

Wayne-Sanderson Farms joins relief effort

October 2, 2024 | Mt. Airy News, The (NC) Author: Staff Writer| Section: Business| 198 Words OpenURL Link

DOBSON — In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene across western North Carolina and the Appalachian region, Wayne-Sanderson Farms Dobson is mustering community support for storm victims from team members and area residents, collecting and delivering relief supplies and other donations.

Dobson Complex Manager Matthew Wooten said employees initially began collecting supplies for the effort at the processing facility, but the effort soon expanded to the entire community.

"We set up a company semi and tent with our 'Amazing starts with me' banner just to encourage our team members and collect supplies. Our people were soon joined by local residents to offer support while we were setting up, and now we're planning to fill the trailer and get these supplies to the people that need them."

The company also distributed a flyer locally, appealing to team members and local residents to support the effort and donate packaged foods and staples, along with blankets, clothing items and other supplies. Donations will be accepted every day at the Wayne-Sanderson Farms Dobson Processing Complex drop-off site from 7 a.m. — 6 p.m. through Friday, and will be delivered by the Dobson team to relief agencies in the Boone area for distribution to local victims.

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Helene North Carolina death toll is rising, - but incomplete. What we know so far.

October 2, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Virginia Bridges; Staff Writer | Section: News | 691 Words Page: 9A OpenURL Link

Macon County Sheriff's Office officials on Sunday composed what they said was one of the most difficult press releases they ever released.

On Friday morning, Deputy Jim Lau left his courthouse security job for lunch, a Sheriff's Office Facebook post states. He never returned as the former Category 4 hurricane-turned-tropical storm dumped extreme rainfall in Western North Carolina.

Helene's death count in North Carolina is by no means final. But Lau was one of dozens known to have been killed after the hurricane's powerful remnants reached Western North Carolina, with more fatal tragedies yet to be reported or even discovered.

At least 38 people were confirmed killed in North Carolina as of Tuesday morning, including a 7-year-old boy in Buncombe County, according to information provided by state officials.

A second sheriff's deputy, in Madison County, is also known to have died in Helene's chaos, according to the North Carolina Sheriffs' Association.

And a faint outline of what havoc stole people's lives is coming into view.

At least 11 people died from drowning, along with four more who reported drowning in their motor vehicles, according to the public safety department. Nine people died in landslides, with five from dangers linked to high winds and damaged trees.

Three others died in motor vehicle crashes while the causes of five lives lost are unknown, according to information provided Monday by the North Carolina Department of Public Safety.

Toll still unfurling

At least 100 people have died and over 600 are unaccounted for across 10 states hit by Helene, President Joe Biden said Monday.

Leaders of western North Carolina counties, where Helene fed historic flooding that shut down roads and bridges, along with cell and internet connections, say people are unaccounted for across the region.

Buncombe County Sheriff Quentin Miller said Monday morning that 35 have been found dead in that county alone, but the body count will rise as search and rescue efforts continue. By 4 p.m., the death toll had risen to 40, a county official said. So far the county, which is home to Asheville, has the most reported Helene deaths in the state.

"Devastation does not begin to describe how we feel," Miller said during a briefing broadcast live on Facebook.

Buncombe County Register of Deeds Drew Reisinger said that his office has received 11,000 requests from people seeking help to locate their loved ones amid the spotty cell service and destroyed roadways.

In response to the thousands of calls, Reisinger's office opened a family assistance center and volunteers are supplementing search and rescue efforts going door to door of local residences, he reported in the briefing.

Tragic ending to a search

Officials in Macon County, which includes the town of Franklin and the Nantahala River, noticed deputy Lau didn't return to the courthouse after around 11:30 a.m. on Friday.

Witnesses called 911 reporting a truck being swept under water in a local river with a person inside. Officials soon made the connection to Lau not returning and his truck matched witnesses' descriptions, the post states.

Multiple agencies started searching on foot, with a drone in the air and with multiple swift water rescue teams, the post said. But as the sun started to set, they put the search on hold.

They found Lau's body the next morning.

"Jim was very liked and respected within our department. He was known to be a hard worker, dependable, and he jumped in wherever help was needed. His absence will truly be felt in our agency," the post said.

It also asked for prayers for his family, for the department and for all of Western North Carolina.

"The tragedy that surrounds our mountain communities is unimaginable," the post states.

To report a missing person or request non-emergency support, call NC 211 or 1-888-892-1162 if calling from out-of-state.

(Story updated at 1 p.m. on Tuesday.)

Virginia Bridges covers criminal justice in the Triangle and across North Carolina for The News & Observer. Her work is produced with financial support from the nonprofit The Just Trust. The N&O maintains full editorial control of its journalism.

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Trying to reach a missing person impacted by - Helene in NC? What to - do and whom to call

October 2, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Chyna Blackmon; Staff Writer | Section: News | 275 Words Page: 6A

Days after Hurricane Helene swept through the southeast, recovery efforts are still underway for North Carolinians stranded without food, water and other supplies in the western part of the state.

According to Governor Roy Cooper, first responders have received hundreds of calls for rescue and more than 1,000 requests for welfare checks, with that number expected to rise.

How to report missing person or request welfare check

As crews work alongside local governments, state and federal partners and volunteer organizations to support victims impacted by the storm, officials say 911 calls should be made for emergencies only.

If you need to report a missing person or request a welfare check on someone potentially in danger, you should call NC 211 (1-888-892-1162), a information and referral service provided by United Way of North Carolina.

Available in most languages at all times in every county, NC 211 is used to provide residents verified resources across the state for basic needs, including housing, food and healthcare, its website says.

When disaster strikes, like Hurricane Helene, the service is part of the State's Emergency Plan for updates, storm-related issues or non-emergency related questions. Residents can dial 2-1-1 and speak to a trained Community Resource Specialist or use the online NC 211 search tool at nc211.org.

If you're struggling to contact someone who may need assistance, you can add loved ones to the United Way of North Carolina's search and rescue efforts by submitting a missing persons request, welfare check or rescue request online at unitedwaync.org.

Requests can also be made by texting 'PERSON' to 40403.

You can find more information about Helene-related information and resources, including power outages, open shelters and crisis cleanup,online at ncdps.gov/helene.

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How Helene's destruction could affect voting in North Carolina's election

October 2, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Kyle Ingram; Staff Writer | Section: News | 1095 Words

Page: 12A OpenURL Link

In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene's destruction in Western North Carolina, concerns have emerged about whether residents affected by the storm will be able to cast their ballots in the November election.

Disruptions to the postal service, destruction of polling places, missing or damaged IDs and more could all pose challenges to voters with only 36 days left until the election.

"This is all a cascading series of disasters," Gerry Cohen, a member of the Wake County Board of Elections, said.

Disruptions to postal service

On Sunday, the U.S. Postal Service announced it had temporarily suspended services in much of Western North Carolina, including any areas with ZIP codes starting with 286, 287, 288 and 289.

It also listed 39 post offices whose operations would be suspended until conditions are safe.

These closures could present challenges to voters in Western North Carolina seeking to vote by mail.

So far, nearly 250,000 North Carolinians have requested an absentee ballot for this year's election. Nearly 10,000 requests have come in from Buncombe County, which was severely impacted by Helene.

Corinne Duncan, Buncombe County's election director, said the county's main focus now is life, safety and basic needs.

"Personal safety of election services staff is currently our top priority," Duncan said in an email. "We are working to account for all staff and board members. Some are stranded due to road blockage."

She added, however, that the post office is running and election staff were able to drop 200 ballots in the mail on Monday.

Phone lines for several of the counties hit hardest by Helene were down on Monday as The News & Observer attempted to contact board of elections offices.

The absentee voting period has already been reduced this election.

While mail-in ballots were supposed to be sent to voters on Sept. 6, most were delayed another 18 days by a court order after third-party presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. sued to get his name off the state's ballot.

Most absentee ballots went in the mail just a few days before Helene hit Western North Carolina.

"I suspect if these things were in people's mailboxes Thursday and Friday, a lot of these counties, you can see stuff just completely washed away," Cohen said.

In addition to that, voters now have a shorter deadline to get their absentee ballots in. State lawmakers passed a bill last year that requires all mail-in ballots to be received by the county board of elections office by 7:30 p.m. on Election Day.

Previously, any ballots that came in within three days after the election would still be counted, so long as they were postmarked by Election Day.

Voters concerned about postal delays can deliver their absentee ballot in person at their county board of elections office. A voter who has requested an absentee ballot may also choose to vote in person instead, so long as they do not return the absentee ballot.

Polling places for early voting

Flooding and destruction may make polling places unusable as election workers prepare to begin in-person early voting on Oct. 17.

Duncan said that Buncombe County has not yet completed site assessments at polling locations. The facilities where election staff work, however, were not damaged but are currently without access to water.

Changes to a county's early voting plans can still be made, but state law sets out certain limitations.

Previously, the executive director of the State Board of Elections could exercise emergency powers to respond to the impact natural disasters might have on elections.

Last year, however, state lawmakers stripped the director of that power and instead gave it to the State Board of Elections itself. That board is currently comprised of three Democrats and two Republicans, who would have to use these emergency powers in an open meeting.

There also isn't much time left to make changes to early voting sites.

State law requires all early voting sites within a county to be open for the same number of days. That would appear to make any changes to polling sites difficult after Oct. 17.

Having usable polling sites isn't the only concern for counties conducting early voting. With many residents displaced by Helene, counties may have difficulty staffing polling sites.

"It's gonna have a likely enormous impact if all these polling places have been washed away and early voting sites are not available and poll workers are not available," Cohen said. "So I don't know what the solution is, but there's not much time to figure it out."

Voter ID

For the first time in North Carolina's history, voters will have to present photo identification to vote in a presidential general election.

However, state law provides an exception to this requirement for voters affected by natural disasters.

Anyone affected by Helene can fill out an affidavit, either in-person at a polling place or via absentee ballot, saying that they have been a victim of a natural disaster and are unable to produce their ID.

They will then cast a provisional ballot, which will be reviewed by the county board of elections before being accepted.

What can be done to help?

Counties could face heavy financial burdens as they attempt to recover polling places, fix damaged equipment and prepare for voting after Helene.

This also comes after counties were forced to foot the bill to reprint millions of ballots following the state Supreme Court's decision in Kennedy's lawsuit allowing himto withdraw his candidacy.

Cohen said the legislature, which will be back in session next week, should reimburse counties for those costs.

A law passed last year prohibits the use of any private donations for election administration.

Counties are also still accepting volunteers to work the polls during early voting and Election Day.

State grants flexibility to election workers facing closures, power outages

In an emergency meeting on Monday, the State Board of Elections voted to give local election workers greater flexibility in processing absentee ballots in the coming weeks, as western counties reel from Helene's impacts.

Executive Director Karen Brinson Bell said 14 of the 22 western counties contacted by the board reported that their elections offices are currently closed and could be for several more days.

"Our hearts really do go out to these people that we consider elections family," she said. "... At this time, many of them still don't have contact with family members. They're facing damages, some total losses at their own personal properties, and so we are trying to be as responsive as we can to what their needs are."

County election boards are typically required to meet every Tuesday to receive and process absentee ballots, but the state board's resolution will allow them to reschedule those meetings.

Brinson Bell also said the state is currently in the process of creating a webpage to answer questions about the hurricane's impact on elections.

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Price gouging law is in effect following Helene. How to recognize - and report it in NC

October 2, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Renee Umsted; Staff Writer | Section: News | 324 Words Page: 4A

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A law against price gouging is in effect in North Carolina as a result of Helene.

When the state of emergency was declared, it became illegal for businesses to charge too much to make a profit.

The office of N.C. Attorney General Josh Stein is asking consumers to look out for price gouging and report it.

As of Monday, Sept. 30, the attorney general's office has received and is looking into 43 complaints of price gouging since Helene, Nazneen Ahmed, a spokesperson for Stein's office, told The News & Observer. Most of the reports are concerning prices of hotel stays and fuel stemming from businesses in western North Carolina, and particularly the Boone area, Ahmed said.

What is price gouging?

Businesses and industries that are heavily affected by storms like Helene or other severe incidents may need to raise prices to resupply, and they should disclose the increases so people can make informed decisions.

However, businesses can't "unreasonably raise the price of goods or services to profit from a state of emergency," according to a press release announcing the price gouging law.

The attorney general's office can seek refunds for people who paid too much, and courts may impose civil penalties against price gougers of up to \$5,000 per violation, according to the N.C. Department of Justice.

Stein has brought 12 lawsuits against 29 defendants under the price-gouging law since 2018, and has obtained 14 judgments or settlements totaling \$1.08 million against 25 defendants.

How to report price gouging in NC

North Carolinians may submit complaints of price gouging online or by phone.

To report potential price gouging, call 1-877-5-NO-SCAM or go to ncdoj.gov/pricegouging.

Be ready to provide your name, address and contact information, along with the name and address of the company against which you are complaining.

Also be prepared to share details of the product, item or service involved in the price gouging, including its current price and the reason given by the business for the current price, if provided.

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Residents feeding each other in Helene-devastated town

October 2, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Josh Shaffer; Staff Writer | Section: News | 445 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

In just a few hours, Big Horse Creek sent a 10-foot wall of water into the tiny mountain town of Lansing, destroying its row of quaint brick art shops, antique stores and cleverly named pizza parlor - Pie on the Mountain.

Hurricane Helene roared through Lansing's section of the popular Virginia Creeper Trail and left it strewn with mud, tree trunks and a Winnebago-sized camper turned upside-down in the water.

All along Lansing's main street, the shopkeepers pulled out soaking walls and floorboards already reeking with mildew, and they offered their canned goods and water bottles for all needy comers.

"This area has been devastated," said Jeff Pierce, a volunteer at the fire department, "Something we've not seen since the 1940s. You're familiar with Carter-Finley Stadium. Two of those, 40 feet high. That's how much water."

As rescue crews cut trees off roads and cleared branches and strips of sheet metal off bridges, the larger world began to see the extent of ruin in North Carolina's northwest corner.

'Caskets floating in the river'

While repairing a broken gas line in Boone, Steve Calhoun recalled the worst he'd seen in Ashe County since Friday.

"Caskets floating in the river," he said. "People in the water and nobody can get to them. Houses in the road. Cars in trees."

The water has receded, but locals do not expect all the area's power to be restored for months. The roads to many remote areas, including west of Lansing, are too washed out for crews to reach.

They worry about those still missing, unaccounted for in the chaos.

In Lansing, the Squirrel and Nut got walloped only four months after it opened. It sold local and vintage art, including pieces made by Lora Young, who spent Saturday, Sunday and Monday grilling donated food.

"A lot of us don't have power," she said, "so they're bringing us stuff out of their freezers. Need some food? We've got chicken grilling now."

Volunteers feeding hundreds

At the fire department, volunteers fed 300 people barbecue though the population of the town 33 miles northeast of Boone is only 128.

Pierce led a prayer over the pig cooker, giving thanks and asking for guidance.

"One thing you have to understand about mountain people," he said. "We're resilient. We keep fighting."

As he spoke, the shopkeepers moved up and down Lansing's main street, shoveling mud.

Young smiled at them over her grill.

"You have to," she said. "Once you get a chance to slow down, it'll all sink in."

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Western NC needs our help now and long after the waters recede

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The headlines will fade. Our focus will return to the presidential and North Carolina gubernatorial races.

The water will recede. Rivers will return to usual levels and flows. The tears will dry.

It's then residents of western North Carolina and other areas hit hard by Hurricane Helene will need our help most, for us to not forget their suffering.

They need an enormous amount of help today, too, of course, to just be able to survive. The rescues, the treecutting, the restoration of basic infrastructure - roads and electricity and schools and the like - must continue. Prayers and good will from those who can't assist directly are also invaluable.

But it's over the long-haul the suffering will need our help the most, just as the state's and nation's attention will once again be pulled in a thousand different directions.

I saw it happen as a high school student in the aftermath of Hurricane Hugo, which nearly wiped my native St. Stephen, S.C., off the map 35 years ago. At least that's the way it felt the morning after the storm passed. It took our house and kept us out of school for weeks as we tried to re-establish what little we had. My fondest memory are the hot meals we received from the American Red Cross. They remain the best thing I've ever eaten.

The rest of the world seemed to just get on with other more important things, things more important than us. That's the way it felt. Intellectually, I understood why it had to be that way. The Earth doesn't stop rotating on its axis because a group of vulnerable people are struggling. It still felt cold, though, made us in a sense feel forgotten.

I saw a repeat a decade later when I was a journalist covering the aftermath of Hurricane Floyd. There was the initial rush to help, to pray, to prioritize community above politics and partisanship. But as the Waccamaw River returned to its banks, that collective spirit began fading. Even the short drive between Myrtle Beach and Conway felt like leaving one country for another, the damage that starkly different. Helene left a similar haphazard path of damage.

In Asheville, flood waters nearly reached the roof of a Wendy's restaurant and dislodged a house from it foundation, sending it down the river until it crashed into a tree. There were reports from small communities such as Banner Elk in Avery County, Black Mountain and beyond that they were effectively cut off from the rest of the state.

Rescuers had to leave bodies behind to get the living to safety.

There was more death and extreme destruction in Florida, where Helene came ashore. In South Carolina, Greenville residents reported tree lines in their backyard being knocked over.

In my part of North Carolina, there was no death and little destruction. On the morning after Helene, I saw a large uprooted by the storm. It had been removed within hours. Oh, our power went out, for maybe 30 minutes.

That's typical of natural disasters. They don't care if we plan to vote for Kamala Harris or Donald Trump, don't care about the size of our house, how important the roads we need to get to work.

They are unimpressed by our business acumen or the number of degrees hanging on our walls.

They don't discriminate even if we do.

We are all always in the path of natural disasters. It's just that Helene's chosen path was through western North Carolina rather than the eastern part of the state - this time.

That's why this is a time to remember the fellow human beings who got hit hard will need our help long after we've begun debating who won Tuesday night's vice presidential debate.

The next Hugo, Floyd or Helene might come knocking on our door, if not knocking over our homes.

We should wise enough to want a strong infrastructure in place to help us when our time come. Because that time is likely coming.

Issac Bailey is a McClatchy opinion writer in North Carolina and South Carolina. Here's how to help flood and hurricane victims in North Carolina.

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reality check - Biden says Trump lying about Cooper, Helene response

October 2, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC)

Author: Dawn Baumgartner Vaughan and Danielle Battaglia; Staff Writer Section: News | 1364 Words

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RALEIGH Former President Donald Trump complained about North Carolina's disaster response on social media on Monday, claiming without evidence that Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper isn't helping Republican-leaning areas of the state impacted by Hurricane Helene.

President Joe Biden told reporters on Monday that Trump is lying.

The Republican presidential candidate targeted Cooper in a social media post about how he was going to Valdosta, Georgia, "in order to pay my respects and bring lots of relief material."

He goes on to say that he "was also going to stop into North Carolina, which has really been hit hard. I have a lot of supplies ready for them, but access and communication is now restricted, and we want to make sure that Local Emergency Management is able to focus on helping the people most affected, and not being concerned with me. I'll be there shortly, but don't like the reports that I'm getting about the Federal Government, and the Democrat Governor of the State, going out of their way to not help people in Republican areas. MAGA!"

In reality, federal, state and local governments are working together on relief. And relief is also coming from other states.

Trump did not explain where he was getting "reports" of some people not being helped because of their political party affiliation. In general, urban areas like Asheville have concentrations of Democratic voters while Republican voters are in rural areas.

Biden, asked Monday about Trump's comments on Cooper's Helene response, angrily interjected before a reporter finished asking the question, according to the White House pool report.

"He's lying, and the governor told him he was lying. The governor told him he's lying. I've spoken to the governor, spent time with him, and he told him he's lying. I don't know why he does it ... that's simply not true, and it's irresponsible," Biden said.

Cooper surveyed the damage Monday, joined by FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell and leaders of the departments of transportation, public safety and Health and Human Services, which are part of his Cabinet.

"People are working around the clock to provide help to them right now - food, water, working hard to make sure that we've got shelters open all across this area, and working to get power back on," Cooper told reporters in a press briefing at the Asheville airport on Monday, when asked about the speed of the response. "When you have a situation where communities are completely cut off, when first responders can't even get in, because water is still there, and rivers are rising right now, as we speak."

"A lot of work is done. What we want to tell people is that more help is on the way, and help is continuing. This is our main mission right now, and this is a massive coordinated effort to help this area, both in the short term and in the long term," Cooper said.

Rep. Edwards, Speaker Moore survey damage

Also at the briefing in Asheville with Cooper were Republican U.S. Rep. Chuck Edwards and Republican N.C. Sen.

Tim Moffitt.

Edwards and Republican House Speaker Tim Moore surveyed damage via a helicopter on Monday, Edwards said in a news release.

"We've had a very disappointing response from FEMA, and a very disappointing response, initially, from the North Carolina Emergency Management services," Edwards, who represents far western North Carolina, said in an interview with McClatchy.

"But we're seeing resources start to show up. Today, the governor has given us assurances that there will be more and I think we're on our way to a good solid recovery."

Edwards said he was frustrated because the storm ended at 10 a.m. Friday in the western part of the state.

"I'm only seeing resources brought into Western North Carolina today," Edwards said. "We lost, I'm going to say 80 hours - and we knew the storm was coming, so 80 hours ago we should have seen FEMA deploying resources to the perimeter of where we expected the storm to hit. But instead it looked like folks took the weekend off. They're just showing up today."

"The people in this district are hurting, and they're really disappointed with the response from the federal government, and our state government."

Edwards said it was Cooper's responsibility to oversee North Carolina Emergency Management, which is responsible for the initial response in a disaster.

"I had a call from the White House earlier today, saying, Congressman, we know that the response from FEMA has been slow, but tell me what you need me to do," Edwards said. "And my response is, 'I don't need people to continue to ask me what I need them to do. I need people to do things."

Edwards said to White House officials' credit, they told him to put together a list of immediate needs and promised to help check things off that list.

Edwards asked for temporary cellphone towers, unprecedented amounts of water, meals ready-to-eat, a communication center and a grocery distribution warehouse to replenish stores.

"I'm giving the White House a chance to live up to their promise that they'll help us get the things on that list," Edwards said.

Republican Senate leader Phil Berger said Monday that he had been "briefed by Emergency Management officials on the impacts of Hurricane Helene and the emergency response efforts. This was an absolutely devastating storm."

"The General Assembly is evaluating what a disaster recovery package could look like and what other steps we can take. North Carolina has a healthy savings account that will help us respond to the catastrophic nature of this storm," Berger said on social media.

'Major access challenges'

N.C. Emergency Management Director William Ray said that state officials are using ground routes to distribute water and food that they can access "reliably and safely," including through Interstate 40 and Interstate 26.

"We know there are many areas of the western part of the state that still have major access challenges, which is why we put in place the operation you see here of moving, using aircraft to move commodities into those impacted areas," Ray said at the Asheville airport.

"Right now, we are trying to surge as much of the commodities into the entire impacted region. Yesterday as an example, either via ground or by air, 30 counties had commodities delivered to them yesterday," he said.

"We know that we're not going to be able to meet right now, out of the gate, the universal need that everyone has, that's why we are surging up both our distribution so we're putting additional drivers on, to be able to get more trucks on the road, to get commodities in faster," Ray said, as well as aircraft.

Emergency Management officials have 40 trailers a day of food and water they are trying to distribute to the "entire impacted area," he said.

National Guard response

Cooper activated more than 400 service members in the N.C. National Guard. The National Guard has rescued 422 people since the storm, out of more than 500 total rescues that includes search and rescue teams from 27 states and 18 federal teams. Of those rescued, 42 were critically injured people and four were infants. There were 64 animals rescued as well.

The Guard has also delivered 306 pallets of water and 230 pallets of food.

Republican U.S. Rep. Virginia Foxx of Banner Elk said Monday she wanted to see more from Cooper's office. Only six members of the National Guard were on the ground in Avery County, she said.

"We don't have enough National Guard," Foxx told McClatchy. "Last night, they had sent out 400 National Guard for 25 counties. That's a very small number."

The North Carolina Department of Transportation posted several times on social media and on its website that "all roads" in Western North Carolina are closed and the only travel on them should be for emergencies, over the weekend and on Monday. NCDOT is a Cabinet agency of Cooper's administration.

On Saturday, the North Carolina National Guard shared photos of the work they had already begun, joined by other states' National Guard soldiers from Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Iowa and Maryland to support relief efforts by air.

NC Reality Check is an N&O series holding those in power accountable and shining a light on public issues that affect the Triangle or North Carolina. Have a suggestion for a future story? Email realitycheck@newsobserver.com

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Baptists on Mission among helpers at work in Western NC after Helene devastation

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Until last week, Bill White had the kind of home in Arden, just south of Asheville, that real estate agents would describe as park-like, with a lot so dense with trees it was hard to see the house from the road.

Then destructive remnants of Hurricane Helene came through and did some unwelcome landscaping, dropping at least 10 mature trees, including a four-trunk oak that landed on the house.

White, 86, was just about to climb onto the roof and size up the damage Monday afternoon when a trio of men from the N.C. Baptists on Mission pulled into his driveway and started unloading chainsaws and limb loppers.

"This is unbelievable," White kept saying, his sea-blue eyes filling with tears. "It's unbelievable that they do this."

Craig Schomburg, John Miller and Mark Cantrell have been doing this together for years. They know each other from Apex Baptist Church, and now that they're retired, they have the time to travel to the places where people are the most relieved to see them.

Between them, they have done disaster relief in several states, and regularly volunteer at the Baptist on Mission's Rose Hill outpost, where workers still are rebuilding homes lost in Hurricane Florence n 2018.

This week, they're working with teams based at Biltmore Baptist Church, where several disaster-relief efforts have converged in response to the widespread need Helene created.

The Baptists have set up two of their mass-feeding kitchens behind the church and have been preparing meals for students and faculty at UNC-Asheville, a nursing home in Asheville and some of the shelters around Buncombe County where people are staying-because their homes are uninhabitable.

Feed the Hunger has delivered thousands of bags of pre-mixed rice and pasta meals that church volunteers were giving away Monday along with donated bags of ice and cases of water. Inside the church more volunteers were sorting gifts of baby diapers, formula and other items displaced residents will need.

Drinking water has been an urgent need since the storm. The city of Asheville had to shut off water to make repairs to its system and those on wells in rural communities need electricity to power pumps.

Biltmore Baptist's pastor, Jason Gaston, who used to serve Raleigh's Summit Church, has been working with Raleigh sources to bring in some of the water and other supplies. Monday afternoon, a line of cars wrapped around Biltmore Baptist's parking lot as residents rolled through and volunteers placed the items in their trunks or back seats.

The campus bustled with the work of more than 100 volunteers Monday.

"Hope showed up today," Gaston said. "Hope has been here, of course, but hope showed up tangibly for our community today."

Watching the chainsaw crew work in his yard a few miles away, Bill White agreed.

"It's here," he said.

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A county-by-county look at Helene's devastation in western NC

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Author: Drew Jackson, Richard Stradling and Evan Moore; Staff Writer | Section: News | 1791 Words

Page: 13A OpenURL Link

The toll of the tropical storm that was once Hurricane Helene continues to unfold in North Carolina. The state's picturesque and mountainous western region was inundated with historic rainfalls, flooding, land and mudslides.

We're gathering what we know of the damage in each county in Western North Carolina. Here is an evolving snapshot of that toll as new information becomes available.

We'll update this in the coming days with more counties and specific details.

Alexander County

About 8% of the 19,000 homes and businesses in Alexander County remain without power as of Tuesday morning.

The Alexander County Sheriff's Office said 7 main roads remain closed, including the Highway 16 bridge, which passes over Lake Hickory near the Oxford Dam, which saw water spill over its top during Friday's rainfall.

The county reports that phone, internet and cell service have improved and have been restored in most government buildings.

Alleghany County

About 22% of the 9,835 homes and businesses in Alleghany County remain without power as of Tuesday morning.

Road closures include large sections of the Blue Ridge Parkway in this rural county along the Virginia border.

Ashe County

There has been one confirmed death in Ashe County.

About 45% of the 21,778 homes and businesses in Ashe County remain without power as of Tuesday morning.

A long stretch of Highway 18 along the eastern border of Ashe County is closed. The New River State Park is currently closed.

The New River crested at 18.27 feet, higher than the 18-foot crest during the Great Flood of 1916. The historic record, though, for the Jefferson water station is 22.5 feet, from 1940.

Avery County

About 56% of the 1,803 homes and businesses in Avery County remain without power as of Tuesday morning.

Three major road closures remain and many others are impassable in this mountainous county along the Tennessee border.

Grandfather Mountain, which includes Avery, Caldwell and Watauga counties, is closed until further notice.

Five shelters have been set up in Banner Elk, Beech Mountain, Ingalls, Newland and Minneapolis.

Curfew is in place from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m. to keep roadways clear.

Buncombe County

Buncombe County officials said Monday afternoon that 40 people have been found dead in that county alone.

So far Buncombe, which is home to Asheville, has the most reported Helene deaths in the state.

Buncombe County Register of Deeds Drew Reisinger said Monday that his office has received 11,000 requests from people seeking help to locate their loved ones amid the spotty cell service and destroyed roadways.

Burke County

There has been one confirmed death in Burke County.

About 49% of homes and businesses are without power as of Tuesday morning.

The Burke County Office of Emergency Services said the number of fatalities and injuries are still being assessed.

The west-bound lane of Interstate 40 is entirely closed to travelers, but is open for emergency vehicles.

Boil advisories are in place for Morganton, Valdese and Icard Township.

Burke County's 911 system, which was down since the Friday storm, has been restored.

Caldwell County

About 39% of the 42,228 homes and businesses in the county remained without power as of Tuesday morning.

The Caldwell County Sheriff's Office reports the county's emergency system received 1,594 calls to 911 during Friday's storm.

A shelter remains open at West Caldwell High School in Lenoir.

Catawba County

There has been one confirmed death in Catawba County.

Around 12% of the county's 82,391 homes and businesses remained without power Tuesday morning.

The westbound lane of Interstate 40 is closed to non-emergency traffic throughout the county. The Oxford Dam bridge on Highway 16 also remains closed.

Clay

All of the power has been restored to homes and businesses in Clay County.

Cleveland

There have been two confirmed deaths in Cleveland County.

Around 53% of the 48,385 homes and businesses in the county remain without power.

An emergency shelter remains open at the Cleveland County Health Department in Shelby.

At least four main roads remain closed around the Shelby area.

Gaston

There has been one confirmed death in Gaston County.

Around 4% of the 115,000 homes and businesses in the county remain without power as of Tuesday morning.

At least eight roads remain closed throughout the county.

Haywood

There have been four confirmed deaths, according to the Haywood County Sheriff's Office.

Around 26 percent of the 39,200 homes and businesses in the county remain without power as of Tuesday morning.

A large section of Interstate 40 is closed in the county, as well as numerous roads and highways.

A curfew remains in place from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m.

The Haywood County fair has been canceled for 2024.

Henderson County

There have been five confirmed deaths in Henderson County.

Lincoln County

About 8% of the 43,000 homes and businesses in Lincoln County remain without power as of Tuesday morning.

The Lincoln County YMCA at 1402 Gaston St. in Lincolnton is open to the community for showers while officials navigate the county-wide power outages.

Macon County

There has been one confirmed death in Macon County.

About 10% of the 29,000 homes and businesses in Macon County remain without power as of Tuesday morning.

"Parts of Macon County are still trying to recover from damages caused by Hurricane Helene and most of Macon County is experiencing poor cellular and other communication system coverage," the Macon County Sheriff's Office said on Monday. "Travel to our west is still limited and travel from other areas into our county is heavier than normal due to many interstate highways routes affected."

Among the roads closed Tuesday were N.C. 106 and U.S. 64 throughout the county.

Madison County

There has been one confirmed death in Madison County.

Around 18% of the 16,000 homes and businesses in Madison County remain without power as of Tuesday morning.

Parts of N.C. 209, N.C. 63 and U.S. 25 Business in Marshall were closed Tuesday morning.

Food, water and other supplies are available to county residents at A-B Tech Madison, 4646 U.S. 25.

McDowell County

Around 65% of the county's 30,262 homes and businesses remained without power Tuesday morning.

County offices will remain closed through Friday, October 4. Offices will reopen on Monday, October 7.

The westbound lane of Interstate 40 is closed to non-emergency traffic throughout the county.

The county has set up a donation site for water and emergency supplies at 634 College Dr. in Marion.

Mecklenburg County

There has been one confirmed death in Mecklenburg County.

Mitchell County

About 39% of homes and businesses in Mitchell County are without power as of Monday evening.

Numerous roads throughout Mitchell County are impassable, and "a good bit of the county infrastructure has been either damaged or destroyed by floodwaters and uprooted trees and downed power lines," according to the county. Bakersville, the county seat along Cane Creek, has been particularly hit hard.

The Red Cross opened a shelter at Mitchell High School in Ledger, while another opened at First Baptist Church in Spruce Pine. There's a county-wide curfew from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m.

A quartz mine in Spruce Pine owned by Sibelco has been temporarily closed due to flooding and damage in the storm.

Polk County

About 66% of homes and businesses in Polk are without power as of Tuesday morning.

The county has set up a phone line with a recorded message for those seeking information, at 828-722-5086. Polk County High School in Columbus is serving as a shelter, and the county is seeking places to distribute food and water.

In the meantime, it's asking people to "please stay at home or in a safe location."

Among the roads closed, the westbound lanes of U.S. 74 east of Columbus are expected to reopened until next week.

Rutherford County

There has been one confirmed death in Rutherford County.

About 63% of 44,499 homes and businesses in Rutherford County are without power as of Tuesday morning.

There is widespread damage throughout the county, including in Chimney Rock. The Lake Lure Dam, once thought in danger of failure, has stabilized.

The town of Lake Lure said firefighters and town workers went door to door over the weekend rescuing people in the most affected area, many on foot or via helicopter because of closed roads. The top of the lake was covered in debris, including floating propane tanks, that the Broad River swept up on its way through Chimney Rock.

Town officials have advised residents to leave town, if possible, and ask nonresidents to stay away.

"Please do not come to Town unless you absolutely need to be here as this is an ongoing rescue situation and the roads are not safe," town officials wrote Monday afternoon. "Your absence will allow first responders to focus on rescue operations."

A resource center with food, showers, restrooms, a tool trailer, charging stations and wifi will be available for residents at the Ingles on N.C. 9 Tuesday at 5 p.m.

Transylvania County

About 73% of the 24,008 homes and businesses in Transylvania County are without power as of Tuesday morning.

The sheriff's office said Sunday that Transylvania County had "received catastrophic damages, and we have still not been able to access all parts of the county." Phone and cell service was out in many places, and power may take two weeks to restore in some areas.

Roads that were closed due to downed trees had been at least partially reopened on Monday, but several roads remain closed due to slides and are expected to be closed for an extended period of time. Among the roads closed Monday were U.S. 276 in Brevard and U.S. 64 throughout the county.

The county has a curfew from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m.

Watauga County

About 40% of 29,118 homes and businesses in Watauga were without power on Tuesday morning.

Numerous homes and businesses were flooded in Boone, and the town's water pipes were broken in several places. Residents have been told to boil drinking water before consuming it.

The Red Cross is running a shelter for residents and Appalachian University students whose off-campus homes were damaged.

More than 100 roads were closed or partially closed in the county as of Sunday evening. On Monday, N.C. 105 near Boone was impassable, and U.S. 321 near Banner Elk and the Tennessee state line was closed.

County and local officials ask all leisure travel to the area be postponed.

Wilkes County

About 9% of 38,691 homes and businesses in Wilkes County were without power as of Tuesday morning.

A county official told MyFox80, a local TV station, that between 150 and 200 homes are inaccessible because of blocked roads. A landslide had closed N.C. 18 between Wilkesboro and Sparta, and the road will likely be closed for about a month, said Jason Reavis, the Emergency Services Director.

The county got up to 16 inches of rain, Reavis said, but wasn't as hard hit as others.

"We caught the side of it pretty much," he said. "We are very fortunate and very blessed."

A Red Cross shelter was opened at West Wilkes Middle School in Wilkesboro for those displaced or needing a meal or place to charge devices.

Yadkin County

There has been one confirmed death in Yadkin County.

Yancey County

There have been two confirmed deaths in Yancey County.

Around 81% of the 14,610 homes and businesses in Yancey County were without power as of Tuesday morning.

N.C. 97 partially collapsed near Burnsville and NC 80 collapsed south of Burnsville. Both roads are closed.

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Helene shuts down NC mine key to quartz production

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Page: 1A OpenURL Link

The remnants of Hurricane Helene ripped through the Western North Carolina mountain town of Spruce Pine last week, disrupting a quartz facility integral to the global production of solar panels and semiconductor chips.

The largest Spruce Pine mine is owned by Sibelco, a private Belgium mineral company that is Mitchell County's top employer. Sibelco told The News & Observer Monday that the company has "temporarily halted operations at the Spruce Pine facilities" since Sept. 26.

"The hurricane has caused widespread flooding, power outages, communication disruptions, and damage to critical infrastructure in the area," the emailed statement said. "Many people in the area, including our employees and their families, are facing displacement and significant disruptions."

As of Saturday morning, the storm had dumped more than 2 feet of rain on the town, submerging its downtown buildings and overwhelming area roads, railways, utilities, and homes.

Sibelco's mines are north of downtown in an area called the Spruce Pine Mining District. From above, they look like giant white sandy beaches. The area is set back from the local North Toe River, which flooded.

But news reports indicate surrounding Mitchell County has experienced extensive damage to roads and rail lines, which could impact workers' ability to get to the site and the company's ability to transport materials.

The town is home to the purest quartz on the planet, a byproduct of continental formations that occurred more than 380 million years ago. High-purity quartz is essential to making the silicon wafers that get cut into chips. While there are other sources of quartz, the purity many producers demand is only found around the mines of Spruce Pine.

"It is rare, unheard of almost, for a single site to control the global supply of a crucial material," wrote Ed Conway in his 2023 book "Material World." "Yet if you want to get high-purity quartz - the kind you need to make those crucibles without which you can't make silicon wafers - it has to come from Spruce Pine."

Nowhere else matches the purity

Facility issues have hindered the global supply chain of quartz before. In 2008, a fire at a Spruce Pine quartz refinery "temporarily brought production to a halt and impacted the market," reported Global Risk Intel, a Washington D.C.-based consulting firm.

Throughout the 20th century, local miners extracted mica and feldspar from the Mitchell County sites, yet, in the past 30 years, escalating demand for newer technologies has made high-purity quartz one of North Carolina's most important exports. Last year, Sibelco announced it would invest \$200 million into the site by 2025 to double production. The company sells its quartz under the brand name IOTA.

"I've been sent to Brazil, I've been sent to Australia, and nothing matches the final purity of the Spruce Pine quartz," local geologist Alex Glover said during an interview last March.

More recently, a second company named The Quartz Corp has invested in mines around Spruce Pine. On Tuesday, the company announced it too had stopped operations on Sept. 26, adding "we have no visibility on when they will

restart."

"This is second order of priority," The Quartz Corp said in an online post. "Our top priority remains the health and safety of our employees and their families."

Compared to Sibelco's sites, The Quartz Corp location is closer to the North Toe River, aerial images on Google Maps show.

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Federal aid is available for North Carolinians affected by Helene. Here's how to apply.

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Author: Luciana Perez Uribe Guinassi; Staff Writer | Section: News | 592 Words

Page: 13A OpenURL Link

When a hurricane such as Helene strikes, one of the first forms of federal aid available is through FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

This agency provides disaster assistance before, during and after a disaster, including via help for individuals and families affected.

Events declared disasters by the president are eligible for help from FEMA, and on Friday, North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper requested a major disaster declaration. President Joe Biden announced Saturday he had approved the declaration.

Cooper requested that declaration for federal help for 38 counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and Biden approved it for 25 North Carolina counties and the Eastern Band.

This declaration means that FEMA can expedite help for the state, reimburse local governments, state agencies and nonprofits for funds spent on repairs and provide individual assistance for people affected.

Forms of aid for individuals through FEMA can include funds for temporary housing (for rental assistance or covering hotel costs), repairs and rebuilding of homes, or other needs such as medical expenses, damage to an essential vehicle, funeral expenses, child care expenses and more.

The 25 counties approved for aid are: Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Clay, Cleveland, Gaston, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Lincoln, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes and Yancey counties, according to a press release by Cooper's office.

How to apply for FEMA assistance

As for how to apply for individual aid, there are multiple ways you can do so.

Online at DisasterAssistance.gov.

Via the FEMA App

By calling the FEMA helpline at 800-621-3362 from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. ET daily.

If you use a video relay service, captioned telephone service, or other communication services, you should provide FEMA the specific number assigned for that service.

FEMA does not provide aid for losses already covered by insurance, so the agency recommends immediately filing a claim with your insurance company if you have insurance. You do not need to file your insurance claim before applying for FEMA aid, but will be required to provide FEMA with insurance settlement details or denials for some forms of assistance, according to the FEMA website.

Be sure to take pictures of damage to your home and personal property before any cleanup or repairs. Document all the information you can.

FEMA aid is available for U.S. citizens, noncitizen nationals, or qualified noncitizens such as legal permanent residents, refugees and more.

Renters and small business owners may also be eligible for federal help through the U.S Small Business Administration (SBA), which provides disaster loans.

What is needed for the application

For the FEMA application, here's what you need:

Social Security number

Annual household income

Contact information such as your phone number, mailing address, email address and the damaged home address

Bank account information

Insurance information

After applying for aid, an inspection might be required, in which a FEMA employee comes to survey damage to your home and personal property. FEMA may also request more information. After the review, FEMA will notify you of any aid you are eligible for. You can appeal the decision.

The application deadline in North Carolina for this aid is Nov. 27, according to the FEMA website.

For more immediate emergency assistance, contact 911.

For shelter, visit the American Red Cross, or Salvation Army, or by texting SHELTER and your zip code (for example, "SHELTER 01234") to 4FEMA (43362).

For local aid options, call 2-1-1.

FEMA is just one form of federal aid. More aid is often provided by other agencies, including through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Be sure to be on the lookout for other federal aid and other local and statewide aid that may become available.

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Cut off by Helene in Western NC, Rep. Foxx calls for more aid for her district

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Author: Danielle Battaglia; Staff Writer | Section: News | 1609 Words

Page: 6A OpenURL Link

Rep. Virginia Foxx's husband used his last match on Monday morning to light a candle in their Banner Elk house.

Tropical Storm Helene had ripped through Western North Carolina, sending flash floods, mudslides and devastation throughout the region.

The storm didn't spare the Foxx family.

"My own husband is trapped because our driveway washed away," the Republican congresswoman said Monday in a phone interview with McClatchy. "He has no power, and he didn't have cell reception for a long time."

But if you thought a washed-out driveway was enough to stop the feisty 81-year-old congresswoman, you don't know her very well.

Foxx said she walked from her property until she could get into a car and drive around her district Saturday to assess the damage.

"The roads were closed everywhere," Foxx said. "I had to keep taking detours and detours. I drove under power lines, barely getting around fallen trees, over fallen trees and power lines down everywhere. And then, DOT trying to clear the roads, but being stuck in traffic, in what should have taken 10 minutes, for an hour and a half. It's a really bad situation."

For three days, Foxx worked from her office making calls to anyone she thought could help, from the White House to the National Guard to the Governor's Mansion.

News coverage has largely focused on areas in North Carolina's11th Congressional District to the west. There, photos and videos show two tourist destinations - Chimney Rock and Asheville - damaged by the storm.

"We know it's bad in Asheville, we know it's bad west of us, but it's very bad here in the High Country: Ashe, Avery, Watauga," Foxx said. "Watauga, particularly has been hit very, very hard."

For 19 years, Foxx has represented in Congress the counties around her Banner Elk home. Her 5th Congressional District currently encompasses Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Caldwell, Davie, Forsyth, Mitchell, Stokes, Surry, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yadkin counties.

Hurricane Helene reached the U.S. Thursday, near Perry, Florida, as a Category 4 hurricane. When it reached North Carolina, on Friday, it had been downgraded to a tropical storm, but dumped tens of inches of rain on the mountains.

As of Monday, at least 120 people had died from the storm throughout the Southeast. And many others remain unaccounted for. It is unclear if that's because they're isolated, have no means of communication or are dead.

Over Foxx's house, 2 feet of rain fell, she said. Banner Elk is home to Lees-McRae College, and has a population of just over 1,000 people.

The most rainfall was measured at Busick Raws in nearby Yancey County, where 29.5 inches fell, The News &

Observer reported.

That's close to Mount Mitchell, the highest peak in the Appalachian Mountains and east of the Mississippi River in the continental United States.

Helene's devastation

Rep. Chuck Edwards, a Republican representing the 11th Congressional District, also spoke with McClatchy on Monday about the devastation Helene left in its path through the state.

"It begins with the fact that so many roads are closed and impassable," Edwards said.

Edwards said traffic has to be routed around the region. Smaller roads and bridges have been washed out.

"We've got communities here in the mountains that are severed from civilization, and they also have no power, and they have no cell service. They literally are cut off from the rest of the world."

People who can get out lined up for more than three hours to get gas, and he worries that the region will run out. A few grocery stores can run on generators but their food supplies are low.

And then there are those who can't be reached.

"There's several we have not heard from yet," Edwards said. "We don't know their condition. Cell service is sporadic at best."

Cellphone outage

Foxx's cell phone cut in and out, and then cut off, as she spoke about the devastation.

She called back, sounding exasperated.

"One of the biggest problems that we have here is phone service," Foxx said. "We have people isolated, all over, who don't have phone access."

Foxx said she's been begging federal and state agencies to get her counties access to Starlink, a satellite internet company owned by SpaceX, that offers mobile broadband. On Monday, the White House announced that every emergency operations center in North Carolina would be sent Starlink satellite systems. On Monday afternoon, FEMA announced they delivered 40 Starlink systems to the state.

Foxx said lack of working cellphones was one of the biggest frustrations among lawmakers, first responders and residents. They aren't able to communicate about problems throughout the area.

In the 11th District, Canton Mayor Zeb Smathers posted on social media his "frustration and anger" with cellphone providers, saying they failed his community when they needed them the most.

"It is unacceptable and disgusting that in our time of need, cellular service for the entire region is blocked out," Smathers told The Charlotte Observer. "There's no excuse for that. I mean, we knew the storm was coming."

Canton, a town with fewer than 4,500 people, is located 17 miles west of Asheville.

In Foxx's district, she said, an information technology employee in Ashe County was able to connect to Starlink. But other counties had not.

And that concerns Foxx, where she says there there are places with no access to the outside world - like Beech

Mountain, home to around 700 people.

"The only way to get to Beech Mountain is by helicopter," Foxx said. "We've got communications with the manager up there, but it is a big issue, being able to talk to people and getting supplies to them."

Missing people

Mid-conversation, Foxx's other phone rang.

"I don't need to take that one," she said. "That is somebody calling to tell me they're worried about me and praying for me."

That's a constant for people living in Western North Carolina.

And something Foxx says she really appreciates right now.

When Foxx isn't assessing the damage, she's been in her office making calls.

Foxx and other members of Congress were among those who wrote to Biden asking for him to declare a major disaster. On Saturday, Biden announced he had approved the declaration, which offers grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property loses and programs to help individuals and business owners.

On Monday, Biden announced in a news conference that FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell would be staying in the Asheville area for the foreseeable future. He said he, too, plans to travel to North Carolina on Wednesday.

There's been some criticism that Congress left town Wednesday after passing a temporary funding measure but not the 12 appropriation bills needed to fund the federal government. Edwards noted how close Congress came to another government shutdown and where his district would be today, had that happened. Congress plans to be out until after the November election.

On Monday, Biden said he is considering calling Congress back into session. But Foxx said there's more Biden can do without Congress, like spending unused COVID-19 relief money on storm relief efforts.

Foxx said she wanted to see more from Gov. Roy Cooper's office.

In Avery County, only six members of the National Guard were on the ground, she said Monday.

"We don't have enough National Guard," Foxx said. "Last night, they had sent out 400 National Guard for 25 counties. That's a very small number."

She urged Cooper, a Democrat, to do more.

On Sunday, the North Carolina National Guard said more than 500 soldiers and airmen had been deployed. The U.S. National Guard said over 5,500 had been deployed from 11 states.

Edwards was also frustrated by the response.

"The people in this district are hurting, and they're really disappointed with the response from the federal government, and our state government," Edwards said.

He said he was only seeing federal and state resources brought into the region beginning Monday.

Volunteering

But Edwards added that Western North Carolina communities are resilient.

One of his own businesses was devastated in the storm, and it will take months to get it back up and running, but he said that it's nothing compared to what some of his neighbors are dealing with, with homes and businesses lost for good.

"I certainly see the community coming together," Edwards said. "Folks in the mountains are prideful and resilient. Our law enforcement and first responders are coming together in a big way. We're seeing more and more neighbors helping one another, checking on neighbors, seeing that they've got some of the basic things they need, sawing trees out of the way, so that their neighbors' cars can get by."

That uplifted Edwards, despite his frustration with state and federal leaders.

Next on Foxx's schedule was to go to Samaritan's Purse, a humanitarian aid organization based in Boone. There volunteers had come from across the country to help with relief efforts and she wanted to thank them for their work.

"We've very grateful to Samaritan's Purse," Foxx said. "It's one of the most effective relief organizations anywhere in the world, maybe the most effective. When Samaritan's Purse in on the ground, then we all feel better."

And Foxx said people looking to come to Western North Carolina tohelp should find an organization to volunteer with like Samaritan's Purse. She warned that people should not try to help on their own.

"We don't need people just going out on their own and trying to help because they don't know the situation here, and it's really dangerous for people to be trying to do things," Foxx said. "Roads are still caving in everywhere, and so it would be better for them to work through an established organization."

She suggested contacting the local emergency management agency where a person wanting to volunteer lives, to ask that county what is needed.

And she urged those wanting to help to donate to a reputable organization, and call their legislators or members of Congress to encourage the White House and Cooper's office to do everything needed.

Danielle Battaglia: @dani battaglia

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NCHSAA commissioner: Damage from Hurricane Helene could affect NC prep playoff schedule

October 2, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Langston Wertz Jr.; Staff Writer | Section: Sports | 540 Words

Page: 4B OpenURL Link

Eight years ago, the N.C. High School Athletic Association pushed back the start of its football playoffs due to Hurricane Matthew.

NCHSAA commissioner Que Tucker said that could be a possibility again this year after the devastation brought to the western part of the state by Hurricane Helene.

Tucker said any decisions about the playoffs would come from the NCHSAA Board of Directors, which she expects will meet via Zoom sometime later this week.

"With the devastation they have had," Tucker said Monday. "I'm not sure one week would do it. But that's a decision that has to be made by our board members. As a staff we want to huddle up and look at what we have found and see what we can come up with to present to the board, but we want to make sure our board members (from the regions most affected) can be on the Zoom with us because they have boots-on-the-ground knowledge, and we need to get their perspective."

Tucker said in her talks with coaches and athletic officials in the mountains that the damage is excessive and that schools in all four of the NCHSAA's classes have been affected.

So the association will not be able to delay one or two classifications in the playoffs, she said.

Tucker also doesn't expect that many football games, or any sports, will be played in that region this week. She noted she saw a photograph of the football field at Morganton's Freedom High School showing it almost completely submerged.

"Even if we thought one school could play, well, who would they be playing?" Tucker asked. "How can they get there? That's the crazy part. We talked to a coach at Mountain Heritage and he had been out with a chainsaw trying to help. He stopped long enough and found a spot with cell service and said it may be two months before they can get back to school; that they are using the school building to house the workers and everybody."

The NCHSAA playoffs are scheduled to begin in about two weeks, with girls' tennis (Oct. 14), volleyball (Oct. 19), girls' golf (Oct. 21) and cross-country (Oct. 26) up first.

Football playoffs are scheduled to begin Nov. 8.

"Until we can get a true assessment to when schools can return to play, and just be able to open up school, we can't make decisions at this point," Tucker said. "But I do know our board will be as far as equitable as when they were dealing with situations (brought on by past weather events) in eastern North Carolina."

Tucker said she is worried about how to get the playoffs going, knowing they are important so many schools and athletes and families. But seeing the images of the damage done, she said, is heartbreaking.

"It's a lot to think about," Tucker said. "Some people don't have drinking water. But you have to have hope, and hope brings about renewed excitement to push through. We know when we get to the other side, we'll play again, and we don't want to act like we don't have hope. But we have to be patient and try to keep it all in perspective as we try to do things that are in the best interest of everyone."

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'KEEP THINGS IN - PERSPECTIVE' - UNC coaches, players focus on more than football after Helene ravages North Carolina

October 2, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Chip Alexander; Staff Writer | Section: Sports | 982 Words

Page: 1B OpenURL Link

Chapel Hill For North Carolina's football coaches and players, any lingering pain from the loss to Duke has been tempered by the devastation that has been experienced by so many in the western part of North Carolina.

Lives have been lost, homes have been destroyed and families and communities badly disrupted by the carnage caused by Hurricane Helene.

"I know how important our sport is," UNC coach Mack Brown said Monday. "We love football and we love the kids. But I want thoughts and prayers for the people in western North Carolina. ...

"Roads are out, trees are down. They are encouraging people not to go to the mountains. The people up there can't get off the mountain. They don't have food. There's no water in some of the hospitals. I mean, it is totally devastating to think a storm can do that much damage."

UNC defensive coordinator Geoff Collins played college football at Western Carolina. He said his mother lives in Franklin, southwest of Asheville. His wife is from Lenoir and has long-time friends there. One of his best friends lives near Swannanoa.

"That area is near and dear to my heart, for a lot of reasons," Collins said Monday.

Brown said it was important this week to "keep things in perspective." And, yes, there is another football game to prepare for - Saturday against undefeated Pittsburgh.

'They are great kids'

The noon game at Kenan Stadium offers the chance for the Tar Heels (3-2, 0-1 ACC) to put aside the 21-20 loss at Duke, even its ACC record and perhaps tamp down the increased "outside noise" that has come - much of it on social media - after a couple of losses.

Brown realizes the "Mack must retire" crowd will not quiet down anytime soon. At 73, after 36 years as a head coach, after winning a national championship, the Hall of Famer might also come to that conclusion - after the season, not during it. Or not at all.

While Brown was so angry after the 70-50 loss to James Madison that he apparently offered to step aside, he's still the coach and its his program. He has work to do. And he wants to do it while shielding, as best he can, much of the criticism from the players.

"We have great fans," Brown said. "Some are better than others. Some are vocal, some are not. Usually the really positive fans don't say anything; they go back to work. The negative fans gripe when you're winning. They go crazy when you're losing.

"What we've got, like Saturday, is be mad at me. I'm mad at me. So come to the game to support the kids. They are great kids. And they are trying and they are college kids. I've been a head coach for 36 years, so there's nothing anyone can say, to me or about me, that I haven't heard, good or bad. I've had it all."

Explaining the loss at Duke

Brown, Collins and offensive coordinator Chip Lindsey did their best Monday to explain how the Tar Heels took a 17-0 halftime lead over Duke, increased it to 20-0 in the third quarter and then lost the rivalry game.

There were the expected plaudits for Duke, now 5-0. Lindsey noted the Heels' lost their offensive rhythm in the second half against a Duke defense that intensified the pressure. As for Collins, he talked about missed tackles and needing better execution in alignments and taking care of assignments.

Brown said he thought his team became frustrated and "panicked" - his word - during the loss to James Madison two weeks ago at Kenan. That didn't happen against Duke, he said.

"We tried to do too much," he said. "That's when missed assignments come and missed tackles. They tried to do too much because they want to win so badly.

"And (Duke) has good players. So when they make a play, don't think the world is coming to an end."

Collins said the same. The Blue Devils got in a nice groove running the ball in the second half, winning the play upfront, mixing in some sizable pass plays, and the Heels could not slow their momentum.

"Some things started sliding away from us," Collins said. "When things started happening negatively, and we're going to stop doing this, we have a tendency to try to do too much and try to do things outside the framework of what our individual responsibility is."

On Rucker, and Holstein

Collins said the defensive staff identified 12 plays that affected the game, saying eight of those plays involved missed tackles. That's correctable stuff, he said, and the possible return of edge rusher Kaimon Rucker - out the first five games with a lower-body injury -- for the Pitt game would be a boost for the defense.

And not just on the field with his play. "He knows which buttons to push, which guys to put his arms around, which guys to ramp up or which guys to calm down," Collins said.

Brown said Pitt (4-0) has more of a multiple look on offense this season with Alabama transfer Eli Holstein taking over at quarterback. The 6-4, 225-pound freshman had thrown for 1,183 yards, with 12 touchdowns and two picks - three TD passes in each game.

"He, to me, is the difference on the football team," Brown said. "Same defense, same tough guys. They make it really hard to run. For us, again, we're going to have to throw the ball better.

"They are the most complete football team we've played this year."

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Grant Williams has seen everything with the Charlotte Hornets, ready to 'commit to winning'

October 2, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Shane Connuck; Staff Writer | Section: Sports | 908 Words

Page: 2B
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Grant Williams feels he has seen Spectrum Center flip.

The 25-year-old forward entering his second season on the Charlotte Hornets remembers attending games during the franchise's 7-59 season in 2011-12. It felt as though fans just wouldn't even be inside the building, or casual basketball spectators would fill seats while donning different teams' jerseys.

Williams, who grew up in west Charlotte and won a state championship at Providence Day, initially sat courtside for the first time in his life during a Hornets game against the Golden State Warriors. With J. Cole sitting behind Williams, Stephen Curry dropped more than 40 points on Charlotte, and the crowd had its cheers for the local talent.

Williams has seen it all.

He attended a Hornets-Warriors game during the following season, and remembers watching Kemba Walker - who's now on Charlotte's staff as a player enhancement coach - "whooping that tail."

It wasn't just that the NBA team that represents the city in which he grew up was starting to play well. The Hornets were gaining support, and that was something he wanted to help sustain.

"I know that happens quickly," Williams said Monday at the Hornets' preseason media day. "We just have to do our job as players to really commit to winning."

Hornets donate

\$1 million to Hurricane Helene relief efforts

The Charlotte Hornets Foundation announced that it has committed \$1 million to aid the American Red Cross and Second Harvest Food Bank of Metrolina in their ongoing Hurricane Helene relief efforts.

Most of the Hornets began their remarks at media day with a message for those affected by the hurricane.

Williams, the former Tennessee star who became one of four local high school basketball players named All-Observer player of the year twice, noted that he has grandparents who are turning 89 and 90, respectively. Still being able to regularly play in front of them is a blessing.

"Whether it's your time, whether it's your efforts, volunteering your finances to the victims: They're right there in our backyard," Williams said. "People I know in Charlotte, Asheville, family members of mine across the way have been affected.

"Just the community here. I know the importance of basketball in the state of North Carolina. I know the importance of the Charlotte Hornets and Carolina Panthers, because I've been here, and when we're at our best, the city's at its best."

Seth Curry, the Charlotte Christian graduate whom the Hornets quickly re-signed in the offseason, offered a similar sentiment.

"I'm worried about everybody affected by Hurricane Helene in the western part of the state," Curry said. "It's been a rough past week, so I just want to say our thoughts and prayers are with everybody trying to get everything they need to recover from this awful, awful tragedy."

Hornets will 'do everything we can as an organization'

New head coach Charles Lee said he's already been noticing how the city of Charlotte rallies and bands together.

For example, Spectrum Center has been going through renovations, and spaces inside the arena are moving amid the construction. He's noticed how they've had to "figure it out," even if it's as simple as knowing when to walk down a different hallway.

"Living in Charlotte and hearing about all the devastation that took place in all the Carolinas, just want them to understand that they are in our thoughts and prayers," Lee said. "I know there's already been a message from the Hornets' organization sent out to everybody, and our ownership group is trying to help financially in the relief efforts.

"The videos are pretty devastating, and it's a tragic situation. Having a family myself and knowing what you have to go through to lose your home, power and all those things, it's really tough."

Jeff Peterson, the Hornets' executive vice president of basketball operations, kicked off all the news conferences on Monday morning by acknowledging the devastating impact that Hurricane Helene has had on the Carolinas.

"Our hearts and thoughts and prayers are going out to them," Peterson said. "We're going to do everything we can as an organization to make it a little bit better. We know it's not perfect, and we just want to continue to let them know that we're thinking about them."

'We want to be a consistent, relevant contender'

Peterson, who begins his first season in his new role, joked about how he even had his clothes laid out ahead of his first media day.

He's been excited about the ways in which new owners Rick Schnall and Gabe Plotkin have built this roster - taking immense pride in character and bringing in the most competitive group it can.

"We wanted to take a holistic approach in terms of just having sustainable success," Peterson said. "It's not one of these things where we want to make the playoffs one year, and then we're out for another four years; Or make the play-in game one year, and then we're out for five. We want to be a consistent, relevant contender.

"You don't do that overnight, right? It takes time. You have to build it the right way. You can't skip steps. We're very strategic in every move to see if that's possibly going to impact that goal, knowing it's the north star."

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Triangle teams get involved with helping storm victims

October 2, 2024 \mid News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC)

Author: Jadyn Watson-Fisher; Staff Writer | Section: Sports | 1081 Words

Page: 1B OpenURL Link

RALEIGH Two NC State football players are working with their family to assist survivors of Helene, the massive storm that ravaged western North Carolina.

Brothers Davin and Rylan Vann are working with their mother, Joy Hall-Haley, who owns Joyful Moving, and Durham Rescue Mission to collect supplies for residents in western North Carolina. They have set up on the east side of Close-King Indoor Practice Facility, across from Carter-Finley Stadium. The goal is to "fill a truck" that will leave Thursday.

"It's just devastating to see people that have lost everything; their whole livelihood, their homes," Hall-Haley said on Monday afternoon. "I can't imagine, as a mom, going through that same kind of thing. It's just amazing to see people already. I really didn't think that people were gonna come and bring stuff, but I was wrong."

About two hours after the game on Saturday, Hall-Haley said the family discussed how it could help support the survivors.

Hall-Haley admitted she second-guessed herself on Sunday, unsure if they could pull off the feat. Monday, they decided it was possible.

"I just said, 'Nope, I'm going to do it. I want to help. Davin wants to help, so let's do it,'" Hall-Haley said.

She texted N.C. State head coach Dave Doeren on Monday morning about using the football facilities as a collection site. His response came within seconds and he was "on board immediately," Davin Vann said.

It means a lot to be part of a program and to play for a coach who supports efforts like this, Hall-Haley and Davin Vann said.

"I think it says a lot about coach Doeren," Davin Vann said. "He does a lot of charity work himself, so I think him allowing us to use the facility for us to do some is very great."

"It makes me feel happy and thankful for Coach Doeren," Hall-Haley added. "And, thankful that my boys made the right choice to come here."

All items collected by the family and its Joyful Moving team will be given to Durham Rescue Mission for distribution. Due to the storm's impact, organizations must obtain specific authorization. There were also concerns about reaching the affected areas.

If the truck ends up full, Hall-Haley said there are plans to bring more on site. They are also willing to lead other efforts, because she knows the recovery period will take years.

Collection times are Monday from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m., and Tuesday and Wednesday from noon to 8 p.m. During his weekly news conference, Doeren encouraged residents to bring items and fill the truck with supplies.

"Really proud and thankful for Davin and his family. Davin probably just came off the best game of his career, as well," N.C. State coach Dave Doeren said on Monday. "For that to be on his mind today, I think, says a lot about that young man and his family."

Davin, a defensive end, is in his fifth season at N.C. State and second consecutive as a team captain. The graduate student recorded career highs with 10 tackles, 3.5 tackles for loss and two forced fumbles Saturday against Northern Illinois

Rylan, a redshirt sophomore offensive lineman, is in his third season with the Pack.

Aydan White, Isaiah Shirley and Zack Myers are all from the impacted region, Doeren said. Their families are safe but called it a "scary time for them." Doeren's son, Jacob, attends Appalachian State in Boone. His second son, Connor, plays at East Tennessee State. ETSU's team bus was stranded in the flooding on its way to a game. Both are safe, as well.

"I think the damage is so much worse than people even understood," Doeren said. "All the people, the homes, the businesses, communities, state parks that have just been devastated by this flood, it's really sad and tragic. We are here praying and thinking a lot about the folks in the western part of the state."

Duke launches donation drive

Duke University's football coach announced Monday that the Blue Devils will also shepherd a donation drive.

The donation drive will run through Oct. 11, with items accepted at the Duke athletics ticket office in Scott Family Athletics Performance Center at 110 Whitford Drive, Durham, from 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday-Friday. In addition Two Men and Truck will have truck parked at Tribull Plaza during Countdown to Craziness this Friday to collect items.

Items requested are: non-perishable food, bottled water, contractor-size trash bags, blankets, first aid supplies, feminine hygiene products, diapers and baby clothes, hand sanitizer, toilet paper, paper towels, bleach, shovels, brooms, gloves, coolers, flashlights, batteries and fans.

As an extra incentive, Duke offers two discount ticket packages.

The first offer is \$25 for one east reserved football ticket for Virginia Tech at Duke on Nov. 23 plus one reserved women's basketball ticket for Belmont at Duke on Nov. 21.

The second offer is \$45 for one general admission (standing room only) men's basketball ticket for Seattle at Duke on Nov. 29 plus one general admission women's basketball ticket for Belmont at Duke on Nov. 21.

For every five items donated from the list, fans can purchase one ticket package.

In addition, a Two Men and a Truck vehicle will return to Morton Plaza at Duke on Oct. 18 to collect donations when Florida State and Duke play football that night at Wallace Wade Stadium. The ticket offer will not be in effect for the Oct. 18 donation site.

Duke football coach Manny Diaz said one of his assistant coaches got in touch with a high school football coach from Western N.C. on Monday and heard grim details of the situation.

"To hear (about) people just cut off from civilization because of the roads either being impassable or just flat out gone," Diaz said, "Bridges wiped out. People who have cars who can't take them anywhere. People who can't get to their cars or are out of gas. Just the destruction and the disruption of life.

"These are the things that you would expect in a movie. And this is real life going on in our state right now. And so again, it's something that we want to be a part of helping in any way we can."

Requested supply donations

Toothbrushes
Toothpaste
Deodorant
Hand sanitizer
Menstrual products
Diapers
Baby wipes
Pre-mixed baby formula
Cleansing wipes
Shampoo
Body wash
Flashlights, lanterns and batteries
Blankets, sleeping bags and pillows
Socks
Shelf-stable food
Canned goods (preferably pop-top cans)
Bottled water and water jugs
Electrolyte drinks (such as Gatorade)
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Lake Lure Dam in Western NC stable after imminent failure warning; emergency repairs begin

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Author: Drew Jackson and Tammy Grubb; Staff Writer | Section: News | 320 Words

Page: 4A OpenURL Link

The Lake Lure Dam, which was feared doomed to collapse on Friday, is stable and emergency repairs are set to begin.

At the peak of Helene's rains, a warning went out that the Lake Lure Dam was at imminent risk of failing, as water spilled over the top of its 124-foot tall structure. An evacuation order was issued for residents below, but the dam held. On Friday, an engineer assessed the dam and found the water level receding.

By Sunday, the water level was lowered an additional 3 and a half feet, so emergency repairs could be made, according to Josh Kastrinsky, spokesman for the NC Department of Environmental Quality.

"The structure remained intact following the storm," Kastrinsky said in an email. "Water caused erosion on both sides of the dam abutments but it was not undermined."

The town of Lake Lure announced on its Facebook page Sunday afternoon that the dam is stable. Previously, town officials discouraged any unnecessary travel to the area and said to stay off Lake Lure roads unless trying to leave town.

The Lake Lure Dam was assessed Saturday by Schnabel Engineering and a plan for emergency repairs was determined, the town said. Officials from FEMA are also expected to asses the dam.

The dam, built in 1925 and 1926, is a tourist and recreational destination for the rural county. It also harnesses the Broad River and two creeks to power a hydroelectric plant producing electricity for Duke Energy from two hydroelectric turbine generators.

Dam workers typically lower the water in the lake by as much as 8 inches below the normal lake level before big storms, according to a document posted on the town's website. The town manager approves lowering the lake by more than that amount, it notes.

Most residents in Lake Lure remain without power, as of Sunday, according to town officials.

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Dean's List: What to know about the search for NC State's next chancellor, so far

October 2, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Korie Dean; Staff Writer | Section: News | 1313 Words

Page: 12A OpenURL Link

Next academic year will mark a new era for NC State University, as a new leader takes the helm from longtime Chancellor Randy Woodson.

Woodson announced in July his plans to retire by the end of the current academic year. By the time he leaves the university, he will have been chancellor for 15 years.

Although Woodson's expected departure is still at least eight months away, the search to find his successor is already well underway.

So, when could the new chancellor be named?

Welcome to Dean's List, a roundup of higher education news in the Triangle and across North Carolina from The News & Observer and me, Korie Dean.

In this week's edition, I'll get you up-to-speed on the search for NC State's next chancellor and a decision Wake Forest University leaders made to cancel an on-campus event that was scheduled to feature a pro-Palestinian speaker.

Here we go.

NC State chancellor search updates

UNC System President Peter Hans wasted no time getting the search started, naming the committee tasked with finding the next chancellor the day after Woodson made his announcement this summer.

Hans, as outlined in UNC System policy, will serve on the committee and is also tasked with selecting the final nominee to submit to the system Board of Governors for approval.

Ed Stack III, an NC State alumnus and vice chair of the university's Board of Trustees, is serving as chair of the committee.

The additional members of the committee, chosen in accordance with UNC System policy, are:

Ed Weisiger Jr., NC State Board of Trustees chair

Timothy Humphrey, NC State alumnus and Board of Trustees secretary

Ghazale Johnston, NC State alumna and Board of Trustees member

David Powers, NC State alumnus and Board of Trustees member

Wendy Floyd Murphy, Board of Governors chair

J. Alex Mitchell, NC State alumnus and Board of Governors member

Harold Martin, chancellor emeritus of North Carolina A&T State University

Charles Hall, NC State Staff Senate chair

Herle McGowan, NC State Faculty Senate chair

Allison Markert, NC State student body president

Dewayne Washington, NC State alumnus

The search committee is tasked with gathering feedback from the campus community about the traits they feel are important in the next chancellor, recruiting and interviewing candidates and selecting an unranked slate of at least three finalists to submit to the university's Board of Trustees.

The Board of Trustees then forwards three finalists to Hans, who makes the final selection and submits the preferred candidate to the Board of Governors.

Chancellor searches in the UNC System are confidential, so only those on the committee and directly involved with the search process will officially know the identities of the candidates not selected for the job - even after the search concludes. The vote to hire chancellors must take place in a public, open meeting.

The search committee met for the first time Sept. 10, during which Hans delivered his charge to the group and outlined the timeline and process for the search. During those remarks, he said he hopes a new chancellor will be named by the end of the academic year in May.

"We're fortunate that Chancellor Woodson has given us a generous runway to complete this search and ensure a new leader is ready to pick up the baton without missing a step," Hans said.

Students, faculty, staff, alumni and other members of the NC State community can give their input on the search and the next chancellor by completing an anonymous online survey.

Hans said Sept. 10 that the survey had already received more than 4,000 responses - which he believed "must be a system record."

The search committee will also host listening sessions with various groups on campus. The first sessions will be held:

Tuesday, Oct. 1, from 3:30-5 p.m. at D.H. Hill Jr. Library (for faculty)

Wednesday, Oct. 2, from 11 a.m.-noon at Talley Student Union, Mountains Ballroom (for staff)

Hans has previously said that chancellor searches take between six and nine months, though the recent search UNC-Chapel Hill moved much quicker.

To keep up with the latest information on the search at NC State, visit: chancellor.ncsu.edu/search-process.

Wake Forest cancels event with pro-Palestinian speaker

Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem will no longer allow a pro-Palestinian scholar to speak on campus next Monday, the one-year anniversary of Hamas' surprise attack on Israel, The Old Gold & Black, Wake Forest's student newspaper, reports.

A handful of campus departments were set to host an event Oct. 7 titled "One Year Since al-Aqsa Flood: Reflections on a Year of Genocide and Resistance" with San Francisco State University professor Rabab Abdulhadi as the

speaker.

Abdulhadi, who is Palestinian American and serves as the director and senior scholar of the Arab and Muslim ethnicities and diasporas studies program at SFSU, has been denounced by the Anti-Defamation League and other groups.

In 2020, Zoom canceled an event Abdulhadi planned to host with Leila Khaled as a speaker. In 1969, as a member of the U.S.-designated terrorist group Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Khaled participated in the hijacking of a commercial airplane.

The Old Gold & Black reported that a group of faculty who research "genocide and memory studies" proposed the event and received approval from the university's Humanities Institute.

But after the event was announced, a petition calling for it to be canceled quickly gained attention and support - with more than 8,500 signatures in five days.

Then, last Thursday, Wake Forest President Susan Wente and Provost Michele Gillespie announced in a campus message that the event would be canceled and that no other "events on this day that are inherently contentious and stand to stoke division in our campus community" would be allowed, either.

Instead, the university will host an interfaith prayer service and a community reflection event.

"As a university community, there are many ways that we could choose to recognize this day," Wente and Gillespie wrote. "At Wake Forest, we will emphasize our ability to come together to support one another, holding space for our many different perspectives and experiences. As such, we invite you to join us for several university-sponsored events."

Wake Forest ranked No. 144 out of roughly 250 universities for its "tolerance for speakers" in the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE) College Free Speech Rankings, released earlier this month.

You can read more of The Old Gold & Black's coverage of this story on its website.

WNC universities closed after Helene

As you probably know, Hurricane Helene devastated much of Western North Carolina late last week.

The destruction spread to several of the region's colleges and universities, most of which will be closed for at least a week as they work to repair and rebuild. That includes:

UNC Asheville, where classes are canceled until Wednesday, Oct. 9.

Appalachian State University, which is closed until Friday, Oct. 4.

Western Carolina University, which is also closed until Oct. 4.

Warren Wilson College, where classes are canceled until Oct. 14.

Lees-McRae College, which is closed until Oct. 4.

Montreat College, which is closed until Sunday, Oct. 6.

Classes resume at Lenoir-Rhyne University Tuesday.

Campuses across the UNC System have stepped up to help the public universities impacted by the storm. Among

other efforts, NC A&T State University and Winston-Salem State University sent emergency management personnel to UNC Asheville, while East Carolina University sent food trucks and NC State sent student affairs and facilities staff.

"Our emergency response was underway even before the storm hit," Hans said in a Monday news release. "I want to especially thank the campuses across our state that have provided mutual aid and much-needed support to their sister universities in the mountains. The scale of this disaster is tremendous, and the recovery is going to be long and difficult."

You can read more about the damage caused to these campuses here.

Higher ed news I'm reading

UNC-Chapel Hill police served a student with a search warrant for the contents of her phone at her on-campus apartment, The Daily Tar Heel reports. Police sought the warrant in connection with a protest during which pro-Palestinian demonstrators vandalized campus buildings.

See you next week

Thanks for reading this week's Dean's List. I hope to see you right back here next week.

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Watch videos, including aerials, of damage caused by Helene in Western North Carolina

October 2, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Laura Brache, News & Observer | Section: local | 662 Words OpenURL Link

Helene hit North Carolina as a tropical storm on Sept. 27, 2024, leaving death and destruction, particularly in the western part of the state.

Relief efforts for these mountain towns is ongoing, and the path to recovery will be a long one.

A county by county look at Helene's devastation in Western NC

The News & Observer and The Charlotte Observer will continue to cover the storm's aftermath as communities pick up the pieces and rebuild. Here are videos and aerial footage captured by N&O and Observer journalists on the ground.

NC residents dig out of the mud, knowing Helene has forever changed their communitiesThe News & Observer's Travis Long, Kaitlin McKeown and Josh Shaffer capture the scenes in Marshall and Avery County, NC as residents begin the long process to recover from Helene's devastation.

Avery Co. family lost everything but their dogs to Helene and the riverBob Tatum lived for 46 years along the Toe River river in Minneapolis, N.C. before floodwaters from Hurricane Helene washed his entire house downriver and drowned both of his horses.

Before and after satellite images show flooding from Helene in AshevilleBiltmore Village and the River Arts District in Asheville received extensive damage from flooding of the Swannanoa River after Helene caused torrential rainfall in western North Carolina over the weekend. Satellite imagery provided by Planet Labs PBC shows the river overwhelming parts of the city.

Helene stole the music and soul of the town of Spruce PineWith the mud ankle-deep inside her Majestic Music store, and the water stains climbing 8 feet high on the walls, Angie Buchanan said goodbye to 50 years of teaching music in Spruce Pine, NC. "My life is in there," she said. "It's hard. Very hard."

Aid finally arrives in remote Western NC town whose lone road was battered by Helene"The highway is gone," said Mark Harrison, medical officer for the Pensacola Fire Department. "Most of the homes are gone." Harrison describes the relief effort following Hurricane Helene, and the medical supplies the community needs.

Drone video shows the damage to Biltmore Village in AshevilleBiltmore Village received extensive damage from flooding of the Swannanoa River after the remnants of Hurricane Helene caused torrential rainfall in western North Carolina over the weekend.

Drone video: Small NC town starts the long recovery from HeleneAerial footage from N&O visual journalist Travis Long shows people trying to dig out from the catastrophic destruction in downtown Marshall, Tuesday, Oct. 1, 2024, after flooding from the French Broad River inundated the small western North Carolina town.

Residents of small Ashe County town take care of each other after Helene devastationIn just a few hours Helene roared through Lansing NC's section of the popular Virginia Creeper Trail and left it strewn with mud, tree trunks and a Winnebago-sized camper can «turned upside-down in the water.

See drone footage of flood-damaged western NC townsNews & Observer visual journalist Travis Long shows the damage from Helene in the towns of Clyde and Canton in Haywood County, out in the western part of North

Carolina.

See the devastation Helene left in western NCNews & Observer photojournalist Travis Long and Charlotte Observer photojournalist Khadejeh Nikouyeh document the destruction left in the path of Helene as it ravaged the western mountain region of North Carolina over the weekend.

Video: See Helene's destruction in NC's Lake LureCharlotte City Council member Tariq Bokhari went to the Lake Lure/Chimney Rock area on Sunday, Sept. 29th, 2024. He posted this video on X saying about the destruction from Hurricane Helene: "...never seen anything like this. Post apocalyptic. It's so overwhelming you don't even know how to fathom what recovery looks like, let alone where to start. Going to be a long path to recovery that all levels of stakeholders are going to be needed."

Video: Helene brings flooding to mountain areas of western North CarolinaHeavy rains from Helene are causing creeks to overflow, flooding mountain areas of western NC, Friday, Sept. 27, 2024.

You can read all News & Observer coverage of Hurricane Helene with no paywall at newsobserver.com/topics/helene-nc.

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