

# 13 state parks closed in Western NC after Hurricane Helene. Estimated reopening timeline

BY CHYNA BLACKMON  
[cblackmon@charlotteobserver.com](mailto:cblackmon@charlotteobserver.com)

After the deadly destruction of Hurricane Helene, over a dozen of North Carolina's state parks will be shut down for several weeks.

As cleanup continues across the southeast, The North Carolina Division

of Parks and Recreation announced that all state parks west of I-77 are closed through at least Oct. 31, 2024, along with most programs at all state parks.

The Division of Parks and Recreation is assisting with statewide emergency and rescue efforts in Western North Carolina in the aftermath of

Hurricane Helene," the division announced on Oct. 2. "As a result, we are scaling back operations across the state to allow staff to continue to assist with critical deployments."

According to the division, 13 of North Carolina's 39 state parks and recreation areas will be closed until at least the

end of the month, including:

- Chimney Rock State Park
- Crowders Mountain State Park
- Elk Knob State Park
- Gorges State Park
- Grandfather Mountain State Park
- Lake James State Park
- Lake Norman State

Park  
 • Mount Jefferson State Natural Area  
 • Mount Mitchell State Park  
 • New River State Park  
 • Rendezvous Mountain  
 • South Mountains State Park  
 • Stone Mountain State Park

sources and repairing vital infrastructure repairs in the communities hit hardest by Helene. Many roads continue to be closed due to unsafe conditions," NCDPR's website says.

If you have any reservations made for any of the state parks west of I-77, including cabins, campsites and picnic shelters, full refunds will be distributed, according to the division.

You can find more information and updates on park closures online at [neparks.gov/closures](http://neparks.gov/closures).

*Chyna Blackmon:  
[cblackmon@charlotteobserver.com](mailto:cblackmon@charlotteobserver.com)*

## JD Vance to host town hall in Greensboro, criticizing Harris on immigration and Helene

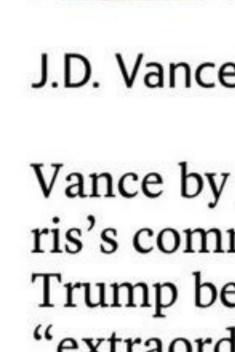
BY LUCIANA PEREZ URIBE  
[lperezuribe@newsobserver.com](mailto:lperezuribe@newsobserver.com)

Republican vice presidential candidate JD Vance is coming back to North Carolina this week, this time to host a town hall in Greensboro.

Doors for the town hall at the Koury Convention Center will open at 4 p.m. on Thursday, with Vance slated to speak at 6 p.m. Topics will likely include the economy, illegal immigration and Hurricane Helene.

The remnants of Hurricane Helene, which began to be felt in North Carolina on the last Thursday of September, devastated the western part of the state, bringing historic flooding, destruction and death.

The Trump campaign has heavily politicized the ongoing recovery efforts. Most recently, former President Donald Trump, during a town hall meeting in Fayetteville on Friday night, said that the federal government's response to the devastating storm had been "terrible." The news release announcing Vance's town hall said Vice President Kamala Harris "completely left North Carolinians behind in the



wake of devastation post-Hurricane Helene."

The Harris campaign responded to Vance by pointing to Harris' comments about Trump being "extraordinarily irresponsible" in pushing "disinformation" about Helene relief aid.

Many on social media platforms like X have also taken to criticizing the response despite federal responders working in the area alongside their local and state counterparts. Conspiracy theories have also spread on social media.

President Joe Biden surveyed the damage in North Carolina by air on Wednesday and pledged more resources. Harris visited Charlotte on Saturday, announcing Mecklenburg County would also be eligible for federal disaster aid.

The Trump campaign's news release hones in on the fiscal impact of immigrants living in the United States without legal authorization, citing research by the Federation for American Immigration Reform, a nonprofit, anti-

immigration organization. "While Kamala Harris continues to ignore these critical issues," says the release, Trump "has a proven track record of putting North Carolinians first."

"President Trump understands the importance of lowering taxes, securing the border and stopping the unchecked flow of illegal immigration that drains resources from American citizens. President Trump has always fought for the people, and he will continue to fight to restore economic stability, security, and prosperity in North Carolina," says the release.

Vance's visit to Greensboro is his fifth trip to North Carolina since becoming Trump's running mate.

In mid-September, he held a rally in Raleigh. Before that, he was with Trump in Asheboro. He has also visited Greenville twice.

Trump, Harris and Democratic vice presidential candidate Tim Walz have also visited the battleground state often this year.

*Luciana Perez Uribe  
Guinasi:  
[LucianaPerezUb](mailto:LucianaPerezUb)*

## Obituaries

### OBITUARY INDEX

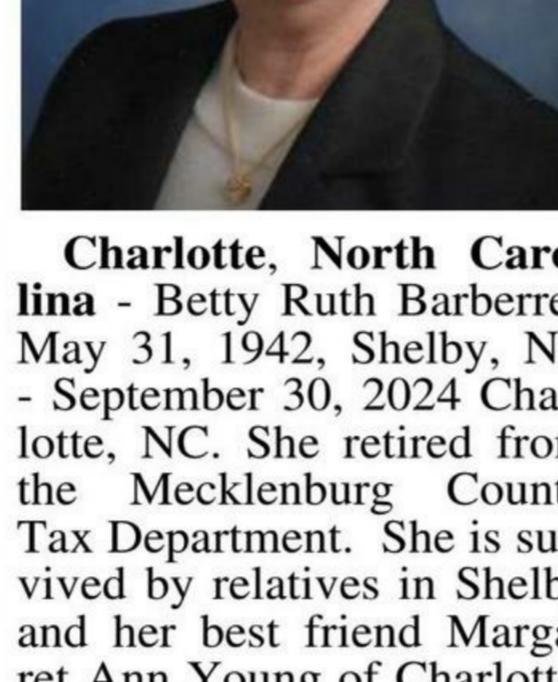
View and place obituaries at [charlotteobserver.com](http://charlotteobserver.com)

Contact our obituary staff at 704-358-5382 or [obitdesk@charlotteobserver.com](mailto:obitdesk@charlotteobserver.com)

NAME, AGE	CITY	DEATH	ARRANGEMENTS
Barbarree, Betty, 82	Charlotte	Sep 30	Cecil M. Burton Funeral Home & Crematory
Guerant, Thomas Connally, 84	Charlotte	Oct 01	--
Hodgin Jr., David Newlin, 70	Concord	Oct 04	James Funeral Home
Howell, Charles Melvin, 85	Concord	Oct 06	Forest Lawn West Funeral & Cremation Service
Mason, Mariana Jones Peete, 62	Charlotte	Oct 03	Kenneth Poe Services
Watkins, Jr., Basil Manly, 95	Concord	Oct 03	Hartsell Funeral Home - Concord

**Bold listings indicate expanded obituaries**

**Betty Barbarree**  
May 31, 1942 - September 30, 2024



**Charlotte, North Carolina** - Betty Ruth Barbarree May 31, 1942, Shelby, NC - September 30, 2024 Charlotte, NC. She retired from the Mecklenburg County Tax Department. She is survived by relatives in Shelby and her best friend Margaret Ann Young of Charlotte, NC.

A graveside service will be at 2 pm on October 10 at Sunset Cemetery in Shelby, NC (casual attire). Cecil Burton Funeral Home is in charge. Send memorials to the charity of your choice.

**Share Your Condolences, Thoughts & Memories Online**  
Sign the guest book and post your personal message for the family. You can also view messages from the past year and the online obituaries listing and a link to the guest book at [Obituary.CharlotteObserver.Org/Obituaries/Charlotte](http://Obituary.CharlotteObserver.Org/Obituaries/Charlotte)

**Basil Manly Watkins, Jr.**  
August 25, 1929 - October 3, 2024

**Concord, North Carolina** - Basil M. Watkins, Jr., of Concord, NC, passed away in Salisbury, NC on October 3, 2024, at the age of 95. Born in Durham, NC, on August 25, 1929, to the late Basil M. Watkins, Sr., and Elizabeth China Watkins. Basil lived a full and meaningful life devoted to his family, his faith, and his community.

Basil earned his degree from Wake Forest University and later attended Emory University. He built a distinguished career with NCNB (now known as Bank of America) in Charlotte, where he worked for 40 years before his retirement.

In 1965, Basil married the love of his life, Martha Hobbs Watkins, whom he met in a young adults class at Myers Park Baptist Church. Together, they shared a deep Christian faith and were actively involved in church life and mission outreach. Their commitment to service and to fostering close relationships extended beyond their immediate family. Over the years, they developed lasting bonds with two men they cherished as sons, Glenn Price and Dr. Hanna Sallhar.

After his retirement, Basil and Martha moved to Concord in 1995, where they were involved in their

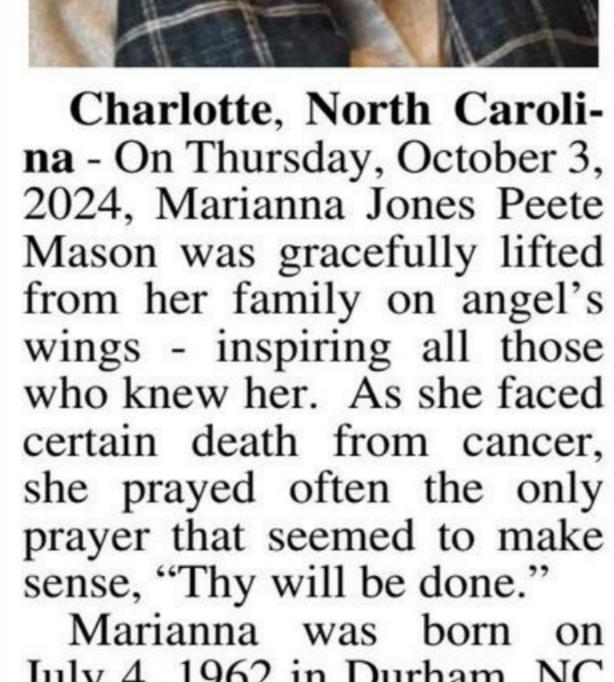
church, Harvest Community Church, and the community. Martha passed away in 1999, but their legacy of love and service has continued to impact the lives of many.

Basil is survived by nieces and nephews, Howard Hobbs (Mary Jo), Harriet Burch (John), Alan Matthews, Jan Turpin (Jeff), Mary Gonzales, Bill Hobbs (Amy), along with numerous great-nieces, great-nephews, and even great-great nieces and nephews. Glenn Price (Carol), Dr. Hanna Sallhar (Dora), Mandi Jones, and special friend and neighbor, Corky Collins also mourn his passing. The family extends their heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Collins for his unwavering friendship and the support he provided Basil, enabling him to live independently in his home for many years.

A burial service will be held at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 9, 2024 at Elmwood Cemetery in Charlotte, with Reverend Dr. Jerry Barber officiating.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that memorial donations be made to a charity of one's choice in Basil's honor. Hartsell Funeral Home of Concord is serving the Watkins family.

**Marianna Jones Peete Mason**  
July 4, 1962 - October 3, 2024



**Charlotte, North Carolina** - On Thursday, October 3, 2024, Marianna Jones Peete Mason was gracefully lifted from her family's wings - inspiring all those who knew her. As she faced certain death from cancer, she prayed often the only prayer that seemed to make sense, "Thy will be done."

Marianna was born on July 4, 1962 in Durham, NC at Duke Hospital, delivered by her Uncle Charles Peete, and welcomed by her loving parents. Her father thought her lips were the color of a rosebud and placed a red rose in her bassinet every morning, despite the protests of the nurses. She enjoyed her childhood in Durham with dear friends Penn, Patty, and Barrett; attended Durham Academy before going off to high school at St. Catherine's and then St. Mary's. After two years undergraduate study at St. Mary's, she matriculated to University of North Carolina Chapel Hill where she graduated with a BA in Fine Arts. She attended the Parsons School of design and studied art and design in France before marrying John Bohannon Mason in 1985 at the innocent age of 22.

Marianna carefully created a home from a house with and for her husband as they

always took their time making decisions. She had an intuitive and seemingly empathetic understanding of how subtleties shape and contextualize our lives. When it came the decisions of shade, shape, texture, or contrast, her eye was remarkably keen and her opinion valued.

She particularly enjoyed the fragrances of the tea olive, magnolia blossom, and sweet confederate jasmine. She was a thalassophile, full stop - magnetically attracted to the ocean and the sea - the more remote and natural the environment, the more relaxed she became. Sunsets suited her better than sunrises, as late mornings were better than early mornings. Tips tea, coconut cake, piñon rather than cabernet. Chris Stapleton and Pachelbel's Canon soft cheezed the flowers of but especially the green shades of Spring, an oyster with homemade mignonette - a small mix of her pleasures. She loved her dogs Noah, River and her sweet Hudson as family, bunnies and dragon flies, tide pools with babies, and salt breezes.

She recognized the non-trivial gift of gratitude hard won and spent her illness thinking of ways to help others including her husband, her boys, and her family and friends. Marianna was the mark of grace. Her calm acceptance was a gift to those who knew her.

She is survived by her loving husband of 39 years, J. Bohannon Mason, M.D.; her sons, William Bohannon

Mason of Ft. Lauderdale and Stuart Jennings Mason of Charlotte; her mother, Mary Frances Hart Peete of Durham; her other mothers, Esten Bohannon Mason, Stuart Bohannon Evans of Charlotte, and Sally John-

son of Durham; her sisters and brothers-in-law, Robert and Annette Mason and Burchell and Esten Walker of Charlotte, Joann Melker of Charlotte, Anabel Montes of Andrews, and many beloved nieces and nephews, and her very special great-niece, Sloan Beasley. She was predeceased in death by her sweet daughter, Marianna Stuart Mason; and her beloved father, William Pettway Jones Peete, M.D.

A service of celebration will be held 11 a.m. on Wednesday, October 9, 2024, at Myers Park Presbyterian Church, 2501 Oxford Place, Charlotte, NC with a reception to follow in Oxford Hall. The service will be livestreamed at <https://myersparkpres.org/live/> for those unable to attend in person.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that memorial contributions be made to the Marianna Stuart Mason Endowed Memorial Scholarship Fund at the MUSC Foundation or a charity of your choice. Donations can be made online at <https://bit.ly/muscmasonmemorial> or by check to the MUSC Foundation at 18 Bee Street, MSC 450, Charleston, SC 29425. Please make checks payable to MUSC Foundation and write fund #05322 on the memo line.

Arrangements are in the care of Kenneth W. Poe Funeral & Cremation Service, 1321 Berkeley Ave., Charlotte, NC 28204; (704) 641-7606. Online condolences may be shared at [www.kenwpoeservices.com](http://www.kenwpoeservices.com).

**Kenneth W. Poe**  
Funeral & Cremation Service

"Caring is our passion"