you never had to guess where she stood on an issue. Melissa took pride in creating natural healing remedies and finding beauty in God's creation everywhere," it said.

Lawrence was survived by her three beloved children, William Lawrence III, Marlin Lawrence Scott and Joseph Lawrence. Melissa was also a proud grandmother to four grandchildren: Eli, Elyse, Melia, and Morgan, who affectionately called her "Honey." She is also survived by numerous cousins, nieces, nephews, her dear friends—whom she lovingly called her "tribe"—and her beloved dog, Lager.

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Which trails are open after hurricane?

October 13, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC) Author: Rebecca Sitzes; Shelby Star| Section: News| 553 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

Outdoor enthusiasts have limited hiking options this fall season after Hurricane Helene damaged trails and parks across the state.

South Mountain and Crowders Mountain state parks remains closed while staff assess the damage and ensure it is safe to reopen. Kings Mountain State Park trails are closed, but the park remains open. Kings Mountain National Military Park is closed, including trails, park grounds and facilities.

Here is an update on four local trails in Cleveland County:

Stagecoach Trail, Lawndale

Brad Cornwell, general manager of Cleveland County Water, said the Stagecoach Trail, which is still being constructed, weathered the storm well.

"The Lawndale Park did have some flooding, but only on the parking lot areas that are in the flood plain area," he said in an email to The Star. "The restrooms/picnic shelters, etc. were built up out of the flood plain and didn't receive any damage."

Cornwell said the parking lot had anywhere from a half foot of sand on the upper parking to lot to around two feet of sand on the lower parking lot.

"The boat ramp has sand on it. We will clean all this off over the coming days," he said. "There was only one tree uprooted, and it's already been removed."

He said the storm will have no impact on the timeline for the trail's completion.

Two boating access points, that were opened earlier this year, are in good condition.

"The boating access points on N.C. 10 and Delight Road built by Wildlife are in great condition," Cornwell said.
"Water came up over them about 6 to 8 feet but went back down just like they were designed. A little mud on the steps is all that's left."

Broad River Greenway, Boiling Springs

The trails at the Broad River Greenway are closed for recreation.

"The damage is extensive and from one end of the 1,500 acres to the other," wrote Kim Duren, executive director of the greenway.

Photos posted to the Greenway's Facebook page show large trees fallen across the trail every few feet.

In a summary posted to the page, it said crews had been able to survey around three miles of the 15 miles of trails, but progress was slow and challenging.

"The scale of the damage is immense," the summary said. "In one 1.2 mile section alone, we stopped counting after

encountering 45 downed trees. Some of the largest trees are inaccessible, and others remain precariously hanging."

Greenway staff will continue to update the community as progress is made.

First Broad Trail/Carl Spangler Trail, Shelby

City Manager Rick Howell said a full assessment of the trail would be completed soon, but the extent of the damages are not yet known. The suspension bridge, which was rebuilt in 2022 following floods that washed away the first bridge in 2020, has once again been swept away by the raging water.

Howell said staff would likely do an assessment this week and will have an update at that point.

Gateway Trail, Kings Mountain

The Gateway Trail in Kings Mountain has portions that are open to the public.

City Manager Jim Palenick said the parking lot, trailhead and shorter paved sections remain open to the public.

"However, the portion referred to as the "Foote" trail, a longer internal section, is currently closed due to downed trees," he said in an email. "Work is underway to bring back access, but at this point we don't have a definitive date for re-opening that section."

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Rebecca Sitzes, Shelby Star, 'Which trails are open after hurricane?', *Star, The* (online), 13 Oct 2024 A1 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C2E8B44297D180



Raleigh writer: Hurricane brought out best in NC residents

October 13, 2024 | Statesville Record & Landmark (NC) Author: John Hood | Section: Column | 676 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 life jackets, 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 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 roads 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.

John Hood is a John Locke Foundation board member. His latest books, "Mountain Folk" and "Forest Folk," combine epic fantasy with early American history (FolkloreCycle.com).

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Eric Church, Luke Combs discuss hopes for benefit

October 13, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Marcus K. Dowling; Nashville Tennessean| Section: News| 706 Words Page: A12 OpenURL Link

Eric Church visibly stiffens when he considers what it'll be like to hear James Taylor play "Carolina In My Mind" at the "Concert for Carolina" Hurricane Helene benefit show he has organized with fellow country music star Luke Combs.

"It's going to be emotional. That's one of those songs that I've played a lot," he says Tuesday. "For all of us dealing with so much, it'll provide some joy."

Church, Combs, Taylor and Billy Strings will headline "Concert for Carolina" on Oct. 26 at Charlotte's Bank of America Stadium. The event will be hosted by ESPN's Marty Smith and Barstool Sports' Caleb Pressley and will feature additional artists to be announced.

Church, Combs, discuss their plan for assistance following concert

Church and Combs are taking a pragmatic approach to providing the highest quality service to their community by splitting the event's proceeds.

Combs' portion will be distributed between Samaritan's Purse, Manna Food Bank and Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC and offer immediate benefits to the region. Church's Chief Cares Foundation will fund organizations of his choosing to support longer-term relief efforts across the Carolinas and the Southeast.

Combs recalls spending years in Asheville doing community service at Manna and notes that their entire facility was washed away due to Hurricane Helene.

Church's half of the concert proceeds will benefit, among many things, a lack of roadway infrastructure to businesses, hospitals and schools that could remain inaccessible for months and potentially forever be impacted by last week's disaster.

"Over the next few years, I hope to match my half of the funds we'll raise at the concert," Church says. "Sure, many of us want to turn the page after an event like this. But that's impossible for those people in places like Western North Carolina. Continuing to shine a light on the services they'll continue to require is important."

'Small, proud communities ... desire to be small, proud communities again'

Combs notes that geographically, because Western North Carolina's mountainous areas are so isolated and rural, focusing on reviving infrastructure and services is not simple. A town like Appalachian State University's home of Boone is two hours northwest of Charlotte Douglas International Airport.

"When the creeks that separate towns in valleys suddenly become rivers, it also changes the topographical landscape of the mountains surrounding them," Combs says. "Those towns — and the Western North Carolina region, in general — will never be the same."

"These were small, proud communities that desire to be small, proud communities again," Church adds.

Images of Helene's path of destruction initially shocked Church and Combs. The pair shares collegiate roots at Appalachian State University. Church still currently lives nearby for half the year.

"I'm devastated that areas that I once intimately knew are now unrecognizable," Church says.

Superstar artists as humble community servants

A week ago, Church released "Darkest Hour," his first new song in three years, to benefit the people of North Carolina.

"Being in service to the community is at the heart of what it means to be an artist and songwriter," he says.

Though it was not intended to be released until next year, to Church the song's lyrics about "unsung heroes" who "show up when the world's falling apart" fit post-Hurricane Helene America better than any other meaning it could have had.

Because he considers Western North Carolina to be an intrinsic element of his "creative and personal DNA," Helene's damage "hit home harder than anything has ever impacted (him in his) career."

Combs adds that it is his duty to support "people who support me when they need me to help them."

Church finishes the conversation with his most hopeful statement: "This displacement of life will take years to overcome — more than anything, that's most devastating of all. It'll take a while, but one day, things will return somewhat to what they used to be."

Tickets for the show will go on sale on Thursday at 10 a.m. ET/9 a.m. CT. Full details can be found at concertforcarolina.com.

Donations can be made to the North Carolina Community Foundation Disaster Relief Fund or various organizations listed at concertforcarolina.com for those unable to attend the concert but still looking to offer support.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

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Cooper visits iconic tourist town Lake Lure

October 13, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Rebecca Heliot; USA TODAY NETWORK | Section: News | 1169 Words Page: A7 OpenURL Link

LAKE LURE, N.C - The scenic town in the Hickory Nut Gorge is hard to recognize more than a week after Tropical Storm Helene.

Mayor Carol C. Pritchett met with Gov. Roy Cooper the afternoon of Oct. 8 at the Lake Lure Inn off Memorial Highway, where flood waters left over 60 people unaccounted for and destroyed property, including local businesses and boats on the dock. The town continues to lack access to water, electricity, and telecommunication services.

"To see the devastation of a place like (Chimney Rock) and Lake Lure, it's devastating not only to the people here, but the people of North Carolina who have fond memories of Western North Carolina coming back to so many different places and caring about it deeply," Cooper said.

"The economic recovery of this area of the state not only is important to that, but it's also important to our state's economy."

Speaking in front of the lakeside structure, the governor said Lake Lure brings a significant portion of money to the state's tourism economy, especially around this fall foliage time of year.

His main concerns are to get the town's water systems, telecommunications, and utilities working again across the state. "We're down from a little over a million to about 141,000 power outages," Cooper said.

Hurricane Helene caused three fatalities in Rutherford County, officials said. However, 62 Lake Lure residents are still missing. Pritchett said the town will need more state funding and emergency services to recover.

Pritchett said more emergency services are needed in the area. As a small tourist town with a population of only around 1,300 residents, she said residents depended on emergency services during extreme weather events like Tropical Storm Helene. More services are still needed in the area.

"We don't have sufficient emergency services here," said Pritchett. "In the meantime, we have our fire department, and they are wonderful. But we need to look at the numbers so we can fund those services here. I mean there's no hospital or emergency care here, and there will never be in a town of 1,300 ... Emergency services are truly the only accessibility to any (healthcare-related) emergencies. We need a lot of things, but these are the major things."

Cooper said the state government plans to continue sending coordinated efforts to reserve the damage.

For the last two years, the mayor asked for state and federal funding to address waste water management in Lake Lure. She said Helene worsened the need and asked the governor what he could do to fund hurricane relief efforts and waste water treatment assessments.

"The mayor already has some price tags on waste water treatment plants," Cooper said. "She already has some price tags on the fixing waste water system and sewer system. So congratulations on that. But I think it's because they've been dealing with it for a long time, and they want to now get a chance to build this in a way that needs to be built, to make sure this tourism area is alive and kicking for years to come."

Funding would allow city officials to correct many issues at the same time, said Pritchett.

She said Lake Lure would need around \$80 million for sewer systems and \$34 million for a waste water treatment plant. She added funding could be used to address several of the town's needs at one time.

"What we're going to do is turn on all those snippets of funding, because there's a lot of communities that'll need help," Cooper said. "We're talking about billions of dollars that we need. When we're talking about rebuilding these roads and bridges out here, which is the way people get around, it's going to be complex, but we've got to do it."

"The town, the livelihood of the town, depends on there being a lake, and having public services," Pritchett said. "This is just tourism. They're never going to come back. So, if we need to keep the lake down, if we need to drop the lake to get proper (public services), that would be more desirable."

Infrastructure, property damage

During the storm, floodwater washed out all the roads in the town, including U.S. 74A, the entrance that welcomes visitors to the iconic Lake Lure Inn. Roadblocks have kept people out of the town while search and rescue crews continue working in the area. Cooper said the state is looking for ways to bring temporary access to the town until damage can be truly cleared.

"The pier snapped, and boats fell on top of each other. It's the first time the Inn owner has seen that extent of damage just across the road from the hotel," said a Lake Lure Inn front desk manager named Michelle, who spoke only on a first-name basis due to having a restraining order protection. "It's the first time I've seen that extend of damage."

Between Lake Lure and Chimney Rock, Uzi Kamal accessed his property for the first time since tropical storm Helene hit the Wester Still under construction, Lake Lure Gateway Centre showed no signs of exterior damage. looked fine from the outside. Once he entered, he found water damage caused by the rising floodwater. A block of material covered in mold laid in central area of the building.

He expected construction to be finished by next month. He's not certain that will be possible now. There's no power or communications at his Hendersonville office, the city where he works and lives.

"I basically put all of the Hendersonville funding into this new location," Kamal said. "I was hoping to see construction done by the end of the month. I was also planning to build a home closer to this location. I am not seeing any light at the end of the tunnel."

Close by, on the other side of the road, trucks drove into Marine Boat Tours, near Morse Park Gardens. On a peninsula, a stack of boats surrounded a gazebo overlooking the lake.

Just before the storm, Michelle recalled how the team at Lake Lure Inn managed to host a welcome party the Friday before the storm and a wedding the following Saturday. Power shut down some time during the event, and the hotel ran off a power generator. Short-staffed and under adverse weather conditions, the celebration continued as if nothing had happened. "Outside there was the hurricane, but inside the Inn, there was no difference," said Michelle. "It's well-built."

No more guests will be checking in at Lake Lure Inn, said Michelle. They can't have people stay without running water, and road blocks will keep more tourists from coming. As she spoke, a tow truck hauled a demolished vehicle on to a lift across the road. A worker said it was one of the few cars "still in the river."

It's unclear when recovery will be completed. At a prior press conference in Chimney Rock, Cooper said it could take months, even years to repair the damage. Pritchett kept her hopes up.

"We'll get it back to what it was," she said.

• Citation (aglc Style)

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Chimney Rock's comeback - Town vows to return after being wiped away by Helene

October 13, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Evan Gerike; Asheville Citizen Times | Section: News | 1525 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

CHIMNEY ROCK — After staying the night at the Chimney Rock Volunteer Fire Department, Bruce Godzik woke up Sept. 27 to see the Broad River rising rapidly as rain poured down from Tropical Storm Helene. He told his wife, Rebecca, to give up barricading their basement against the flood waters and come get breakfast at the fire department. The flooding was already too bad. They would lose some basement contents, but they'd deal with it later. The river, however, kept rising. In 15 years, Godzik had never seen it so high. It continued to rush through the town, wiping out roads and businesses along Chimney Rock's Main Street.

He watched as his house washed into the river, then fell to his knees.

On Monday, Oct. 7, over a week after the storm, what once was maybe a river, or maybe a road — it was too hard to tell now — was a mass of debris and destruction in the heart of Chimney Rock.

The only good news, of a sort: Chimney Rock Mayor Peter O'Leary confirmed there was just one death in the village from the storm, and multiple volunteers at the fire department said they had checked on everyone in the town.

Though Chimney Rock — a tourism-based town about 30 miles southeast of Asheville in Rutherford County — population is just 125. During tourist season, 8,000 to 12,000 people can be in the town on a given day, O'Leary said.

Godzik does a bit of everything in Chimney Rock, like many residents do. On top of owning Coffee on the Rocks, he's on the Town Council and is an assistant chief of the Chimney Rock Volunteer Fire Department.

He was at the station Sept. 26, helping evacuate the lower-lying areas of Chimney Rock. He'd seen the Broad River climb high before, sometimes even creeping into his yard before settling back down. But when he went to check on his wife, she was trying to block water seeping into their basement.

They left to get breakfast up the hill at the fire department, leaving their Maine coon cat at home. Twenty minutes later, the water was flowing over the bridge and flooding Main Street. He told his wife there wasn't time to go back for the cat.

Chimney Rock Brewing Co. went first. Highlands Kitchen and Bar followed. Houses, cars and propane tanks, spraying gas into the air, flowed through as the raging waters tore away at the ground beneath Main Street.

"We're all standing there, a couple of us, just watching," Godzik said. "We're just like, 'Hold on!' We're praying, 'Hold on to the buildings!'"

Godzik watched the roof collapse on his house before it vanished. Coffee on the Rocks tumbled into the river shortly after, the last building on Main Street to be swept away.

Since the storm, Godzik has been living in the fire department, continuing to help search, rescue and recovery efforts in Chimney Rock. His wife is in Orlando, Florida, staying with friends.

"We're like a family here," Godzik said. "This is Chimney Rock. We all live and work here. I have to stay here. This is my home, and the firehouse is the second best home I can have right now."

Gov. Cooper: 'Western North Carolina

is going to come back'

A month ago, Gov. Roy Cooper visited Chimney Rock during the Labor Day Weekend. He shopped at Bubba O'Leary's General Store, named after Mayor O'Leary's golden retriever, and ate lunch next door at the RiverWatch Bar and Grill.

On Monday, Cooper stood in front of the same buildings, which had been wrecked when the Broad River swelled to five times its normal size. Across the street was Gale's souvenir and gift shop, which had been in Chimney Rock since 1947. Usually displaying knick-knacks in its window, it now was boarded up with a sign spray-painted in pink letters that read "KEEP OUT." Next door at the Chimney Rock Gem Mine, the floor had collapsed.

At Bubba O'Leary's, water had rushed through the building and blasted the front doors clear across the street. The right side of the building had collapse as piles of debris had washed underneath it.

The rebuilding of Chimney Rock will have to take into account the unprecedented level of destruction.

"It's important that you come back in a way that's smart and resilient," Cooper told residents at the fire department.

Cooper said rumors that government agencies are blocking help are not only false, but detrimental to the recovery effort. With thousands of officials helping, he said, discrediting the teams working nonstop is demoralizing.

"We're all in this together," he said. "The challenge is ... making sure we continue to be focused on this for weeks, months and years."

Nick and Kristen Sottile, who own the Broad River Inn on Main Street, are among those in Chimney Rock looking to rebuild their business.

Nick Sottile said they'd owned the inn for four years, living in it for the first two. On the day they opened, a busy summer Saturday, he said, the community volunteered to help them out, bussing tables and cleaning.

That's what Chimney Rock is, he said.

The building was severely damaged in the storm, especially the restaurant, Stagecoach Saloon. The mini golf course attached to the inn washed away entirely.

"Where hole No. 1 is now starts in the river," Sottile told Cooper, adding with a resilient touch of humor, "It's a pretty tough course."

It's places like Broad River Inn that Cooper wants to ensure come back, as FEMA aid reaches more remote places in Western North Carolina. Though Sottile said it was too early to think about the next steps, a local engineering firm has been volunteering its time to evaluate the safety of the buildings.

"Western North Carolina is going to come back," Cooper said. "I feel very confident in that. Not only is it important to the people here, it's important to our state. It's important to us, economically, for this area to come back."

Chimney Rock isn't being bulldozed;

it's beginning to build back

Though rumors have been floated that Chimney Rock will be bulldozed, O'Leary stressed that not only is the village going to be rebuilt, the process has already started.

Every person he has talked to, whether local officials or federal agents or community members, has asked the same thing.

"Their message is always, 'What can we do to help you?'" he said.

Much of the village no longer exists, wiped away by the raging waters. But the process of rebuilding the road from Bat Cave that connects Chimney Rock to Asheville and the rest of Western North Carolina already is underway, O'Leary said. And in his experience, when it comes to natural disasters, the North Carolina Department of Transportation's response often is ahead of its own schedule.

Shop owners were expected to get access midweek to check on their businesses.

"That may seem fast, but the simple fact is, the reason we didn't have a tremendous cleanup area is everything was washed into Lake Lure," O'Leary said. "There's nothing left to clean up."

Officials will have a list of business owners, as well as residents of Terrace Drive, to keep traffic limited during cleanup. O'Leary said officials are using a Facebook page, Chimney Rock Village NC, to keep the public updated on official news.

An estimation for repairs, both a financial and a timeline, remains unclear. There is still debris to clear before reconstruction starts, a long process that begets reopening to visitors.

"On Wednesday, when they get in here, not everybody but a lot of these business owners are going to be going gangbusters to get open," O'Leary said. "I'm very hopeful that some point in the spring, we'll have tourists back in town."

The first step will be a temporary narrow, two-lane road, which will be open to the public. Though O'Leary didn't have an estimate for when that will be complete, he said it should be sooner than he originally expected. The main road will be built on top of that in what will be a multi-year project.

O'Leary said he's satisfied with the government agencies providing aid to Chimney Rock, though he certainly would like more.

He called the response overwhelming: People have arrived to help from Brooklyn, New York, Texas and San Diego. Cooper was the latest official to visit.

But O'Leary remains wary of giving the government too much credit.

"So far, it's been wonderful. We're the top story now," he said. "But two months, three months, two years from now, when we're still trying to get everything rebuilt... that's my fear — we get forgotten."

Evan Gerike is a reporter for the Asheville Citizen Times. Email him at egerike@citizentimes.com or follow him on X, formerly Twitter, @EvanGerike. Please support this type of journalism with a subscription to the Citizen Times.

TEXT UPDATES

We are staffing a text message service to bring you the latest on Helene, connect you with resources and answer any questions you have. To sign up, text "Hello" to (239) 241-6343.

WHERE TO

GET HELP

See 4A for the latest on food, water, and emergency resources in the Hendersonville area.

MORE COVERAGE

See inside for a word from our editor, as well as reports on mental health, health concerns, and the fate of iconic Lake Lure.

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How the 'Great Flood' of 1916 compares to Helene

October 13, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC)
Author: Sara Chernikoff, Jennifer Borresen and Diana Leyva; USA TODAY NETWORK | Section: News | 734 Words Page: A13
OpenURL Link

ASHEVILLE, N.C. — Asheville's "Great Flood," of 1916 brought inconceivable devastation to the small mountain town in western North Carolina. What has been described as, "the worst natural disaster in the recorded history of Western North Carolina," killed dozens of residents and completely wiped out roads and railways.

The horror of this distant memory was brought back to life two weeks ago as rains brought by Hurricane Helene deluged western North Carolina. Communities on the edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains are left devastated; hundreds of people are missing, thousands are without power and many roads are impassable.

This "100-year flood" is partially due to a rare weather event, some back luck, and potentially climate change, the Asheville Citizen Times reported. There are only estimates about the extent of the destruction, with the full scope of Helene's devastation not expected to be known for some time, the Citizen Times wrote.

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper said Helene had become "one of the worst storms in modern history for parts of North Carolina."

Over 100 years ago, the "Great Flood" of 1916 crested at 21 feet, a record that has now been smashed by Helene. Here's how Asheville's historic flood compares to the devastation caused by Helene in western North Carolina:

How did Asheville's 'Great Flood' of 1916 unfold?

What began as weeks of continuous rain, turned into what has been called, "the worst natural disaster in the recorded history of Western North Carolina." The catastrophic North Carolina flood of 1916 wreaked immeasurable havoc on the region, killing dozens and wiping out roads and railways.

According to the National Weather Service, a storm system made landfall in Alabama on July 5, 1916, producing heavy, relentless rainfall over the North Carolina foothills and mountains. Although no flooding was caused by the initial storm, the ground became heavily saturated and bodies of water were running high.

Then the second storm hit.

On July 14, a Category 2 hurricane made landfall on the South Carolina coast, before reaching the North Carolina mountains on July 15. Record rainfall was widespread. Reports state that between July 15-16, 22.22 inches of rain fell over parts of western North Carolina.

"The water that thundered in its wake wasn't just 'high'; it carved away the ground under mountain railroad passes, leaving tracks looking like sky-high trapeze rigs hanging 20 to 60 feet in the air," the city of Asheville reported.

Reports estimate that around 80 people were killed in the flood of 1916, however, the figure is estimated to be higher. According to the Statesville Record and Landmark, over 20 people died when a single bridge collapsed at Catawba, taking the lives of 14 railway employees, four telegraph employees, and half a dozen onlookers.

"It was more than a universal cloudburst in all this mountain country," reported the Newton Enterprise back in July 25, 1916. "It was a night of tempest and terror."

Flooding from Helene brings widespread destruction

Helene dumped nearly 14 inches of rain through Sept. 27, on cities along the Blue Ridge Mountains, including Asheville.

Other areas of North Carolina reported more than 2 feet of rainfall, with Busick receiving nearly 31 inches and Spruce Pine recording 24.12 inches through 8 a.m. Sept. 28.

Officials in North Carolina said deaths in the state had risen to 120. Buncombe County, home to Asheville, has reported 72 deaths.

USA TODAY reported that hundreds of homes and scores of roads were damaged or destroyed in the floods. Many neighborhoods in western North Carolina have no electricity or running water.

AccuWeather estimates that the cost of total damage and economic loss from Hurricane Helene is over \$220 billion. This includes destruction along the Florida coast and in the Southeast.

According to 1916 reports from the Winston-Salem Journal, the flood caused millions of dollars worth of damage, with the damage to crops alone being worth several hundred thousands of dollars. "It can be said with safety that no such damage has ever before been brought by flood in the western half of North Carolina," wrote the Winston-Salem Journal about the Great Flood of 1916. "Indeed, no one thought this section of the state could ever suffer such damage."

Over 100 years later, western North Carolina is left devastated from one of the deadliest storms in its history. Helene is now the deadliest hurricane to make landfall in the U.S. mainland since Katrina hit in 2005.

Contributing: Staff reports, Asheville Citizen Times

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Post-Helene updates: Curfew, resources, donations - What to do with debris

October 13, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC)

Section: News 1016 Words

Page: A4
OpenURL Link

Henderson County will provide free curbside storm debris pickup for all county residents on NCDOT, municipal and private roads. All storm debris that is pushed to the right of way of a property will be picked up for free.

Burning debris is not the safest method under the current conditions, and accidental fires would only tax the already busy emergency responders. Residents are strongly encouraged to use this free curbside service to reduce the risk of accidental fires.

Find a job in debris collection

Debris Tech is hiring hurricane debris collection monitors to support recovery efforts in Henderson County. Applicants can earn \$1,000 or more per week based on full-time hours.

These positions offer hourly pay, overtime eligibility and on-the-job training, with no experience required. Monitors will be responsible for ensuring that eligible debris is properly collected and loaded, as well as maintaining safety standards and reporting any issues during removal. To apply, visit www.debrisjobs.com and check the "Debris Monitor" box or text your name, contact information and residence to 407-205-9602 or 407-205-9627.

Find a place to do laundry

Express Laundry, 5839 Asheville Hwy., Hendersonville, is open 6 a.m.-9 p.m. daily. 828-551-5053.

Pocket Change Laundry, 1620 Brevard Road, Suite 50, Hendersonville, is open 8 a.m.-9 p.m. Laundry drop-off from 8 a.m.-noon at Pocket Change Laundry, 282 New Leicester Hwy., Asheville, or 1620 Brevard Road, Hendersonville. 50% off wash, dry and fold for regular customers. Free for first responders and linemen. (828) 540-2625 or www.itspocketchange.com.

Coin Laundry at Mills River Barbershop, 4176 Haywood Road, Mills River, is open until 10 p.m. (828) 891-4855.

The Tide laundry unit is at Home Depot, 401 Linda Vista Drive, Hendersonville, from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. No charge.

Donations - financial aid needed

Henderson County is no longer in need of physical donations like water, food and supplies after an outpouring of support from the community and beyond. Henderson County does continue to encourage financial contributions. The Community Foundation of Henderson County has set up a special page for Hurricane Helene Relief & Recovery donations. To contribute, visit www.cfhcforever.org. Donors may choose among funds specifically for Henderson County and the surrounding area, WNC recovery and Lake Lure and Chimney Rock.

The United Way of Henderson County is managing volunteer sign-ups. Visit www.hendersoncountync.gov/helene.

Wellness Check Status Map

Henderson County has launched a Wellness Check Status Map for missing contacts. This map shows individuals whose location and safety are unknown in red. Blue dots show contacts that were made. Check the map to see if you are listed or if you know the whereabouts of anyone on this map. Call (828) 771-6670 to notify of anyone's

status. View the map at https://hendersoncounty.maps.arcgis.com/.../76a0a66ff2ff4...

Environmental health —

well, septic, food

Have questions about your well water, septic system or food establishment after Tropical Storm Helene? The Environmental Health team has compiled a list of guidance and resources to help people navigate their situation. Visit www.hendersoncountync.gov/.../environmental...To view Hendersonville Water Department updates and a map for up-to-date status of water advisories, visit www.hvlnc.gov/wateralerts. Depending on where customers are in the system determines if they still need to boil water. The majority of customers have water and no longer need to boil water. The state of North Carolina will provide free well testing kits for those affected by Tropical Storm Helene at a future date. Test kits are expected to arrive by Monday. More details are forthcoming.

Government offices

City government offices in Hendersonville have reopened with walk-in services at some facilities from 9 a.m.-5 p.m.:

City Hall, 160 6th Ave. E.

Hendersonville Police Department, 630 Ashe St.

Community Development, 100 King St.

Visit www.hvlnc.gov/Helene or call (828) 697-3052 for updated city service information.

FEMA assistance

President Biden has approved federal disaster assistance that is available for survivors in designated counties in North Carolina.

Survivors may apply online at disasterassistance.gov, call 800-621-3362 or on the FEMA App.

Recreation

The Oklawaha Greenway in Hendersonville is open for walking.

Information call center

The call center is available for all non-medical requests for information. Call (828) 771-6670 or email Helene-info@hcem.org.

For emergencies, call 911.

For more information visit www.hendersoncountync.gov and click on the Hurricane Helene Updates banner.

Reminder: Access to Bat Cave area is restricted

Henderson County's State of Emergency Declaration has been modified to prohibit travel on U.S. 74, U.S. 64, N.C. 9 or Grant Mountain Road beyond the area barricaded by the Henderson County Sheriff's Office in the direction of Gerton, Bat Cave or Lake Lure.

Exceptions include:

Law enforcement officers

First Responders and Emergency Medical Services Personnel

Other public safety officials

Utility workers

Persons traveling to and from gainful employment.

Residents of the area beyond the area barricaded by the Henderson County Sheriff's Office in the direction of Gerton, Bat Cave or Lake Lure.

Hendersonville water system restored to normal operations

The City of Hendersonville announced that the water system has been substantially restored to normal operations. Thursday, water service was fully restored to the Hoopers Creek area, marking the completion of the system-wide restoration efforts.

Approximately 4% of the utility's 80,0000 customers, including those in the Hoopers Creek area, remain under a system pressure advisory. This advisory will remain in effect until water quality tests confirm it is safe for consumption. Residents can find updates and view a map showing the status of water advisories at www.hvlnc.gov/wateralerts.

Although the conservation recommendations have been lifted, the Hendersonville Water Department encourages residents to continue practicing mindful water use where possible. Ongoing conservation helps ensure that the utility can remain resilient and extend assistance to neighboring communities in need.

Curfew lifted for county

Henderson County has lifted its curfew, though a State of Emergency remains in effect.

Share storm experience

with Historical Society

The Henderson County Historical and Genealogical Society is asking residents to share stories about their experience of Tropical Storm Helene, so they can be archived and preserved for future generations. Writeups can be emailed to hcghs@bellsouth.net, sent via mail to the Society at 400 N. Main St., Hendersonville, NC 28792 or dropped off in person when the office opens sometime next week.

Theatre asks for volunteers

A work day/clean up day will be held from 2-5 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 13, at Hendersonville Theatre, 229 S. Washington St., downtown. This will include cleaning and organizing inside the theatre, minor repairs and setting things back in order. Bring any tools or supplies that might be useful. Call (828) 692-1082. for more information.

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Helene vs. Milton: Comparing impact

October 13, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Allison Kiehl; Knoxville News Sentinel | Section: News | 908 Words Page: A13 OpenURL Link

Two major hurricanes have made landfall in Florida in the past two weeks, unleashing their furry and floods across the Southeast.

First, Hurricane Helene made landfall on Thursday, Sept. 26, and, most recently, Hurricane Milton swept through Florida on Oct. 9.

Both storms have been classified as major hurricanes by the National Hurricane Center and caused damage to the communities they impacted.

Here's a side-by-side look at how Helene and Milton compare.

What was the path of

the Hurricane Milton?

Though Hurricane Milton and Hurricane Helene both originated in the Gulf of Mexico, the two storms had very different trajectories.

Hurricane Milton crossed over the middle of the Florida Peninsula before heading back out into the Atlantic Ocean. Helene, on the other hand, took a more destructive path through the southeast.

Where did Hurricane Milton

make landfall?

Milton made landfall near Siesta Key, Florida, which is located just south of Sarasota. Siesta Key has a population of around 5,400 people, according to 2020 Census data.

Helene made landfall near Perry, located in Florida's Big Bend. Perry is home to nearly 6,900 residents, according to the most recent Census numbers.

Siesta Key and Perry are about 250 miles apart, or a nearly five-hour drive away from each other.

What time did Milton

make landfall?

Milton hit near Siesta Key at around 8:30 p.m. on Oct. 9. Helene also made landfall at night, at around 11:25 p.m. on Sept. 26.

What category was

Hurricane Milton?

Hurricane Milton, though once a powerful Category 5 storm, passed through Florida's west coast as a Category 3

storm. This is classified as a major hurricane by the National Hurricane Service.

Helene was a Category 4 hurricane when it swept through North Florida.

How fast were

Hurricane Milton's winds?

Hurricane Milton had maximum sustained wind speeds of 120 mph when it hit Florida, according to the National Hurricane Center.

The storm had a minimum central pressure of 28.17 inches.

Back in the Atlantic Ocean, Milton continues its path as a post-tropical cyclone with 80 mph winds on Thursday.

When Helene made landfall in Perry, it had maximum sustained winds of 140 mph, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Helene had a minimum central pressure of 27.70 when it hit the coast. It was reclassified as a Category 1 storm as it moved inland over Georgia.

How many people died

from Hurricane Milton?

As of 1 p.m. on Oct. 10, at least eight people are confirmed dead in Florida because of Hurricane Milton, according to a USA TODAY report.

Two deaths were confirmed in St. Petersburg, one in Volusia County and five more were confirmed in St. Lucie County on Florida's east coast following tornadoes there.

On Sept. 28, two days after Helene struck the southeast, AP reported at least 64 people dead from the storm.

Now, the death toll from Hurricane Helene has risen to more than 200 people.

How many people lost power because of Hurricane Milton?

More than 3 million Florida residents are still without power in the aftermath of Hurricane Milton, according to PowerOutage.com.

The counties with the highest concentrations of outages include Hardee County, with 97.7% of tracked customers without power, and Highlands County, with 96.3% of the county with outages.

In the aftermath of Helene, Residents across Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia all saw power outages. In total, Reuters reported that an estimated 5.5 million customers lost power due to the storm.

How much FEMA money

was given out after Helene?

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has dispersed around \$344 million in federal funding after Hurricane Helene, according to an Oct. 9 report. The money has gone out to support 375,000 households across the affected states.

It is unclear at this time how much federal aid will be needed in Florida in the wake of Hurricane Milton.

What are the different

categories of hurricanes?

Milton made landfall as at Category 3 hurricane. This category can cause devastating damage and bring dangerous storm surges to coastal communities. But this isn't the strongest hurricane possible. Hurricanes have five types of categories, here are what each are, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration:

Category 1: A Minimal Hurricane

Winds: 74-95 mph

Minimum surface pressure: higher than 980 mbar

Storm surge: 3-5 feet

Damage primarily to shrubbery, trees, foliage and unanchored homes. No real damage to other structures. Some damage to poorly constructed signs.

Category 2: A Moderate Hurricane

Winds: 96-110 mph

Minimum surface pressure: 979-965 mbar

Storm surge: 6-8 feet

Considerable damage to shrubbery and tree foliage; some trees blown down. Major damage to exposed mobile homes. Extensive damage to poorly constructed signs. Some damage to roofing materials of buildings; some window and door damage. No major damage to buildings.

Category 3: An Extensive Hurricane

Winds: 111-130 mph

Minimum surface pressure: 964-945 mbar

Storm surge: 9-12 feet

Foliage torn from trees, large trees blown down. Practically all poorly constructed signs blown down. Some damage to roofing materials of buildings with some wind and door damage. Some structural damage to small buildings. Mobile homes destroyed. Serious flooding at coast and many smaller structures near coast destroyed. Larger structures near coast damaged by battering waves and floating debris.

Category 4: An Extreme Hurricane

Winds: 131-155 mph

Minimum surface pressure: 944-920 mbar

Storm surge: 13-18 feet

Shrubs and trees blown down; all signs down. Extensive damage to roofing materials, windows, and doors.

Complete failure of roofs on many small residences. Complete destruction of mobile homes. Flat terrain 10 feet or less above sea level flooded inland as far as 6 miles. Major damage to lower floors of structures near shore due to flooding and battering by waves and floating debris.

Category 5: A Catastrophic Hurricane

Winds: greater than 155 mph

Minimum surface pressure: lower than 920 mbar

Storm surge: higher than 18 feet

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Overflowing potties, chainsaws, lives lost - Behind the scenes of your newspaper's Helene reporting

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ASHEVILLE - We knew Helene was coming.

The staff at the Asheville Citizen Times started reporting on the rampage days before the first raindrop fell Sept. 27. But most of us thought the storm would take the usual track — it would smash into Florida's Gulf Coast, as hurricanes do. Then Asheville and Western Carolina would get residual rains and winds, maybe knock down a few trees and power lines, as these mountain storms do.

I bought extra chocolate chip cookies, D batteries for my flashlight, filled a few bottles with water and settled down at home Thursday night, Sept. 26, to finish up work, as I do nightly.

At first I was happy to hear the pounding rain — my yard, newly planted blueberry bushes, arborvitae and azaleas — needed watering.

Then things took a dark turn.

The wind blew ferociously, the rain hammered harder and didn't stop. Tree branches floated down my street. Friday morning my internet went out. Then the power. Then the faucets went dry.

My first thought — were my sister and her family, a couple miles down the road, OK? I had no cell service. Then: How would we put out the newspaper?

Before Helene hit, I had asked for one volunteer reporter to work the weekend shift. With the rain still pelting and the French Broad River dangerously rising, Asheville Citizen Times staffers went into the storm, taking cell phone photos and dispatching reports from the field. When I got to our downtown office Friday, news editor Aaron Nelsen and five reporters — almost our entire newsroom — were already there.

Our county watchdog reporter Jacob Biba, a father of two young children, raced to pick up city government reporter Sarah Honosky and growth and development reporter Will Hofmann, whose cars were trapped by toppled trees. High school sports reporter Evan Gerike and Black Mountain News reporter Karrigan Monk also found their way to the office, which was (and still is) without water or air conditioning, but had power and Wi-Fi.

Knowing that our veteran — and only — staff photographer, Angela Wilhelm, was in a far-away location on vacation, freelance photographer Josh Bell chain-sawed a massive tree out of his driveway and called to tell me he had our backs.

None of our staff had natural disaster training. But as daily newspaper journalists, our instincts went to work: go into the storm, get out vital information to our community — school and road closures, areas of dangerous flooding, evacuation warnings and places to safely ride out the storm. We were documenting, unknowingly, the worst natural disaster in Western North Carolina and in our lifetimes.

None of us had power, water, Wi-Fi or cell service in our homes. Our office — our operation command center — is tiny, has no windows that open, no flushing toilets, no hand washing, but an abundance of sweat, body odor and muddy boots.

Businesses, restaurants and hotels shuttered. With no power, credit cards and ATMs were useless. My staff had no drinking water. I gave Evan my last \$20 to find us some. He came back with five bottles — a hotel charged him \$4 a pop.

There hasn't been a day since Helene hit that we haven't been in the office, working the emails and phones, out in our neighborhoods where record-high rainfall and rivers savagely swept away trees, power lines, roads, bridges, homes, hope and human lives.

The enormity of our collective loss is still a shock, as we visit emergency shelters and our city's poorest neighborhoods, trek through the flood waters and mud of the River Arts District, Swannanoa and Biltmore Village, Burnsville and Marshall, Boone and Buck Creek.

As the paper's editor, I need to stay close to home base, with only quick walks around downtown. But I can still grasp the fear and the loss. Our reporters came in from the many towns and devastated areas, exhausted, emotionally drained from reporting on the homes swept away, the people desperately searching for loved ones they could not find.

On my daily forages for a "porta potty" that's not overflowing, I meet our community members.

Leon, a Vietnam Veteran who was living in the Veterans Restoration Quarters in East Asheville when he was suddenly evacuated due to flooding. He traveled first to Harrah's Cherokee Center, then to A-B Tech, and then he left the cramped quarters for the streets.

Carter James and his co-owners of Flour in the S&W Building selflessly — the eatery is closed indefinitely without water — spread out coffee and hot biscuits, pasta and salad, bottled water and a smile for whoever came by, no questions asked, no money expected. Their friends trucked in food from Charlotte.

I bumped into my old friend, Will Harlan, and his wife, Emily. They looked drained. Their Barnardsville farm flooded away — but not before Will saved their goats and chickens, sheltering with the animals in their home. They were downtown searching for cell service to start the long process of insurance claims.

Kendra and her family of six children, from ages 3-17, from West Asheville, searched downtown for help — drinking water and food for her kids, who are out of school until who knows when, and need a place to play and find Wi-Fi, as children need to do. No water, power or internet at home. She starts each day at 6:30 a.m. to find the places distributing food.

"It's extremely hard," she told me about the storm's aftermath. "Getting (the children) bathed is the hardest thing. They want to play outside because there's nothing else to do and then it's hard to get them clean. Our stove don't work. We ran out of charcoal. We've done a lot of foraging in the woods to find wood to burn."

I asked one of her daughters, age 9, what she missed since the storm. "I miss Asheville. Ever since the storm it feels different," she said. "I miss Christmas."

Sitting outside filthy, overflowing porta potties one afternoon, gathering strength to go back in there to relieve my knotted-up stomach cramps, I chatted with two women — they told me they were lifelong friends — now living in the Vanderbilt Apartments. Each walked with a cane. They had ventured out of their waterless homes to get a free hot meal.

One opened the porta potty door, saw the sewage on the seat and floor and said she couldn't do it. I asked where she would go to the bathroom.

"They bring us diapers to wear, so we're fine."

I decided day that I wouldn't stress over my sauna of an office, my grimy skin and unwashed hair, or the 15-17-hour

workdays. I was so lucky to have my house still standing, my loved ones safe and legs strong enough to squat somewhere, without the need for diapers.

After multiple nights working well past dark, I finally saw my backyard in the daylight. The arborvitae had not bent or broken, the blueberry bushes turning a fall blush of red, and my azaleas danced in purplish-pink blossoms.

Karen Chávez is the executive editor of the Asheville Citizen Times and the Hendersonville Times-News. Email her at KChavez@citizentimes.com

Karen Chávez

Asheville Citizen Times

USA TODAY NETWORK

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