

Helene: Farmers encouraged to assess soil damage

October 12, 2024 | Daily Reflector, The (Greenville, NC) Author: David Beasley | Section: Local | 353 Words OpenURL Link

(The Center Square) – Soil assessments for damage to fields inflicted by Hurricane Helene is being encouraged by North Carolina agriculture leaders.

"Hurricane Helene caused great devastation throughout much of western North Carolina and farm fields were not spared," the state's Agriculture Department said Friday. "This situation calls for a vigilant approach to soil and crop managements that includes assessment on a field-by-field basis."

In addition to clearing fallen trees and limbs and washed out bridges, farmers should examine fields for soil washed away by the hurricane, the state said.

"For areas where erosion has occurred significant topsoil is lost," the department said. "If so, phosphorus, potassium and significant microinutrients such as manganese, zince and copper may have been removed."

In addition to the problem of lost soil is dirt that has been carried by flowing storm water onto a farmer's fields, the state said. That soil may be better or worse that the soil that was in the field before the hurricane hit.

"Sediment or soil eroding from other locations may be deposited over native soil in fields," the state said. "This can potentially impact fertility. Since this deposition is often topsoil from other locations to floodplain areas, it may have high nutritive value. If predominantly sand has been deposited, it may have relatively low nutrient levels."

While 2 inches or less of new soil might cause only minimal changes to the fields, the state advised to perform testing on any levels higher than 4 inches.

Soil washed in from another location by flood waters could also be contaminated, the state advised.

"Given the widespread origin of floodwaters, it is difficult to assess contamination of soils since various unknown chemicals can be associated with these events," the state said. "If there are known chemicals of concern at a given location, use of a commercial environmental lab that offers analysis for contaminants is an option but can be expensive."

Even replacing lost soil can be challenging.

North Carolina does not have regulations on the quality of top soil.

"Any fill for reconstruction purposes (grading, filling gullies) should be tested for general soil fertility prior to use," the state said. "It is buyer beware."

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Celia Stone: Helping in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene

October 12, 2024 | Daily Reflector, The (Greenville, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Columnists | 545 Words OpenURL Link

One of the most beautiful parts of the United States, especially in the autumn, has got to be western North Carolina. With 125 peaks over 5,000 feet in elevation, including Mount Mitchell rising to 6,684 feet, it is no wonder that people love to hike, vacation and live amidst this breathtaking scenery. The areas around the Great Smokies, the Blue Ridge Mountains and other parts of the Appalachians provide the perfect backdrop for countless Christian camps, children's homes, retreat and conference centers and various ministries.

Teen Valley Ranch, Camp Tekoa, Windy Gap, Cragmont Assembly, Crossnore School and Children's Home, Black Mountain Home, Broyhill Home, Montreat Conference Center, Community of the Cross, Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center, Billy Graham Training Center at the Cove and Samaritan's Purse make up just a part of the different denominational and parachurch organizations providing outreach, service and training in the western part of our state.

Since Hurricane Helene made landfall and wreaked havoc across areas of Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, North Carolina and Virginia, over 200 lives have been lost due to the storm. More than half of those have been in North Carolina, where many towns were cut off due to already saturated land, massive amounts of new rainfall and mudslides, plus collapsed roads and bridges.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported that over 40 trillion gallons of rain fell in the Southeast during Hurricane Helene and during the preceding rainfall event in the mountains of N.C., which would fill 60 million Olympic swimming pools.

All of us have a big job ahead. First of all, we continue to pray for and give comfort to the families and friends who have lost loved ones and those who have experienced deep trauma from this storm. We also can pray for those who have faced the horrifying losses of pets, homes, places of business, schools and houses of worship. Secondly, we can donate money and supplies to the many faithful organizations that have been finding ways to get help on the ground to those who need it most. Finally, in the weeks and months to come, we should consider being part of or helping send a clean-up crew, rebuilding team or feeding program.

Tragedies like this tend to bring out the best and the worst in people. Helene can bring out the best in us, as we share generously and remember the words of the Prophet Isaiah and of Jesus.

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Isaiah 41:10

"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." Isaiah 43:1b-3

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." John 14:27

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Jim Buchanan: Mountain folks' stubbornness on display after Helene

October 12, 2024 | Daily Reflector, The (Greenville, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Columnists | 835 Words OpenURL Link

There's a lot of cliches about mountain folk: resilience, determination, resourcefulness and, yes, stubbornness.

These were all on display when Helene visited horror and devastation on our beloved slice of the world, and they were all welcome. People here tend toward self-dependence, and as such a lot of folks had the tools needed to ride through the storm — foodstocks, fuel supplies, chainsaws, generators, etc. — and had access to heavier equipment to help clear impassable roads.

There's no overstating how terrifying and devastating Helene was in terms of death and sheer destruction. Some WNC towns have literally been wiped off the map and all of us were knocked back to the Stone Age to some degree, with communications knocked out. A lot of us had to sit in the dark, conjuring up the worst fears of the fate of our neighbors.

But a lot of us also took it upon ourselves to venture out to see what we could do to help. A lot of those efforts helped save lives or provide whatever aid could be given to those in need. In fact, so many people were out checking on neighbors, trying to round up water and supplies, attempting to clear roads, etc. that it was a bit of a problem in that people were stepping all over each other.

That was alleviated in large part by a competent response on the ground from volunteer organizations, first responders and local and state government. That the response was as quick and effective as it was was nothing short of astounding, especially given the fact that everyone was pretty much in a communications blackout thanks to the loss of internet and phone services.

Sadly, part of the effectiveness of the response is that a great many local officials, from here to Canton to Asheville, have been through versions of this before. In a very real sense, Hurricane Alley now runs through Western North Carolina.

As to the communications collapse, therein lies two of the immediate pressing questions of this event: How did we get so blind and deaf so fast across such a wide area?

And what needs to be done so it doesn't happen again? Previously effective 911 systems became useless when no one could get on either end of the line.

When communications did begin working in stops and starts, a sad chapter of this saga began when charlatans, clowns, pot-stirrers and, yes, foreign actors flooded the zone with stories meant to outrage and confuse. This secondary deluge got so bad that local, state and federal officials had to devote resources to debunking misinformation. Those folks pulled away to flush the junk, with their hands already full, certainly had better things they could have done with their time.

But the happy problem we faced in this region was something of an overload of people wanting to help. In the short run it appears to be that a lot of folks stepped up, both in official and volunteer capacities, and a lot of good calls were made

Some of those calls were tough. Western Carolina University was forced to cancel Mountain Heritage Day due to Helene, and in an unprecedented move a week later held a home football game with no fans. We feel both were the right call, the first due to the obvious dangers to life and limb and the second due to the fact that road traffic to ravaged areas remained the top priority (and also due to the fact a large part of the WCU community itself was in

the middle of relief efforts). Considering the fact a home football game generates a million bucks in economic activity ... well, it was the right call.

We won, by the way.

Also on the economic front, leaf season is gone. And that means the season when local businesses build up enough fodder to last through the winter is gone with it. Keep your dollars local to help keep them keeping on.

Beyond the loss of life and income, we all need to be cognizant of Helene's damage to the spirit. This storm came as some areas were still rebuilding from Tropical Storm Fred and other localized disasters, laid atop the economic, physical and mental trauma of a pandemic that put the whole country on its back. With Milton bearing down on Florida, the hits from the Age of Chaos just keep a-comin'.

With Milton and the upcoming election, the focus on WNC will soon be cast to other places and issues, and that's when we need to keep our focus. As so many have said, this recovery will not be a sprint but a marathon lasting months and years. Helene didn't just knock down trees; it has changed the geography of much of the area.

So, it's important to keep checking back to see what folks need when the national focus has shifted. Mountain natives and the new mountain folk who have sown their own roots here will still be at the rebuilding.

They, and we, will keep swinging. There's a lot to be said for stubbornness.

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Froma Harrop: Climate change is coming for Florida's economy

October 12, 2024 | Daily Reflector, The (Greenville, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 601 Words OpenURL Link

Florida was the future. The weather's balmy in winter, the beaches are divine and there's no personal income tax. All that and a lower cost of living had set off a sizable migration of companies from New York, Chicago and California. Between 2021 and 2023, Florida was the fastest-growing state.

Now as a second monster hurricane in two weeks smashes the western coast, many Floridians have been turned into serial refugees. Florida is no stranger to the occasional big "blow," but climate change may have completely rewritten the meteorological future, and it's not sunny.

We can't say no one expected this. Nor is the western coast the only area under threat. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration projects that by 2100, more than 30% of Southeast Florida could be underwater, including much of Miami and Fort Lauderdale. Other more extreme scenarios put that figure closer to 70%.

Yet the extent of the threat has been kept under wraps by politicians unwilling to do the hard work.

Former Florida Gov. Rick Scott was said to have banned the use of "climate change" by the state's government agencies. He denies doing that, but employees report being pressured not to use the term, especially in documents related to environmental and coastal policies.

Donald Trump issued a tweet in 2016 that called climate change a "hoax" created by China.

Project 2025, the blueprint for another Trump term, criticizes Joe Biden's climate initiatives as "radical" and "extreme." (Trump called it "the Green New Scam.") The Project says, "The Biden Administration's climate fanaticism will need a whole-of-government unwinding."

The document totally lost it over the Biden administration's promotion of "international partnerships" to address the crisis. The transition to a low-carbon economy must be worldwide.

Project 2025 went so histrionic over Biden's climate law that even Big Oil has been urging Trump not to gut it. The likes of Exxon Mobil, Occidental Petroleum and Phillips 66 oppose the Project's call "to fully repeal recently passed subsidies in the tax code, including the dozens of credits and tax breaks for green energy companies."

Major oil companies have themselves become part green-energy enterprises. They're using the Inflation Reduction Act tax credits to invest in renewable fuel, carbon capture and hydrogen. These are expensive ventures that need government support to get off the ground.

Back in Florida, fierce weather has raised insurance premiums by as much as 400% over five years. As a result, Floridians are having an extra-hard time selling their properties. And those rebuilding homes smashed up by storms are finding that the policies have become a lot tougher, with higher deductibles and stricter limits on what's covered. Few cover flood damage. (Few homeowners have separate flood insurance issued by FEMA.)

Personal wealth goes only so far in protecting people from dislocation. Dynasty Financial Partners was one of the companies that left New York City in 2019 for St. Petersburg, Florida. Its chief executive lost his home in Hurricane Helene. The family moved into a cramped condo downtown. As Hurricane Milton barreled their way, they had to evacuate again.

First Street foundation reports that 3 million Americans became climate migrants between 2000 and 2020 — many

of whom lived far from coastlines. Texas Hill Country, for one, is known as Flash Flood Alley. Entire blocks have been hollowed out of residents. Meanwhile, Progressive says it will join others no longer writing home insurance policies in Texas.

And the world saw how Hurricane Helene visited devastation on lovely Asheville, North Carolina, up there in the mountains, far from landfall in Florida's Big Bend area.

Climate change is coming for Florida and elsewhere. Americans can confront the crisis or not. The weather doesn't care.

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Letter: Time for Sanderson to go

October 12, 2024 | Daily Reflector, The (Greenville, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Letters | 315 Words OpenURL Link

The GOP in North Carolina should be hanging its head in shame. First, for saddling us with Mark Robinson, who they long ago recognized as a loose cannon but retained as a useful idiot, and now for a NYTimes.com headline from Oct. 3: "How the North Carolina Legislature Left Homes Vulnerable to Helene."

To summarize, the N.C. GOP has sacrificed safety and environmental responsibility in dozens of ways over the last 15 years in favor of profit, schmoozing, campaign contributions and power.

Our Sen. Norm Sanderson is up to his neck in all of this. He donated to Mark Robinson's campaign as recently as April 2024 and has served on committees governing land use and environment since 2011. He ignored countless opportunities to set us, our homes and our environment on a safer path.

Sanderson also introduced N.C. Senate Bill 406, which removes the income cap on school vouchers for families who can already afford to send their children to private schools, and he pushed this bill through with no means of audit for the funding, which has generated egregious fraud schemes that we are paying for.

Finally, Sanderson was one of only two senators who voted against Medicaid expansion in March of 2023, a failure that can and has led to many hospital closures around the country. Heaven only knows what lobbyists were whispering in Norm's ear for that vote.

Rural North Carolinians are against vouchers, against rampant development of beaches and countryside, and worried about loss of medical and social services. We need protection from those who would profit from our jeopardy. Sanderson is not protecting us.

We need new leadership. You know what to do. Please complete the assignment on Nov. 5.

Susan Schurer

Morehead City

Currently in Senate District 1, Sanderson is seeking re-election in Senate 2, drawn in 2023 to include Warren, Halifax, Martin, Chowan, Washington, Hyde and Carteret counties in addition to his home county of Pamlico.

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PCC Notes: Trustees chairman earns prestigious NCBA Hall of Fame induction

October 12, 2024 | Daily Reflector, The (Greenville, NC) Author: PCC News Service | Section: Local | 970 Words OpenURL Link

WINTERVILLE — Pitt Community College Board of Trustees Chairman Charles Ellis has been inducted into the North Carolina Bar Association Legal Practice Hall of Fame for his achievements as an attorney and numerous community contributions.

Ellis, who works for Ward & Smith in Greenville, has been practicing law in North Carolina since 1983. He was one of eight inductees honored Sept. 20 during the 2024 NCBA Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony at the Benton Convention Center in Winston-Salem.

"It's very humbling for me to be included (in the NCBA Hall of Fame)," Ellis said. "I have been blessed to have excellent partners throughout my career, without whom this would not have happened."

After earning a bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1980, Ellis graduated cum laude from Campbell Law School before starting out as a tax attorney. In the decades that followed, he emerged as a preeminent personal injury lawyer, helping individuals and organizations receive justice in cases involving complex insurance coverage issues, professional malpractice, wrongful death, products liability and serious personal injury. He is a frequent lecturer who has written about a wide range of litigation topics and earned numerous awards for professional excellence.

Ellis has been a PCC Trustee since July 2017, when the North Carolina Governor's Office appointed him to help promote and shape the college's efforts to create a skilled local workforce. He has chaired the trustees board since August 2023 after previously serving as its secretary and vice chairman.

"On many occasions, Charles Ellis has called upon his distinguished legal background to offer the board valuable insight," PCC Executive Vice President Marianne Cox wrote in a letter supporting Ellis' Hall of Fame induction. "His contributions also include leading PCC's presidential search earlier this year, participation on five trustee subcommittees, and extensive meetings with legislators in Raleigh and Washington, D.C., to advocate for PCC and North Carolina community colleges."

Through his PCC Foundation Board service the past several years, Ellis has proven himself a steadfast supporter of the PCC VISIONS Career Development and Scholarship Program, which has helped nearly 1,300 Pitt County high school students earn diplomas and move into higher education and/or the workplace since 2004. He played a key role in helping the program raise \$1 million in 2019 to match a generous \$2 million endowment from the Eddie & Jo Allison Smith Family Foundation.

"I can think of no one more deserving of induction into the Legal Practice Hall of Fame than Mr. Charles Ellis," said PCC President Maria Pharr. "He established himself as a preeminent attorney through hard work and dedication and has demonstrated time after time that he understands and values the importance of giving back to the community."

In addition to PCC and the PCC Foundation, Ellis has contributed his time and energy to the betterment of more than a dozen professional and community affiliations, including Literacy Volunteers of America, United Way and the Pitt County Health Education Foundation.

"Charles is a firm believer that replacing negative thoughts with positive ones leads to positive results," Cox said. "It's a personal motto that speaks volumes about the character and integrity he has demonstrated as an attorney and in service to Pitt Community College as a trustee and PCC Foundation Board member." Newkirk assists with western NC relief efforts

In the days after Hurricane Helene wreaked havoc upon western North Carolina, claiming lives, causing widespread power outages and destroying infrastructure, emergency personnel from across the country responded en masse, including PCC's Mekenzie Newkirk.

For Newkirk, who is the college's director of Emergency Services Training, it was a matter of "practice what you teach." As part of a local State Medical Assistance Team (or SMAT) comprised of doctors, nurses, paramedics, pharmacists and mental health specialists, she deployed to Caldwell County to volunteer at an emergency shelter established at Lenoir's UNC Health Caldwell facility. She said her team and another from Shelby assisted people affected by the storm who were "too sick or injured to go to a larger shelter but stable enough" not to need UNC Health Caldwell's emergency department.

"SMAT is a state asset, part of North Carolina's emergency management response," Newkirk said. "We're like a mobile hospital that assists during major emergencies and helps out during large public events like air shows."

Though Helene was a Category 4 hurricane when it made landfall in Florida the evening of Sept. 26, it was a tropical storm by the time it reached the mountains of North Carolina the following morning. Nevertheless, it dumped inches of rain on an area already inundated by storms earlier in the week. The result was historic flooding that killed, destroyed or damaged anything in its path, including people, animals, bridges, roads and houses.

"The State of North Carolina has really worked very hard on trying to support everyone impacted by the storm, but there are whole communities that are gone, just gone — some wiped away by floodwaters and others covered by landslides," Newkirk said. "Parts of mountains are just missing."

Though relief efforts have maintained a steady supply of food, equipment and volunteers, including medical personnel from several of the state's largest health systems, Newkirk says it will be quite some time before western North Carolina is back on its collective feet.

"What I really want to tell people is to keep supporting the relief effort," she said. "This is not something that's going to be done in a week. This is going to be years of recovery, so please support emergency workers who want to go out and help. I was very lucky that Pitt Community College, since I'm a full-time time employee but still a paramedic here in Pitt County, supported me to go out there."

Newkirk said that whether it's a providing a gas card or driving an emergency volunteer out to the North Carolina mountains to assist, "it's all important and very much appreciated."

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D.G. Martin: Great floods of 1916 and 2024 won't be forgotten

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One of Miss Letitia Currie's favorite topics from her history class in the 1950s at Davidson Junior High School was the Great Flood of 1916.

Miss Currie was the daughter of a Davidson College professor.

Many of her students also knew what she was talking about because their parents had experienced that 1916 flood and talked about it whenever rain poured down hard.

Today, many of Miss Currie's students, their parents and grandparents, great-grandparents and their children and grandchildren are having a similar experience dealing with the flooding that followed Hurricane Helene. And they will be talking about it for the rest of their lives, calling it "the Great Flood of 2024."

"News of Davidson," the news outlet in my hometown, published the following account by Gatewood Payne Campbell, granddaughter of Davidson Professor Gatey Workman and niece of the late, great opera singer William Workman. Gatewood and her husband Johnny live near Black Mountain.

"Life has stopped. We don't know dates or times. Sirens are 24 hours a day. It's relentless. Helicopters invade our sky. Chainsaws sound nonstop and we run outside in hopes it's in our neighborhood. ...

"Let me back up. We awoke around 6 Friday morning without power. The storm was loud and pounding but we didn't know where we were in the storm. We could not get updates. Around 8:30 we lost internet across cell lines. I called a friend and got her to look at radar and let me know an ETA on rain ending. That was the last call I was able to make. By 9:30 ALL cell signal was completely lost. The rain was increasing. We could see the creek rising. Johnny stepped outside under the porch and was soaked from head to toe after 30 seconds.

"Around 11 we felt like we could go out and survey the neighborhood. We began to feel the weight of the destruction, yet we had NO clue. The creek had turned into a river greater than 50 yards wide. The noise of water heaters, propane tanks, bikes, grills, construction supplies and yard equipment banging on the rails of our bridge to Black Mountain was deafening. We saw two neighbors with trees on their homes and knew they were taking on water."

Meanwhile in Asheville, Bryan King and his wife Angela Koh are assessing the damage to their 12 Bones Smokehouse on Foundry Street in the River Arts District. As I wrote in my book, "North Carolina's Eateries," "Even if 12 Bones had not been made famous by Barack Obama's visits there, it would be a 'must-do' in Asheville." When I first visited 12 Bones several years ago, it was located closer to the French Broad River. Had Bryan and Angela not moved the restaurant a few blocks up the hill it would have been completely washed away. At its current location they may be able to repair and survive.

Angela's sister wrote, "As the floodwaters recede, we see catastrophic damage to homes and businesses, including the River Arts District, where 12 Bones was founded. Entire livelihoods have been lost. In nearly every direction you look, everything is caked in mud and scattered debris. Broken wood and mangled wiring now stand where intersections once existed."

Coincidentally, on Oct. 15, the publisher Blair is releasing "River Road," a book of poems by mountain author Wayne Caldwell. His fine poetry describes the power of the flooding waters on the French Broad as shown in the following excerpt:

"The French Broad, being a river, floods.

"How many times over the millennia has it left its banks

"and moved whatever was swept up in it

"To some far away (and sometimes ridiculous) place?

"Perhaps thousands. And each time it returned to its placid face.

"The worst (in the last century) was in July 1916.

"Asheville's Riverside Park was washed away.

"Parts of which one could have seen rushing by my house

"Had it been there then. (Even this relatively high ground

"Would have been inundated for several days.)

"Only a half dozen people died in Asheville,

"Which I'd consider a small miracle. Thanks to the telephone,

"Warning came to Marshall, and only two or three drowned,

"Even though the courthouse was about the only thing left

"On Main Street. Fifty-Three houses disappeared.

"From high ground one could have seen rushing by

"Bales of cotton, houses, mules, gas tanks,

"Vehicles, sheds, chickens, roosting on pieces of roof,

"Tires, fences, trees, pigs, dogs, cats,

"Anything not tied down — and many things that were."

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Donna Davis: IBMA World of Bluegrass festival ends run in Raleigh

October 12, 2024 | Daily Reflector, The (Greenville, NC) Author: Donna Davis Columnist| Section: Columnists | 1358 Words OpenURL Link

For North Carolinians who like their grass blue, seeing a banjo strap slung around the bronze statue of Sir Walter Raleigh on the steps of the Raleigh Convention Center the last week of September is about as iconic as the Christmas tree lighting in Times Square to New Yorkers.

It has been that way for three presidential terms, as many years as there are hot Krispy Kreme doughnuts in a green and white cardboard box. For college-aged musicians, Raleigh is very likely the only International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) conference and festival location they have ever known. If you stood in just the right downtown spot, you could look in one direction and see the enormous bronze acorn and, in another, have the long-range view of vendor tents and the state Capitol building.

So after the announcement that in 2025 IBMA would move to Chattanooga, 2024 was preordained to be a bittersweet year. It would be like a high school graduation, throwing caps in the air, fully realizing that the World of Bluegrass landscape as we knew it was about to change. Optimism ran strong that a new bluegrass playground would be replete with bells and whistles, rather like boarding a newly christened cruise ship after a multi-year vacation run on a favorite vessel. But bluegrassers never anticipated IBMA moving to another holler would be wedged out of the primary circle of concern by something much more significant and life-changing: a hurricane affecting many of the musicians and constituency.

Helene blew in the back door like an uninvited guest at a dinner party when the table was set. Many attendees were already in place, having arrived in time for the three-day industry professionals' conference that preceded the two-day World of Bluegrass festival. Agile IBMA officials scurried to make last-minute adjustments to the schedule, planning around rainfall, canceling Friday's daytime street stage shows until 5 p.m.

Some attendees spent Friday morning holed up in hotel rooms or at the North Carolina State Fairgrounds campground, tuned into WRAL-TV coverage, keeping a close eye on tornado warnings and storm drains. Others in the lobby and hallways of the Marriott never put down their instruments, like the Titanic's orchestra playing "Nearer My God to Thee."

Balsam Range, from Haywood County, was one of the bands scheduled to play Friday evening that had to cancel because travel wasn't possible. But by Saturday the sun was out in Raleigh and the festival became a temporary bubble of bluegrass oblivion before the reality of damage reports came rolling in.

Awards show

On Thursday evening, light drizzle was just making itself known in Raleigh through an elevated frizz-factor, threatening to wreak havoc with the fancy hair-dos of musicians dressed in their blueclassiest for the Awards Show.

Stage curtains were draped like old Hollywood as fans found themselves rubbing elbows with bluegrass elite.

Hosted by John Cowan and Missy Raines — both bassists — the 38th annual award show featured plenty of low notes.

"It's the age-old debate and it threatens to tear our world apart," Raines said with all seriousness. "Upright or electric bass?"

After taking sides like bass-clef-boxers in the ring, Cowan diplomatically declared a theme that would be repeated

throughout the week: "Music has a way of bridging differences."

When accepting the Male Vocalist of the Year award, Danny Paisley said, "I just sing from the heart and I'm deeply touched that other people like what I do," adding a nod to another nominee in the category with, "Del McCoury and my father were my two greatest heroes."

When Authentic Unlimited was awarded Vocal Group of the Year, banjo player Eli Johnston said, "This is the culmination of a bunch of buddies doing hard work together."

In his acceptance speech for Hall of Fame induction, Jerry Douglas said, "I want to thank IBMA for spreading the good word of bluegrass music," adding, "you don't get here alone." Banjoist and educator Alan Munde and longtime WAMU radio producer and host Katy Daley were also inducted into the Hall of Fame.

An IBMA member who had worked a booth on the Expo floor all day talked about how heavy his eyelids got during the show — just because it had been a long day, not because the event was boring — and said he planned to sneak out "during the next standing ovation." It was a story that told a story: The auditorium was full of enthusiastic fans and fellow musicians who were both ecstatic and exhausted, perhaps in equal measure.

Highlights

Conference attendees know they cannot physically attend all the sessions and shows, so the takeaway experience ends up being individualized. After elbowing past the dual elephants in the room (the move from Raleigh and the hurricane), some themes rose to the top — like Black music in Appalachia challenging myths of isolation and frozen time, asserting "there's more in the holler than Scotch/Irish."

Panelist Dr. Dena Jennings said, "I come from 7 generations of Black folks living in a holler in Kentucky. You sing a song from your culture, I'll sing a song from my culture. We'll probably find more things alike than different."

Lee Bidgood, moderator from East Tennessee State University, said, "Putting boxes around genres can limit our joy of the music."

In workshops focused on voice, panelists said that "voice is the least-studied instrument in bluegrass music and one of the most central." Traditionally the mindset was to study technique in stringed instruments and "sing if you can" as something of an afterthought. Studying voice and learning technique is not going to turn you into a classical performer or hurt your bluegrass sound, the experts assured: "Learning how to breathe and relax muscles will bridge the gap between what you feel and what you are able to express."

In a workshop on writing bluegrass gospel, presenters reiterated the timeless advice, "Write what you know."

"I just sit down to write something honest. A lot of my writing is about real living, messing up. Honesty sells," panelist Donna Ulisse said.

A distinction for 2024 was the inclusion of a "Union Grove Stage" and competition open to anyone present as a tribute to the 100-year anniversary of the Union Grove Old Time Fiddler's Convention founded by H.P. Van Hoy. Fiddler Earl White was announced the grand prize winner.

Local connections

Martin County's Screamin' Bridge played a showcase set in the Convention Center on Thursday afternoon. Hank, Pattie, and the Current (with Winterville's Pattie Hopkins Kinlaw) performed in showcases and a set on the Pinecone stage. Greenville's Ron Harris (former coordinator of Sunday in the Park events) was an enthusiastic audience member, holding Nevada, the baby of his niece, Noah Wall, as her band Barefoot Movement performed.

Another band affected by the hurricane and unable to attend for their headliner slot Saturday night was the Steep Canyon Rangers, from Asheville. Sierra Hull's band played before the final act of the night at the Red Hat Amphitheater.

"I started playing mandolin at 8 years old but came to my first IBMA at 9 years old, and it was being a part of this community that made me stay," Hull said. "What I like about festivals is we can all come together and put our differences aside and enjoy the beauty of music."

Chatham County Line (CCL) had been scheduled to play their trademark song "Living in Raleigh Now" with the Steep Canyon Rangers, so in their absence, the band played a full set. A guest joining them on stage was Brenda Evans, the granddaughter of folk and blues musician Elizabeth Cotten from North Carolina, known for her left-handed guitar style and song "Freight Train." Evans sang a song written by Cotten and her six grandchildren, "Shake Sugaree."

Introducing "Living in Raleigh Now," CCL guitarist/singer Dave Wilson said, "We have purchased a headstone because this is the last time this song will be performed." They wrote the song the first year IBMA was held in Raleigh and the lyrics recount the history of bluegrass music from Bill Monroe to Earl Scruggs and, with this punchline, IBMA's locations: "What was born in Kentucky, moved off to Nashville, is living in Raleigh now."

Before selecting the next IBMA festival location, maybe organizers should have considered the difficulty of working a four-syllable word like "Chat-ta-noo-ga" into song lyrics.

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Helene: Farmers encouraged to assess soil damage

October 12, 2024 | Duplin Times, The (NC) Author: David Beasley| Section: Local | 353 Words OpenURL Link

(The Center Square) – Soil assessments for damage to fields inflicted by Hurricane Helene is being encouraged by North Carolina agriculture leaders.

"Hurricane Helene caused great devastation throughout much of western North Carolina and farm fields were not spared," the state's Agriculture Department said Friday. "This situation calls for a vigilant approach to soil and crop managements that includes assessment on a field-by-field basis."

In addition to clearing fallen trees and limbs and washed out bridges, farmers should examine fields for soil washed away by the hurricane, the state said.

"For areas where erosion has occurred significant topsoil is lost," the department said. "If so, phosphorus, potassium and significant microinutrients such as manganese, zince and copper may have been removed."

In addition to the problem of lost soil is dirt that has been carried by flowing storm water onto a farmer's fields, the state said. That soil may be better or worse that the soil that was in the field before the hurricane hit.

"Sediment or soil eroding from other locations may be deposited over native soil in fields," the state said. "This can potentially impact fertility. Since this deposition is often topsoil from other locations to floodplain areas, it may have high nutritive value. If predominantly sand has been deposited, it may have relatively low nutrient levels."

While 2 inches or less of new soil might cause only minimal changes to the fields, the state advised to perform testing on any levels higher than 4 inches.

Soil washed in from another location by flood waters could also be contaminated, the state advised.

"Given the widespread origin of floodwaters, it is difficult to assess contamination of soils since various unknown chemicals can be associated with these events," the state said. "If there are known chemicals of concern at a given location, use of a commercial environmental lab that offers analysis for contaminants is an option but can be expensive."

Even replacing lost soil can be challenging.

North Carolina does not have regulations on the quality of top soil.

"Any fill for reconstruction purposes (grading, filling gullies) should be tested for general soil fertility prior to use," the state said. "It is buyer beware."

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Hurricane Helene - State legislators approve \$273M in recovery funds

October 12, 2024 | Fayetteville Observer, The (NC) Author: Sarah Gleason; Wilmington StarNews | Section: News | 987 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

"If it weren't for nonprofits, if it weren't for the churches, if it weren't for just ordinary citizens, we would have a much bigger crisis on our hands than what we do right now."

House Speaker Tim Moore

Mountain people don't normally ask for help, Rep. Jennifer Balkcom, R-Henderson, said as she shuffled tears away from her eyes, but right now, they need it.

North Carolina legislators returned to Raleigh for a morning news conference and votes in the afternoon on Wednesday for initial Helene recovery funds.

The bill, which passed in the House and Senate unanimously and now heads to the governor's desk, was introduced by Senate Leader Phil Berger, R-Rockingham, and House Speaker Tim Moore, R-Cleveland, and includes \$273 million in funds, for now.

Helene swept across the Southeastern U.S., devastating Western North Carolina. In the wake of the devastating effects of the storm, entire homes were swept away in the overflowing rivers, landslides destroyed personal property, and residents were left without power and service, some even losing their family and friends.

It's been a little over a week since the unprecedented destruction occurred, and over 20 counties are finally able to start repairing some of the damage. But one thing is very clear, this recovery will take years.

"This is just a first step for us to take as legislators," Berger said.

Legislators are scheduled to return on Oct. 24 to continue what Moore called "a herculean task."

House Bill 149, is just one piece of the relief puzzle, with federal funding and assistance flowing in and community members stepping up.

"If it weren't for nonprofits, if it weren't for the churches, if it weren't for just ordinary citizens, we would have a much bigger crisis on our hands than what we do right now," Moore said.

President Joe Biden approved 100% Federal Emergency Management Agency reimbursement to affected North Carolinians for six months, Cooper has been on the ground connecting residents with resources, over 1,500 North Carolina National Guard members have been deployed and the state's Department of Justice is working to hold companies accountable for any instances of price gouging.

Affected residents can apply for aid at Home | disasterassistance.gov.

What the bill includes

In total, they are spending \$273 million which will go toward the established "Hurricane Helene Disaster Recovery Fund (Helene Fund)," according to the bill. It also extends the declaration of emergency until March, 2025.

The funding can be used in the affected counties established by the president and Nash County.

For those wondering why more money is not being spent, Berger said this is just the beginning.

"This is not all of it," Berger said. "Not by a long shot."

Moore also noted the role that federal funding plays in the matter, saying they expect the federal government to contribute 90 percent and the state 10 percent. They don't want to get ahead of federal funding as to take up unnecessary costs, he added.

The Department of Public Safety and the Division of Emergency Management, state agencies who are supporting Helene recovery, will receive \$250 million.

The Department of Public Instruction will receive \$16 million, which will support the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. The bill also includes school calendar flexibility, remote instruction allowance and states that teachers will still be compensated regularly.

To provide grants to local government, \$2 million will go to the Office of State Budget and Management.

The North Carolina State Board of Elections will receive \$5 million. The board asked for around \$2 million, but the legislature wanted to provide additional funding to support local boards as well as include several other counties affected by Helene that were not included in the board's resolution made this week that only applied to 13 counties.

The bill also includes water treatment, building and burning provisions that Moore said are supposed to help speed up recovery efforts.

"We don't need these efforts tied up in bureaucracy," Moore said.

Additionally, this bill, if signed into law by Cooper, asks the governor to put a hold on late and lost fees within the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Rep. Caleb Rudow, D-Buncombe, requested a separate bill be brought to the floor which would have extended the deadline to register to vote among other voting asks, however, the bill was not picked up for a vote.

Despite both chambers having Republican supermajorities, House Democratic Leader Rep. Robert Reives, D-Chatham, said "This is not a partisan issue," saying they represent the entire state.

The House also took a moment of silence for those lost in the storm before adjourning for the day.

Looking forward

Misinformation surrounding the presence of relief efforts from the state and federal government has been swirling, some fueled by top politicians like Donald Trump who has been criticizing the administration's handling of Helene recovery efforts. His claim that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) doesn't have enough funding because they've been using it on undocumented immigrants is false.

Without referencing specific concerns, Mark Pless, R-Haywood, Madison, said the legislature will need to look into why certain issues occurred directly after Helene, while adding that now is not the time to do so.

"There were some challenges initially that could not be met for reasons that we will determine," Pless said, who is co-chair of the House Disaster Recovery and Homeland Security committee.

In response to a New York Times article which claimed regulatory reform from state Republicans made Helene worse in the state, Moore said it was not true.

"They want to play politics with a disaster," Moore said about the claims that he rejected.

Rep. Lindsey Prather, D-Buncombe, spoke with emotion about her community, saying "we need to show folks that the government has their back, right now, at the time they need it most."

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Congress gets calls for more relief funding - Lawmakers on recess until after Nov. election

October 12, 2024 | Fayetteville Observer, The (NC) Author: Riley Beggin; USA TODAY | Section: News | 907 Words Page: A4 OpenURL Link

"We have the resources to respond to the immediate needs of individuals impacted by Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton. That said, we will need additional funds" when Congress returns.

Alejandro Mayorkas

U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security

WASHINGTON – Hurricane Helene had barely passed through the Southeast before Florida was battered with another devastating storm, Hurricane Milton.

The back-to-back storms have stretched some disaster relief agencies thin, prompting President Joe Biden to press Congress to "move as rapidly as they can" to pass more emergency aid, especially to help supplement loans for small businesses wrecked by the hurricanes.

Biden and members of Congress from both parties have argued lawmakers should come back to Washington early to approve more funding. But it doesn't look like that will happen until after the Nov. 5 election. Lawmakers have long been scheduled to be on a recess and spend time in their districts in the weeks leading up to Election Day.

But emergency officials and others aren't just calling on lawmakers to approve more money. The Federal Emergency Management Authority has raised the alarm on misinformation, saying it could discourage survivors from seeking assistance.

Last month, Congress passed a deal that extended FEMA's current level of funding, \$20billion, through Dec. 20. They also added a way for the agency to spend that money quickly if needed, granting more flexibility than usual.

However, that bill didn't include additional dollars for FEMA or the Small Business Administration, which the White House and Congressional Democrats had asked for to help with long-term cleanup efforts from other disasters, like the wildfires that devastated Maui last year.

What does FEMA need?

FEMA officials haven't directly said how much additional funding they need to address the disasters in the long term. However, they have said they've got enough money in the short term to help survivors. Biden said Thursday it will take "several billion dollars" to rebuild after both hurricanes.

"We have the resources to respond to the immediate needs of individuals impacted by Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton" and the tornadoes that came from each, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said Thursday. "That said, we will need additional funds" when Congress returns.

FEMA administrator Deanne Criswell told reporters Wednesday that the agency spent around \$9billion of the \$20billion approved by Congress for the rest of the year in only one week, before Milton hit Florida Wednesday night. That's in part because it was reimbursing states after it had paused funds for disasters they faced earlier in the year.

But misinformation and conspiracy theories about FEMA resources have been prevalent, including rumors that the

agency does not have enough money to help hurricane victims or that only \$750 per person is available. That's not the case, as FEMA and lawmakers from affected areas have noted.

Criswell earlier this week specifically pushed back against former President Donald Trump's false claims about the recovery efforts following Hurricane Helene. Those have included allegations that there are "no helicopters, no rescue" in North Carolina.

She warned that broader misinformation about recovery efforts are "creating distrust in the federal government, but also the state government. And we have so many first responders that have been working day and night to go out and help these communities."

What about other key resources?

Another critical source of disaster relief funds is struggling.

The Small Business Administration will run out of funding "in a matter of weeks" if Congress doesn't act, Biden said in a letter to Congressional leaders Friday.

The agency helps businesses after disasters, but it also helps individual homeowners and renters with loans to cover the cost of fixing their homes or other personal property. SBA loans "are often the largest source of federal disaster recovery funds" for individuals, Biden said.

The agency is already receiving around 3,000 applications every day from people who survived Helene, and it's likely to need around \$1.6billion more to continue operating through the rest of the year.

"We look forward to working with Congress to secure the federal resources necessary to ensure the SBA can continue funding affordable disaster loans for homeowners, renters, small businesses, and nonprofits," SBA administrator Isabel Casillas Guzman said in a statement. "Americans should not have to wait for critical assistance when they need it the most."

Biden told reporters Thursday that Congress "should be coming back and moving on emergency needs immediately," adding, "they're going to have to come back after the election as well."

A number of lawmakers have also argued that it's necessary to come back early, including a group of 60 Democrats, a dozen bipartisan senators and other House Republicans from states affected by Hurricane Helene.

But House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., has not indicated he plans to call lawmakers back for a vote.

Speaking with reporters in North Carolina on Wednesday, Johnson said FEMA has only distributed 1% of the funding granted through September's extension.

"FEMA and the administration have the resources necessary right now to address the immediate needs," he said.

Next, state and local governments assess the damage and determine what aid they need from the federal government, Johnson said.

"Then Congress acts," he said. "But it will take some time, sadly and unfortunately, for those calculations to be made."

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'Just a first step' - NC legislators vote to approve \$273M in Helene recovery funds

October 12, 2024 | Gaston Gazette, The (Gastonia, NC) Author: Sarah Gleason; Wilmington StarNews| Section: News| 948 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

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Helene threatens iconic Georgia pecan industry - More than 36M pounds of nut crop may be lost

October 12, 2024 | Gaston Gazette, The (Gastonia, NC) Author: Matthew Dolan; Detroit Free Press | Section: News | 847 Words Page: A4 OpenURL Link

After an overnight torrent soaked the sandy soil and winds whipped across his orchards, Willis Hartley saw something truly terrible at daybreak.

Light.

On any other early morning just before harvest, the leafy canopy from his trees, pregnant with pecans, would keep his home dark despite the rising sun. But on this day, after Hurricane Helene roared across Georgia in late September, Hartley woke to a battered farm with roughly half its pecan trees toppled.

"It was like a bomb had gone off," Hartley said, taking a break on Tuesday afternoon from clearing acres of snapped tree branches.

The aftermath of Hurricane Helene is still wreaking havoc on Georgia's agricultural sector. Unpicked cotton was ripped early from its plants and dropped on the soil. Exposed, waterlogged peanuts should have been drying before harvest.

But it's the pecan – one of the state's most iconic exports – that could become an existential crisis for some of its farmers.

"It's a difficult thing to see in person and to put into words," Lenny Wells, University of Georgia Cooperative Extension pecan specialist and author of "Pecan: America's Native Nut Tree," wrote in his newsletter on Monday. "We have not seen a storm with this level of destruction in the past."

With planted row crops, farmers can look quickly forward to next season even after a brutal storm. Helene, however, hit the pecan industry's foundation by kicking over, bending and uprooting thousands of trees – some more than 100 years old – that may never again bear nuts.

Georgia claims the crown as the top pecan-producing state in the U.S., with nearly 200,000 acres planted. Favorable climate conditions, fertile soils and well-established infrastructure support large-scale cultivation.

Experts now believe Helene damaged about one-third of the state's pecan production area. An estimated 75% of this year's crop in the storm-affected region has been lost, more than 36million pounds. Some are ripe nuts blown down to the ground or unripened ones that lingered in destroyed trees. Other losses will come from nuts claimed by cleanup processes and poor-quality nuts that remain on the tree.

"There is no way to know for sure at this point how much of the remaining crop in storm-damaged areas will continue to mature normally and be eligible for harvest," Wells said.

Mary Mikelyn Bruorton, executive director of the Georgia Pecan Growers Association, believes Hurricane Helene destroyed approximately 70% of trees that were 30 years or older, and about 40% of trees between the ages of 8 and 29. Even some of the younger, standing trees leaning more than about 30 degrees will not be worth trying to straighten up, according to experts.

"This tree loss doesn't just impact this year's crop - it has long-term effects for future harvests," Bruorton said in an

email.

Pecan trees take around 10-plus years to start producing nuts, and even then, Bruorton said, the early yields can't match the production of the mature trees lost in the storm. It will take many orchards a decade or more to recover to their pre-Helene yield levels, she said.

CharAnne Powell said in an interview Monday that one of the fears on her family's farm – 90 acres of pecan trees in Blythe in southern Richmond County – was the damage still to come. "There has been a lot of movement underneath the trees, so who knows if they are going to die soon. You won't know a lot until next spring," Powell said.

Willis Hartley, now 80, and his father began farming pecans after buying their Davisboro property in 1968. W&J Farms' average annual yield in recent years has been more than 200,000 pounds of pecans on 200 acres, according to Willis' 50-year-old son, Jason.

Before the storm, the Hartleys had been expecting a good crop. It had been two years since Willis had a stroke, and he was recovered enough to get back into the tractor seat and return to farming.

"I could have never done it without him," Willis said of Jason.

The lanes between the rows of pecan trees had been moved and cleaned. It was all set for the shakers to clamp onto the trees' largest branches, the blowers to move the fallen pecans into neat rows and the scoopers to vacuum the pecans up for sale.

But all of that is but a distant memory at the moment. Their orchards look like an arboreal graveyard, strewn with dozens upon dozens of uprooted pecan trees. "I've never seen anything this bad," Willis said.

Still, Willis and Jason continue to work to clean up the wreckage and either haul away or burn the unearthed trees. Then with the help of longtime farmhand Junior James, they'll return to harvest this year what they can.

This is the land where Jason built a swing on the pecan tree near their house for his wife years ago. The place where his college-aged daughter is finding shelter after the storm. It remains the home where his 17-year-old son lays his head every night before waking up for high school.

But when a visitor remarked that the land, still verdant, was a beautiful spot to see, Jason had a quick reply.

"It was," he said. "It's forever changed."

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Matthew Dolan, Detroit Free Press, 'Helene threatens iconic Georgia pecan industry - More than 36M pounds of nut crop may be lost', *Gaston Gazette, The* (online), 12 Oct 2024 A4 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C2905BE5182B88>



Congress gets calls for more relief funding - Lawmakers on recess until after Nov. election

October 12, 2024 | Gaston Gazette, The (Gastonia, NC) Author: Riley Beggin; USA TODAY | Section: News | 907 Words Page: A8 OpenURL Link

"We have the resources to respond to the immediate needs of individuals impacted by Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton. That said, we will need additional funds" when Congress returns.

Alejandro Mayorkas

U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security

WASHINGTON – Hurricane Helene had barely passed through the Southeast before Florida was battered with another devastating storm, Hurricane Milton.

The back-to-back storms have stretched some disaster relief agencies thin, prompting President Joe Biden to press Congress to "move as rapidly as they can" to pass more emergency aid, especially to help supplement loans for small businesses wrecked by the hurricanes.

Biden and members of Congress from both parties have argued lawmakers should come back to Washington early to approve more funding. But it doesn't look like that will happen until after the Nov. 5 election. Lawmakers have long been scheduled to be on a recess and spend time in their districts in the weeks leading up to Election Day.

But emergency officials and others aren't just calling on lawmakers to approve more money. The Federal Emergency Management Authority has raised the alarm on misinformation, saying it could discourage survivors from seeking assistance.

Last month, Congress passed a deal that extended FEMA's current level of funding, \$20billion, through Dec. 20.

They also added a way for the agency to spend that money quickly if needed, granting more flexibility than usual.

However, that bill didn't include additional dollars for FEMA or the Small Business Administration, which the White House and Congressional Democrats had asked for to help with long-term cleanup efforts from other disasters, like the wildfires that devastated Maui last year.

What does FEMA need?

FEMA officials haven't directly said how much additional funding they need to address the disasters in the long term. However, they have said they've got enough money in the short term to help survivors. Biden said Thursday it will take "several billion dollars" to rebuild after both hurricanes.

"We have the resources to respond to the immediate needs of individuals impacted by Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton" and the tornadoes that came from each, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said Thursday. "That said, we will need additional funds" when Congress returns.

FEMA administrator Deanne Criswell told reporters Wednesday that the agency spent around \$9billion of the \$20billion approved by Congress for the rest of the year in only one week, before Milton hit Florida Wednesday night. That's in part because it was reimbursing states after it had paused funds for disasters they faced earlier in the year.

But misinformation and conspiracy theories about FEMA resources have been prevalent, including rumors that the

agency does not have enough money to help hurricane victims or that only \$750 per person is available. That's not the case, as FEMA and lawmakers from affected areas have noted.

Criswell earlier this week specifically pushed back against former President Donald Trump's false claims about the recovery efforts following Hurricane Helene. Those have included allegations that there are "no helicopters, no rescue" in North Carolina.

She warned that broader misinformation about recovery efforts are "creating distrust in the federal government, but also the state government. And we have so many first responders that have been working day and night to go out and help these communities."

What about other key resources?

Another critical source of disaster relief funds is struggling.

The Small Business Administration will run out of funding "in a matter of weeks" if Congress doesn't act, Biden said in a letter to Congressional leaders Friday.

The agency helps businesses after disasters, but it also helps individual homeowners and renters with loans to cover the cost of fixing their homes or other personal property. SBA loans "are often the largest source of federal disaster recovery funds" for individuals, Biden said.

The agency is already receiving around 3,000 applications every day from people who survived Helene, and it's likely to need around \$1.6billion more to continue operating through the rest of the year.

"We look forward to working with Congress to secure the federal resources necessary to ensure the SBA can continue funding affordable disaster loans for homeowners, renters, small businesses, and nonprofits," SBA administrator Isabel Casillas Guzman said in a statement. "Americans should not have to wait for critical assistance when they need it the most."

Biden told reporters Thursday that Congress "should be coming back and moving on emergency needs immediately," adding, "they're going to have to come back after the election as well."

A number of lawmakers have also argued that it's necessary to come back early, including a group of 60 Democrats, a dozen bipartisan senators and other House Republicans from states affected by Hurricane Helene.

But House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., has not indicated he plans to call lawmakers back for a vote.

Speaking with reporters in North Carolina on Wednesday, Johnson said FEMA has only distributed 1% of the funding granted through September's extension.

"FEMA and the administration have the resources necessary right now to address the immediate needs," he said.

Next, state and local governments assess the damage and determine what aid they need from the federal government, Johnson said.

"Then Congress acts," he said. "But it will take some time, sadly and unfortunately, for those calculations to be made."

"We have the resources to respond to the immediate needs of individuals impacted by Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton. That said, we will need additional funds" when Congress returns.

Alejandro Mayorkas

U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security

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Words bring harm, not hope

October 12, 2024 | Goldsboro News-Argus, The (NC) Author: Liz Meador Language Matters| Section: Columnists | 498 Words OpenURL Link

Amid the horrible tragedy in the western part of North Carolina, it's a shame that some politicians are using Hurricane Helene and its aftermath to foment trouble and advance their own agendas. These conspiracy theorists do their own harm when healing is needed, when their voices and language should be words of compassion and their behaviors reasonable, and their actions productive instead of adding to the misery of people who have lost everything.

Conspiracy derives from the Latin "conspirare," meaning to agree or plot. Its dictionary definition gives it a distinction different from the meaning we assign it today. According to Merriam-Webster, to conspire means "to participate or assist in a joint effort to accomplish an end." This definition sounds positive, the opposite of what Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, for example, achieves in her intention to polarize the country. In case you missed Greene's comments, she said, "they" are controlling hurricanes and aiming them at Trump counties.

Who is this anonymous "they"? The Democratic Party? The government? Of which she and all of us are a part? Our own governor, Roy Cooper, reprimanded those who spread misinformation when he said, "Politicians, billionaires, and grifters who peddle lies in times of crisis should be held accountable." Let's see Elon Musk donate a few billion to western North Carolina, Florida, or any area under attack from Helene or Milton before we give credence to his theories. He has helped spread accusations that the Federal Emergency Management Agency "actively blocked" donations to Helene's victims and seized goods, locking them away.

Writing on the social platform X, Musk claimed, "FEMA used up its budget ferrying illegals into the country instead of saving American lives. Treason." Here is the world's richest person, the CEO of Tesla and owner of X, addressing a problem he could help fix with a check. Never mind that his statement is a lie. Candidate and former President Trump, too, asserts that the current President and Vice President are deliberately not helping people in Republican areas.

FEMA has responded by pointing out that misinformation harms survivors, who may become suspicious and deny any help FEMA offers. According to the Washington Post, FEMA reported that more than \$110 million of federal aid has gone into relief efforts. In addition, 700 of its staff are working in North Carolina, with more than 1,200 search and rescue personnel. From Fort Liberty, 1,000 personnel joined the mission.

My point is that FEMA can offer evidence of its support, while X and other social media sources resort to fear tactics, causing unnecessary evacuations and eliciting chaos instead of calm reason. More than ever, we need to suspect sources like X; more than ever, we need to fact-check and avoid politics. Effective leadership inspires hope; it does not add to people's misery and confusion.

Beware of X or Fox News or any mongers, people who stir up or spread something petty or discreditable. Our folks in Asheville and in all the affected areas need promises fulfilled, not hopelessness and lies.

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PARTY LINES

October 12, 2024 | News & Record (Greensboro, NC)

Author: KEVIN GRIFFIN and CAMDYN BRUCE Staff Reporters | Section: Main | 1099 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

GREENSBORO - Republican vice presidential nominee JD Vance criticized the Biden administration's response to Hurricane Helene and pledged that a second Trump administration would not leave western North Carolina behind.

The Ohio senator and running mate of former President Donald Trump took questions in town hall event at the Koury Convention Center on Thursday.

Former IndyCar and NASCAR driver Danica Patrick, a Trump supporter who said she would be a first-time voter this year, moderated the forum, introducing audience members who asked questions.

The first question of the day came from a representative of a group of volunteers, including several pilots, who have been assisting with relief efforts following Hurricane Helene.

The volunteer asked Vance to promise that a new Trump administration would continue to support western North Carolina in its recovery from the storm.

"We will never forget Western North Carolina," Vance responded to applause from the crowd.

The volunteer also asked Vance what a second Trump administration would do to streamline the disaster relief process and allow for more direct participation from volunteers including veterans.

Vance called the federal response to the hurricane "a massive failure."

He faulted the Biden administration for not sending the 82nd Airborne Division sooner to assist with disaster relief. He faulted a bureaucratic culture in agencies such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency and Federal Aviation Administration.

"You've got people who have been trained by the government bureaucracy that their job is not to cut the BS and help people, it's to basically act like the DMV," Vance said. "Unfortunately, what that means in this case you have a lot of people who could have been helped, a lot of lives that could have been saved that weren't."

For her part, Harris has criticized the Trump campaign for spreading misinformation in the wake hurricane, calling the claims about the response "extraordinarily irresponsible" during an appearance on CNN earlier this week.

She added: "The reality is that FEMA has so many resources that are available to folks who desperately need them now, and resources that are about helping people get back on their feet and rebuild and have places to go."

In the aftermath of the hurricane, rumors and conspiracy theories spread about the response have received pushback from even some Republicans.

U.S. Rep. Chuck Edwards, a Republican whose district includes some of the areas hardest hit by Hurricane Helene, has set up a "Debunking Helene Response Myths" web page.

Edwards said via the release that while the FEMA response "had had its shortfalls," he wanted to "dispel the outrageous rumors that have been circulated online," including claims the hurricane was engineered by the government, that FEMA is running out of money and that FEMA workers are blocking supply trucks or seizing

donations.

Vance said situations like the Helene response required accountability which Trump was willing to provide in a way the Democratic nominee, Vice President Kamala Harris, was not.

"What is fundamentally different about the leadership style of Kamala Harris and Donald Trump is Donald Trump. I mean, hell, he got famous saying, 'You're fired!" He believes in accountability for our government," Vance said. "Kamala Harris just doesn't. I think it's this attitude of go-along-to-get-along of, 'Yeah, you screwed up and maybe you even got people killed but we're not going to fire you.' That's not going to do good for our people in the 21st century."

Vance also reiterated the Trump campaign's plans for mass deportations of undocumented immigrants and advocated for increased domestic oil drilling to bring down energy and other costs.

He also criticized Harris for not doing more media interviews and took several gibes at the Democratic nominee.

At one point, a woman in the seating section behind Vance stumbled. After checking to see if the woman was all right, Vance said: "Kamala Harris built this platform behind us."

Vance's performance gained positive reviews from members of the crowd of Trump supporters.

Ron Wiley said he was particularly impressed with Vance's response on the question of what the Trump administration would do about illegal immigration.

"That question came up, and I thought he gave us an answer we wanted to hear, which is that they're going to exercise that opportunity and get us back in shape," Ron said.

Wiley's wife Jamie said she found Vance's comments about how the Trump administration would aid those affected by Hurricane Helene and continue relief efforts touching.

"He made a good point about supporting it, and not letting North Carolina go behind," Jamie Wiley said.

Emily Williamson said she was most impressed with Vance's promise that the Trump administration would protect social security.

"The thing that was most profound for me was making sure that seniors get what they paid into social security, because they've done their due diligence and they should be able to enjoy their retirement," Williamson said.

Williamson also said Vance's performance would probably earn him her vote.

"I think he answered questions very well," she said.

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Want to donate to flood victims?

October 12, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC)

Author: SARAH C. JOHNSON sjohnson@hickoryrecord.com BILLY CHAPMAN wchapman@hickoryrecord.com | Section: News | 858 Words OpenURL Link

Send money, not water. That's the advice Catawba County United Way Executive Di-rector Mark Bumgarner offered Wednesday for people wanting to aid people in the portions of North Carolina ravaged by Hurricane Helene.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"If you're not sure about who a legitimate partner is, feel free to call us and we'll give you tools for you to research organizations for yourself before you make a donation," Bumgarner said. The Catawba County United Way can be contacted at 828327-6851. The offce is located at 2760 Tate Blvd. in Hickory.

McDowell County

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

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

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

McDowell County has stopped accepting donations of supplies, according to the county's Hurricane Helene information website mcdowellcares.org.

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

Burke County

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

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

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

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

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

Anyone who wishes to donate money toward relief in Burke County can send money to the Community Foundation of Burke County.

The group set up an emergency relief fund to provide grants to local nonprofits providing resources for housing, food and economic insecurities created by hurricane Helene. As of Monday, the fund had raised more than \$100,000. The fund will provide grants of up to \$10,000, according to the foundation's website.

FEMA rumors

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

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

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

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

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NCHSAA makes schedules changes in wake of Hurricane Helene

October 12, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: BRYANT ROCHE Staff Reporter Greensboro News & Record Section: News | 798 Words OpenURL Link

The North Carolina High School Athletic Association has changed its fall sports calendar in response to the damage caused by Hurricane Helene in western North Carolina.

"Changes to the fall calendar are difficult as well as complex but necessary," NCHSAA president Stephen Gainey and association commissioner Que Tucker said 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 football schedule has been pushed back a week for each round. State championships will occur on Dec. 20 and 21. The reporting deadline has been moved from Nov. 1 to Nov. 9, with seeding occurring on Nov. 10. The first round is scheduled for Nov. 15 and subsequent round following each week.

The new state championship football schedule conflicts with the annual HAECO Invitational basketball tournament, currently scheduled for Dec. 19-21. Of the participating schools, Greensboro Day, an NCISAA member, is the only one of the eight participants that doesn't have football.

Dudley is likely to be affected the most. While basketball hasn't begun, based on last year's rosters, four projected key players — Jerron Blackwell, CJ Neely, Nasir Newkirk and Andrew Rogers — are also key starters for the Dudley football team which is 6-0.

The Shrine Bowl of the Carolinas is also scheduled for Dec. 21, with Blackwell and Newkirk having been selected to play.

The North Carolina Coaches Association said its East-West All-Star Game in Greensboro is still scheduled for Dec. 22. The NCCA said that players chosen for that game and are involved in the NCHSAA state championships will be replaced, and that head coaches for the all star game will be replaced by an assistant and reassigned for the 2026 game.

Dudley coach Steven Davis was selected to coach the West team, and Southeast Guilford coach Earl Bates is an assistant. Player rosters for this game have not been announced.

The Frank Spencer Holiday Classic, a traditional Winston-Salem boys basketball tournament, is scheduled for Dec. 18-21. Mount Tabor's Virginia Tech recruit Shamarius Peterkin has excelled in both football and basketball for the Spartans.

The NCHSAA is allowing teams to participate in one additional contest for all sports with a season limit. In this case, the contest must receive prior approval from the NCHSAA. It can't exceed daily or weekly limitations and the contest can't exceed the season limit for both schools. Statistics from the added game cannot be entered into MaxPreps.

The volleyball reporting deadline has been moved back three days to Oct. 19 with seeding to be announced on the next day. The new schedule puts the first round on Oct. 22, the second round on Oct. 24, the third round Oct. 26 and the fourth round on Oct. 29. Regionals will be on Oct. 31 and state championships on Nov. 2.

The weekly limitation on volleyball has been modified to allow for eight matches to make up for postponements, but

the weekly limitation remains the same.

The boys soccer reporting deadline has been moved from Nov. 31 to Nov. 6, with seeding on Nov. 7. The first round of the playoffs is set for Nov. 9, the second round Nov. 12, the third on Nov. 14 and the fourth on Nov. 16. Regionals are set for Nov. 19 and state championships are to take place on Nov. 22 and 23. The weekly limitation is modified to make up games but can't exceed four in a week, with the daily limitation being the same.

The girls tennis individual tournament reporting deadline is the only one that remains on the same day, Oct. 14, but the time has been shifted from 3 p.m. to 11:59 p.m. Regionals are on Oct. 18 and 19 and the state championships are on Oct. 25 and 26. However, the dual team reporting deadline has been modified from Oct. 10 to Oct. 17, with seeding on Oct. 18. The first round is on Oct. 21 with the second round two days later. The third round is set for the 28 and the fourth on Oct. 30. Regionals are to be held on Nov. 5 and state championships on Nov. 9.

The cross country reporting deadline has been pushed back three days from Oct. 22. Regionals are to be held on Oct. 26 and state championships on Nov. 2.

Cheerleading and girls golf are the only sports not to undergo a calendar change, but for girls golf, the minimum number of nine-hole rounds to qualify for regionals is revised from five to three.

The association didn't announce any changes for winter or spring sports. For state playoffs, there have been no venue changes.

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'Hands and feet of Jesus'

October 12, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: SARAH C. JOHNSON sjohnson@hickoryrecord.com| Section: News | 647 Words OpenURL Link

Hurricane Helene has given Christians a chance "to be the hands and feet of Jesus," a Burke County youth pastor said on Tuesday.

Amherst Baptist Church Youth Pastor Braxton Ervin was speaking about continuing efforts to help western North Carolina. He said the heavily impacted communities will need help for months.

"Missions is not only across seas," Ervin said. "It's right here at home, as well." The Long View Police Department took a utility trailer full of canned foods, toiletries and clothes to Burke County to help victims of Hurricane Helene.

The Long View donations were taken to Amherst Baptist Church in Morganton on Tuesday. Amherst has been distributing hot meals in Morganton and taking donations to western North Carolina. The church is located at 1024 Amherst Road in Morganton.

The donations are going to Columbus, a town in Polk County, Ervin said. Columbus is roughly 30 minutes south of Lake Lure. Amherst Baptist Church is partnering with a church in Columbus which has a pastor who is originally from Burke County, Ervin added.

Long View Public Information Officer Heather Minor said 13% of the town of Long View is in Burke County. She said most of the donations have come from citizens and businesses in Long View, along with some donations from Granite Falls.

"Through all of this I have felt really blessed and lucky," Minor said. "And then there's a sense of guilt with it, too, because we did come out so unscathed and 30-45 minutes up the road, it's just like total devastation."

Two churches in Long View donated a total of \$1,460, which was used to buy supplies. The Word of Life Church donated \$960, Minor said. Another church gave \$500 on Monday, Long View Town Manager James Cozart said.

"What we are understanding is the need is changing to stuff to keep warm like blankets, gloves, hats," Cozart said. "We took that (\$500), and our deputy finance director went shopping with it. She just piled her cart full of throws, blankets, all that stuff. She got to the register at Walmart in Hickory. The cashier was checking her out and she said 'Now, when I get to \$500 or close to \$500 stop.' Everything in that buggy went through except for one little throw. She hit the total button. It was exactly 500 bucks."

Minor said the town of Long View will continue to accept donations at their town hall. Ervin said Amherst Baptist Church will continue accepting donations, too. Donations can be taken to Amherst Baptist Church at 1024 Amherst Road in Morganton from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. each day, Ervin said.

"(The donations) are very much appreciated," Long View Mayor Marla Thompson said. "We're hoping that they get to the people that need them. If anybody wants to donate, please feel free to drop off at any time."

Long View plans to bring another load of donations later in the week. Minor said a local manufacturing company is donating a 53-foot trailer filled with supplies.

"(A man) just called us and said, 'I live in Burke County. I work in Conover and my company wants to help,'" Minor said. "We were like, 'Yes, send it.'"

Minor said it has been incredible seeing her small town pouring out support for their neighbors. She said Long View has a significantly smaller tax base than Hickory. Long View had an estimated population of 5,207 in 2023 and Hickory had an estimated population of 44,415 people, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

"We had a mom, and her several young children come by, and each child got to donate an item," Minor said. "And then our town manager got the opportunity to explain to them why they were needing to donate these items. It was incredible to see them come together."

Long View Town Hall is located at 2404 First Ave. SW in Hickory.

Sarah Johnson is the courts and breaking news reporter for the Hickory daily record.

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