

News Herald, The (Morganton, NC): Page 3

October 16, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Morganton, North Carolina Page: 3 OpenURL Link

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News Herald, The (Morganton, NC): Page 2

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StarNews (Wilmington, NC): Page 6

October 16, 2024 | StarNews (Wilmington, NC) Wilmington, North Carolina Page: 6 OpenURL Link

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October 16, 2024 | StarNews (Wilmington, NC) Wilmington, North Carolina Page: 34 OpenURL Link

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Statesville Record & Landmark (NC): Page 1

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Southern Conference moves volleyball championships from Asheville as area continues Helene recovery

October 15, 2024 \mid Associated Press State Wire: North Carolina (NC) Section: Sports \mid 166 Words

OpenURL Link

SPARTANBURG, S.C. (AP) — The Southern Conference has moved its volleyball tournament championship from storm-ravaged Asheville, North Carolina, as the area continues recovering from Hurricane Helene.

The Division I league said Tuesday it would hold its tournament in Spartanburg on the campus of Wofford College. The event takes place Nov. 21-24 with the champion gaining an automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament.

League commissioner Michael Cross said he had heard from Asheville officials and tournament organizers in the North Carolina mountains that it was in the best interest to move the event "to allow Asheville time to recover."

Helene made landfall along Florida's Gulf Coast last month then moved through several Southeastern states and left a trail of destruction for hundreds of miles. At least 246 people have died in what is now the deadliest hurricane to hit the mainland U.S. since Katrina, according to statistics from the National Hurricane Center.

The conference said all tickets sold for the Asheville facility will be honored at Wofford.

AP college sports: https://apnews.com/hub/college-sports

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Hurricane Helene creates 'severe environmental disaster'

October 15, 2024 | Bertie Ledger-Advance (NC) Author: Nick Fogleman The Watauga Democrat Section: Across Carolina 889 Words OpenURL Link

BOONE — Rivers swelled, trees fell and landslides engulfed mountainsides as the landscape of Watauga County radically changed when Hurricane Helene brought historic rain and wind to the area.

As support and recovery efforts continue across the region, assessments of the environmental damage have yet to account for the devastating effects Helene has had on the ecosystem.

"It is my personal perspective that this is going to be the most severe environmental disaster in the recorded history of this area. We've experienced nothing like this before," said New River Conservancy Executive Director Andrew Downs.

The rivers and streams that run through the mountains are vital to the economy, recreation and identity of Watauga County. Throughout the storm, unprecedented water and debris swept through these areas, leaving a trail of environmental destruction.

Environmental organizations are just beginning to inspect the damage to the ecosystem.

"We're just getting our minds around the human toll of this hurricane and the flooding, but the environmental toll is also staggering. We've seen drowned wildlife and habitat destruction along the rivers and watersheds, and widespread erosion and sedimentation," Blue Ridge Conservancy's Director of Communications Leila Jackson said.

Days before Helene, Boone and surrounding communities were struck with storms that filled up the natural sponges that typically absorb water before the full brunt of the storm made its way to the Appalachian Mountains.

"That set the stage for when the real part of the storm arrived," said Dr. Bill Anderson, an App State hydrogeology professor. "There's no storage or anywhere for that water to go but rush down our mountain valleys and get into the major streams and try to get out of here as quickly as possible."

With nowhere to go, rainwater made its way into Watauga County's rivers and streams, along with the houses, trees, asphalt, cars, and sediments that were destroyed and swept into the river.

"There's all the materials, from tires to construction debris, that are in the river that are going to have a long-term impact," Downs said.

On Sept. 27, the USGS sensor on the Watauga River measured a discharge rate of 32,300 ft3/s, about 1000x more than what was recorded just days before, and a height of 25 ft. Both readings were still climbing upward when the sensor broke during the storm.

As flood waters and materials made their way through river beds, they caused significant damage to the river banks, or riparian zones.

"Those natural filters that protected the river were wiped out, eradicated in many places, and those are going to need to be rebuilt," Downs said.

These natural protection systems have been crippled by physical damage, and this has left the environment more susceptible to chemical and biological damage.

Along with the wreckage of buildings and roads, water likely picked up the toxic materials, pesticides and sewage it came in contact with.

"Who knows what kind of contaminants that we all have in our households for cleaning and so forth. Those are all in the streams now," Anderson said. "When you're out in the non-municipal areas, people have septic tanks, and I would guess that a number of those have been compromised or maybe completely inundated."

Large amounts of pollution, toxicants and waste can cause a variety of problems for mountain ecosystems.

They can influence water and habitat quality, food availability, wildlife behavior, and aquatic oxygen levels and disrupt natural cycles within an ecosystem. This can reduce wildlife's overall rates of survival and affect systems that rely on healthy waterways.

"All other systems rely on water, you don't have to overthink it," Downs said. "Water isn't a building block, it's the building block."

Contaminants can also cause dangerous algae blooms making it even more difficult for ecosystems to recover.

Over time, the rivers and streams will move some of these contaminants downstream and out of the region, but Helene's timing means the scars left behind will take more time to heal and make natural and human communities more vulnerable as the ecosystem repairs.

With winter around the corner, areas where trees fell and landslides ripped apart soil and vegetation have little time for secondary succession, when new plants and grass recolonize disrupted ecosystems.

"We're going to have a lot of barren areas throughout the winter," Anderson said. "So when we do get rain, and we get quite a bit of rain throughout the winter, I think we're going to be more prone to landslides and see more sediment in our streams."

As the wreckage and debris from our communities begins to be cleared, unnatural levels of sediment in the water ways remain an issue.

Studies show that while sediment is a vital component of ecological functions when it exceeds natural limits, it can have a range of negative effects on aquatic ecosystems and act as a sink for contaminants.

"That's going to compromise the environment and anything trying to live in those streams," Anderson said. "Our mountain streams are cool and clear environments. That is what the animals that live in those environments have adapted to."

In some areas, the rushing water created new pathways for runoff and altered the natural floodplain. Depending on the severity, this could cause increased erosion and flooding in areas where it was not typical.

"This is what streams do; that's how they wear down our mountains, and they've been doing this for a very long time," Anderson said.

The assessment of the environmental destruction caused by Hurricane Helene will only add to the total account of devastation.

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Nick Fogleman The Watauga Democrat, 'Hurricane Helene creates 'severe environmental disaster", *Bertie Ledger-Advance* (online), 15 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
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10 Tips for NC voters as Early Voting begins this week

October 15, 2024 | Bertie Ledger-Advance (NC) Author: From N.C. Board of Elections | Section: Across Carolina | 743 Words OpenURL Link

In-person early voting for the 2024 general election begins Thursday and ends at 3 p.m. on Nov. 2 in all 100 counties.

Statewide, 419 early voting sites will open on Thursday across North Carolina.

"In-person early voting has been the most popular method of voting in recent general elections, and we expect that will continue in 2024," said Karen Brinson Bell, executive director of the State Board of Elections.

In 2020, 65 percent of North Carolina voters chose in-person early voting as their voting method. And in the presidential election of 2016, 62 percent of NC voters cast their ballot early.

The following are 10 tips for voters as early voting begins:

1. Early voting locations. Eligible voters may cast a ballot at any early voting site in their county. For sites and hours in all 100 counties, use the Early Voting Sites Search tool.

Also see Early Voting Sites for the Nov. 5, 2024 General Election (PDF). The busiest days for early voting are often the first day and the last couple of days.

2. Candidate info. Sample ballots are available through the Voter Search tool. For information on candidates for the state Supreme Court and Court of Appeals, see the State Board's Judicial Voter Guide: 2024 General Election.

The Guide is also being mailed to all North Carolina households. Election officials do not provide information about candidates for other contests, but some media outlets and advocacy groups do. Many candidates also have websites and social media accounts. Being familiar with your ballot choices will help your voting experience go more smoothly.

3. Bring A Photo ID. Voters will be asked to show photo ID when they check in to vote. Most voters will show their driver's license, but many other forms of photo ID will be accepted.

Voters who do not have photo ID can meet the photo ID requirement by either (1) filling out a form explaining why they are unable to show ID, or (2) showing their ID at the county board of elections office by 5 p.m. on Nov. 14. More information about the photo ID requirement is available at BringltNC.gov.

- 4. Free Photo IDs. Any registered voter who needs a photo ID can get one for free from their county board of elections office during the early voting period, which ends on Nov. 2. For details, go to Get a Free Voter Photo ID.
- 5. Register to Vote. The regular voter registration deadline was Oct. 11. But any North Carolinian who is eligible to vote may still register and vote during the early voting period.

Registrants must provide proof of their residence address, which can be a driver's license or other government document, paycheck, utility bill, or bank statement.

For more information, visit Register in Person During Early Voting.

6. Updating Registration. During early voting, registered voters may update their name or address within the same

county, if necessary.

7. Absentee Ballot Drop-off. Voters who vote by absentee ballot can return it by mail or hand it to an election official at an early voting site in their county. They can also drop it off in person to their county board of elections office.

Voters registered in the 25 counties in the Helene disaster area in Western North Carolina may return their absentee ballot to any early voting site in the state during early voting hours. Ballots will be kept secure and delivered to the voter's county board of elections for processing.

For more information on returning absentee-by-mail ballots, see Detailed Instructions to Vote By Mail.

8. Voting in Person Instead of Absentee. Voters who requested an absentee ballot but have not yet returned it may choose instead to vote in person during the early voting period or on Election Day, Nov. 5.

Voters may discard the absentee ballot and do not need to bring it to a voting site.

- 9. Peace at the Polls. All voters should respect the rights of others to participate in the election. Election officials are trained to quickly address incidents that might interfere with a voter's ability to cast their ballot. Intimidating any voter is a crime. Voters who feel harassed or intimidated should notify an election official immediately.
- 10. Voters in Need of Assistance. Voters in need of assistance may bring an eligible person to help them enter and exit the polling place or to help them complete their ballot according to the voter's instructions.

Election officials are also available to help voters. Curbside voting is also available for voters unable to enter the voting site. For more information, visit Curbside Voting.

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From N.C. Board of Elections, '10 Tips for NC voters as Early Voting begins this week', *Bertie Ledger-Advance* (online), 15 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3EA9B629681E8>



NCHSAA Modifies Fall Sports Seasons Due To Hurricane Helene Damage

October 15, 2024 | BladenOnline.com (Elizabethtown, NC) Author: BladenOnline.com | Section: Local Sports | 599 Words OpenURL Link

CHAPEL HILL - The N.C. High School Athletic Association's Board of Directors met last week and made adjustments to the fall sports season calendar necessitated by the devastation caused by Hurricane Helene in western North Carolina.

"Changes to the fall calendar are difficult as well as complex but necessary," said NCHSAA President Dr. Stephen Gainey and NCHSAA Commissioner Que Tucker in a joint statement. "Keeping our student-athletes safe as we try to minimize risk of injury was central to any decisions made. We commend the work of the NCHSAA staff in its research, the Board of Directors in making time to consider these changes and the willingness of our host partners to accommodate any changes and make their venues available."

The most notable change was extending football's regular season by a week with a minimum of three calendar days (72 hours) between contests. Seeding now will take place November 10 and the first round of the playoffs will be November 15. Originally, playoffs were to start November 1.

Adjustment also were made in volleyball, boys' soccer, girls' tennis and cross country.

Sunday practices and competitions are still prohibited. Here are the calendar changes:

FOOTBALL

A minimum of three calendar days (72 hours) must occur in between contests.

Reporting deadline: November 9, 11:59 p.m. (revised from November 1)

Seeding: November 10 (Sunday, after 1 p.m.)

First round: November 15

Second round: November 22

Third round: November 29

Fourth round: December 6

Regionals: December 13

State Championships: December 20-21

GIRLS' TENNIS

Individual

Reporting deadline: October 14, 11:59 p.m. (revised from 3 p.m. to allow for an extra day of competition)

Regionals: October 18-19

State Championships: October 25-26

Dual Team

Reporting deadline: October 17, 11:59 p.m. (revised from October 10)

Seeding: October 18

First Round: October 21

Second Round: October 23

Third Round: October 28

Fourth Round: October 30

Regionals: November 5

State Championships: November 9

BOYS' SOCCER

The weekly limitation is modified to allow affected schools to make up multiple postponed matches, not to exceed four in a week. No change was made to the daily limitation.

Reporting deadline: November 6, 11:59 p.m. (revised from October 31)

Seeding: November 7

First round: November 9

Second Round: November 12

Third Round: November 14

Fourth Round: November 16

Regionals: November 19

State Championships: November 22-23

VOLLEYBALL

The weekly limitation is modified to allow affected schools to make up multiple postponed matches, not to exceed eight in a week. No change was made to the daily limitation.

Reporting deadline: October 19, 11:59 p.m. (revised from October 16)

Seeding: October 20 (Sunday, after 1 p.m.)

First Round: October 22

Second Round: October 24

Third Round: October 26

Fourth Round: October 29

Regionals: October 31

State Championships: November 2

CROSS COUNTRY

Reporting deadline: October 22, 11:59 p.m. (revised from October 19)

Regionals: October 26

State Championships: November 2

GIRLS' GOLF

The minimum number of nine-hole scores required to qualify for the Regional Championships was revised from five to three.

No calendar changes

CHEERLEADING

No calendar changes

SPECIAL PROVISION

The Board approved one additional contest for all sports with a season limit. To exceed the season limit of contests, the following conditions must be met:

Prior approval from NCHSAA

The contest cannot exceed the daily or weekly limitations

The contest must exceed the season limit for both schools

The contest MUST NOT be entered into MaxPreps

The post NCHSAA Modifies Fall Sports Seasons Due To Hurricane Helene Damage appeared first on .

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Blowing Rock Town Council hears hurricane impact update from FEMA, town manager

October 15, 2024 | Blowing Rocket, The (Blowing Rock, NC) Author: Nick Fogleman | Section: Blowingrocket | 625 Words OpenURL Link

BLOWING ROCK — The Blowing Rock Town Council heard from FEMA representatives and gave an update on the impacts of Hurricane Helene at its meeting on Oct. 8.

"I want to commend everyone in this county for their reliance," Jacob Swiatkowski, a FEMA representative, said.
"You have an outstanding emergency management system for the county of Watauga."

Catherine Anderson, a FEMA representative, told citizens where to sign up for FEMA benefits.

"I highly encourage anyone in your community affected to apply with FEMA and the Small Business Administration," Anderson said.

The Small Business Administration gives loans for damage and loss of revenue due to disasters.

Town Manager Shane Fox then gave an update on Hurricane Helene's impacts on Blowing Rock.

On Wednesday, Sept. 25, an EF-1 tornado touched down near Birch Drive and Hill Street, Fox said.

On Thursday, Sept. 26, the town prepared for Hurricane Helene.

"This included culverts, ditches, sandbags and things of that nature. Then we put together our overall communications plan," Fox said.

On Friday, Sept. 27, the Blowing Rock Police station lost power and the emergency generator broke due to water. Teams were then sent to BRPD Station 1.

That morning, the Blowing Rock Swift Water Team responded to requests from Boone Fire at the Walmart and along 321

"Power was out at one point to the majority of the town, but Town Central was able to come back pretty quickly," Fox said.

The wastewater and water plant lost power for multiple days, but emergency generators allowed for continued operation, Fox said.

The Green Hill Tank dropped due to a destroyed pipe, and the interconnect connecting Boone and Blowing Rock was washed away.

There were two major landslides in Blowing Rock, on Valley View and Wonderland Trail.

"We're waiting on estimates and expectations," Fox said. "These are not going to be quick fixes by any means."

On Sunday, repairs and assessments continued and donation centers were established in the town.

Town operations returned to normal Monday, Sept. 30.

"What we started on Monday was what we call the 'support' phase," Fox said. "How can the Town of Blowing Rock

do whatever we can to support our neighbors? We have capabilities, individuals with specialties and we have equipment."

The Blowing Rock police, public works, fire department, landscaping department, park and recreation, planning and zoning and town administration have all been working to assist the community and neighboring communities with disaster recovery.

"They have been unbelievable in assisting and helping in any way they can," Fox said.

The Town of Blowing Rock has also participated in daily meetings with regional and local stakeholders to assist with disaster recovery.

"It is such a nice breath of fresh air because everybody has been working together," Fox said.

Fox said the next phase would be a town cleanup.

SDR trucks began on Oct. 9 to clear debris.

Fox told community members not to place debris in ditch lines and to separate flooded materials from storm debris.

Council members then discussed the storm recovery.

"I just want to say thank you to everyone," Council Member Cat Perry said.

"A reminder that this is not a sprint recovery, this is a marathon recovery," Council Member Melissa Pickett said.

"We've had an outpouring of help that we just don't see much of anymore," Council Member Doug Matheson said.

Council Member Pete Gherin then asked Fox to discuss communication issues during the storm.

"We did have issues in the height of the storm with communications. We did have communications failures that did take place. Our plan is to meet over the next couple of weeks and go over those details and what options there may be," Fox said.

Fox then gave an update on town projects which were put on hold for the storm and recovery.

"Pausing things, not trying to be in the roadways, allowing DOT and lineworkers access was our goal," Fox said.
"Our work has started back up."

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Blowing Rock American Legion building becomes hub for donations

October 15, 2024 | Blowing Rocket, The (Blowing Rock, NC) Author: Nick Fogleman | Section: Blowingrocket | 202 Words OpenURL Link

BLOWING ROCK — As communities in Western North Carolina responded to Hurricane Helene, the American Legion building in Blowing Rock became a distribution center to support counties that were devastated by the storm.

"We had resources, and we wanted to help," Cathay Barker of the Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce said. "Everybody in our community was reaching out asking how to help.

Donations came into Blowing Rock from across the country, and the American Legion building was soon full of clothes, food, diapers, pet food, blankets, and even hand-knit sweaters.

"It's people helping people," Barker said.

Volunteers began getting calls from other counties about the resources they needed and were able to act fast and get them to the right people.

"We're the very back end of the supply chain," said Sam Garrett, whose non-profit Love-Give has been supporting the efforts.

The effort was supported by the Town of Blowing Rock, The Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce and Blowing Rock Tourism Development Board.

Chef José Andrés of World Central Kitchen even landed a helicopter to pick up warm food brought to Blowing Rock from a Raleigh catering company to deliver to Banner Elk.

"The kindness and the hearts of these people have just been nonstop. It's amazing," Barker said.

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Sandhill forfeits football game with East

October 15, 2024 | Carteret County News-Times, The (Morehead City, NC) Author: J.J. SMITH NEWS-TIMES | Section: Sports | 451 Words OpenURL Link

BEAUFORT — East Carteret has already captured its fourth straight win and evened its record at 4-4 this week.

Sandhills had to forfeit its matchup with East on Friday as the Fayetteville program didn't have enough players to compete.

The Mariners' game with North Lenoir in week four of the high school football season was postponed due to inclement weather. They tried to play the Hawks the following week but the game was ultimately cancelled due to the Hawks' field conditions. They later added the Sandhills game for this week.

"We can't seem to get that game in," East coach B.J. Frazier said. "We searched hard for this one, then we got the word on Sunday. Their AD said they didn't have the players."

The loss of the game comes at an inopportune time with the Mariners fresh off a 35-27 win over Northside-Pinetown to move to 2-0 in the 1A/2A Coastal Plains Conference.

"We have some pretty solid momentum and it would be nice to try and continue that," Frazier said. "We don't want to get content. We've been playing pretty well, so it would have been nice to get a game in."

The N.C. High School Athletic Association recently approved extensions to the fall sports calendar in response to the impacts caused by Hurricane Helene in the western part of the state.

There will now be 12 weeks of the football regular season instead of 11. The new playoff bracketing date is Sunday, Nov. 10.

Frazier said he may add his team's 10th game of the season in the extra week with an eye toward the playoffs.

"We are far from being a team that can get to the second round or third round," he said. "We want to get back to the drawing board. We're classified as a 2A, but we're legit 1A, so when we play 2A teams in the playoffs, we have a way to go."

Since being bumped up to the 2A division in 2021 by a new realignment equation that didn't just factor in enrollment – East had been a 1A school for 15 years – the Mariners have failed to win a playoff game.

They didn't qualify for the postseason last year as the only 2A team in the Coastal Plains Conference and fell 44-35 to Midway in the first round in 2022 and dropped a 52-8 contest to Northeastern in the first round in 2021.

"I remember when we lost to Midway, (former East standout) Jacob Nelson said after playing in our conference for five weeks the speed of the game was a lot faster," Frazier said. "We have to prepare for that. We'll look at some areas where we have to improve. There are minor details we have to take care of."

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