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# HELENE UPDATE

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Board of Commissioners | May 20, 2025



BUNCOMBE COUNTY



# Topics for Today

## PRESENTATIONS:

- **Debris** – Dane Pedersen
- **Emergency Watershed Protection Program** – Jennifer Harrison
- **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (Residential)** – Brad Hughes
- **Landslides** – Burnett Walz
- **Private Roads & Bridges** – Rafael Baptista
- **Peer-to-Peer Learning with Lee County, FL** – Ryan Cole

## APPENDIX:

- **Data Updates by Recovery Support Function**



# Debris Removal Volumes



- **Right of Way Debris Removal:**
  - 1,554,221 cubic yards as of 5-19-25
  - Total Soil/Sediment/Silt: 151,198 Tons, 6,530 loads
- **Waterway Debris Removal:**
  - 1,399,809 cubic yards as of 5-19-25



# Right of Way Debris Removal

- Right of Way Debris Removal
  - Right of way debris removal has closed with Federal Partners and is no longer being collected. The County is working closely with FEMA to assess roads for remaining debris.
  - We are actively pursuing options through the North Carolina State Mission Assigned Recovery Task Force (SMART) to manage remaining debris removal in the right of way
- Please help us with this debris removal task by refraining from placing additional debris in the right of way, including private contractors and volunteers that may be assisting with property clean up. This debris is no longer eligible for removal
- We continue to collect data about any remaining debris piles in the right of way from our One Buncombe Call center 828-250-6100 #2
  - Hours of Operations: 7 days/week 7 am-7 pm





# Private Property Debris Removal



- **Private and Commercial Property Debris Removal:**
  - 5,326 Active applications received
  - 4,993 delivered to FEMA
  - 2,801 sites cleaned up and completed



# Private Property Debris Removal Resources & Questions

- **Helene Resource Center**
  - 94 Coxe Ave. Asheville
  - Hours of Operation: Monday-Friday 8 am – 5 pm
- **One Buncombe Call Center**
  - 828-250-6100 #2 for debris
  - Hours of Operations: 7 days/week 7 am-7 pm
- **Private Property Debris Removal Questions only:**  
[debrismanagementhelene@buncombecounty.org](mailto:debrismanagementhelene@buncombecounty.org)





# Residential & Commercial Demolition

- Demolition Packets delivered to FEMA: 66
  - Buncombe County (unincorporated): 45
    - 8 in Barnardsville, 8 in Weaverville (outside town limits), 11 in Swannanoa
  - Town of Black Mtn: 9, 3 are commercial
  - City of Asheville: 12, 9 are commercial
- Demolition inspections and packet completions are ongoing
- Demolition expected to begin soon



# Waterway Debris Removal

- Waterway debris removal continues with FEMA and USACE and State partners to ensure safe removal of debris
- Waterway debris removal deadline extended through June 15





# Questions?





# Emergency Watershed Protection Program



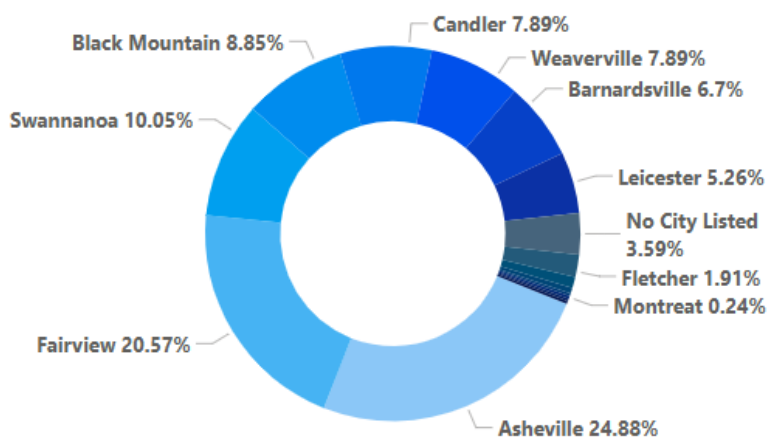
BUNCOMBE COUNTY



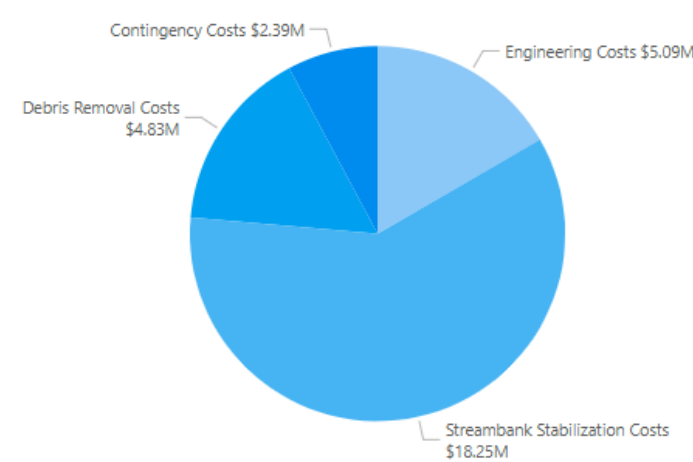
# Buncombe County EWP List Dashboard

611	414	\$25.45M	\$84.84M	178	126	34	19	20	9
EWP Submissions	Require Site Visit	Repair Costs	Structural Value Requested	Eligible - FDR Needed	Not Eligible	Site Repaired	Debris Only	Save for Other Programs	Landslide

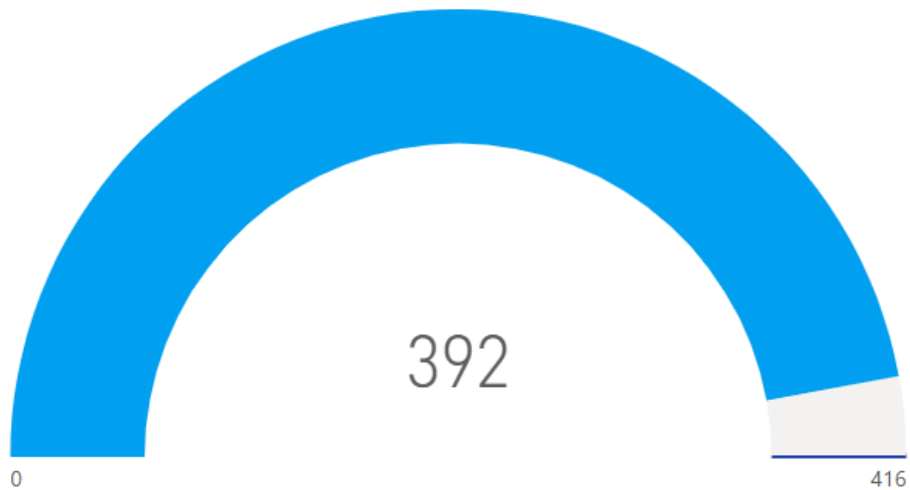
EWP Submissions by Location



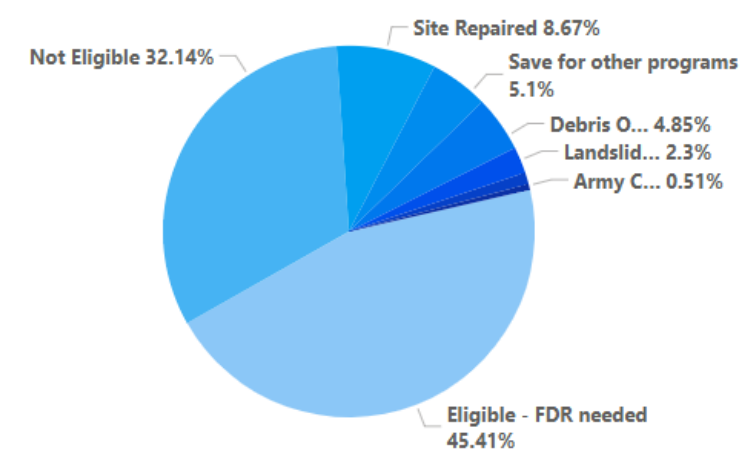
Costs by Type



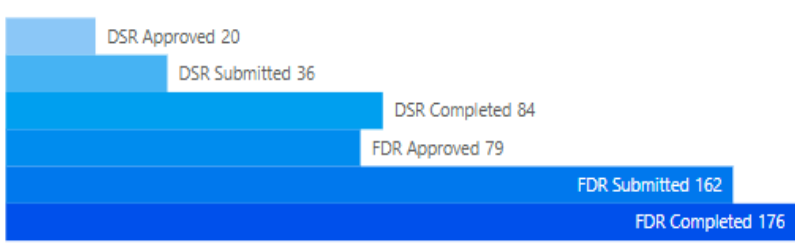
EWP Visits vs. Required Site Visits



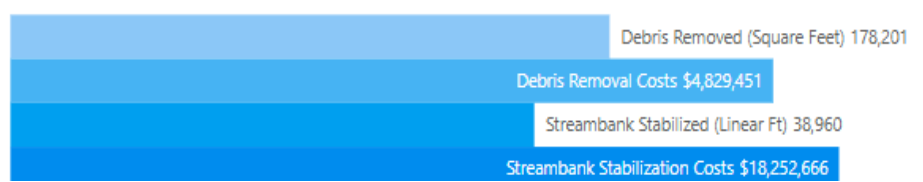
Field Visits by Site Determination



DSR & FDR Submitted vs. Completed



Debris Removal (Square Feet) and Streambank Stabilized (Linear Ft) vs. Costs





# Emergency Watershed Protection

## *First Review Round – Field Data Report (FDR)*

- FDRs Submitted: 162
  - Total Streambank Stabilization Requested: 38,290 LF
  - Total Streambank Stabilization Costs: \$17,903,541
  - Total Debris Removal Requested: 141,760.97 SQF
  - Total Debris Removal Costs: \$4,070,951
- FDRs Approved: 79
  - Total Streambank Stabilization Requested: 20,018 LF
  - Total Streambank Stabilization Costs: \$9,896,648
  - Total Debris Removal Requested: 82,545 SF
  - Total Debris Removal Costs: \$2,432,651



# Emergency Watershed Protection

## *Second Review Round – Damage Survey Report (DSR)*

- DSRs Submitted: 36
  - Total Streambank Stabilization Requested: 8,015 LF
  - Total Streambank Stabilization Costs: \$3,369,775
  - Total Debris Removal Requested: 36,167 SF
  - Total Debris Removal Costs: \$1,090,841
- DSRs Approved: 20
  - Total Streambank Stabilization Requested: 4,615 LF
  - Total Streambank Stabilization Costs: \$1,929,175
  - Total Debris Removal Requested: 26,862 SF
  - Total Debris Removal Costs: \$758,491



# Emergency Watershed Protection

To request a site visit:

<https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/b12905ead2d24e50920352599672b140?portalUrl=https://bunco.maps.arcgis.com>

Huge **THANKS** to all who have helped from counties across the state

- Burke
- Chatham
- Currituck
- Haywood
- Henderson
- Mecklenburg
- Orange
- Swain
- Wake
- Watauga



TETRA TECH



BUNCOMBE COUNTY

5/20/2025



# Questions?



# Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Mitigation Applications Received

Acquisition	Elevation	Elevation Landslide	Elevation Mit Recon	Interest	Land Stabilization	Mit Recon	Slope Stabilization	Soil Erosion
216	68	2	4	10	20	4	4	1

Grand Total: 319 applications, 10 interests

Data as of April 28, 2025



# Project Status by Group

Group	Number of Properties	Status
Group 1	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Application Submitted to FEMA by NCEM on Feb 21, 2025</li><li>• Demolition RFP will proceed upon FEMA award</li></ul>
Group 2	26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Application submitted to NCEM: May 6, 2025</li><li>• NCEM finalizing package for FEMA</li></ul>
Group 3	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• NCEM finalizing property list</li></ul>





# HMGP Process Review

- Federal disaster declaration triggers FEMA funding
- Property owners apply voluntarily
- NCEM groups applications into batches, considering factors like:
  - Project Type
  - Cost Effectiveness
- NCEM forwards application group to Buncombe County. We work internally and with our municipal partners to review applications.
- We submit the final approved properties for inclusion in our application to NCEM.



# HMGP Process Review

- NCEM finalizes application and submits to FEMA
- FEMA reviews applications awards approved applications and releases funding to NCEM
- Buncombe County and NCEM work with our residents to move the projects forward



# Application Deadline: October 31, 2025 @ 5:00pm

## Resources

- Helene Resource Center
- Apply online:  
**NCDPS.gov/HMGP**





# Questions?



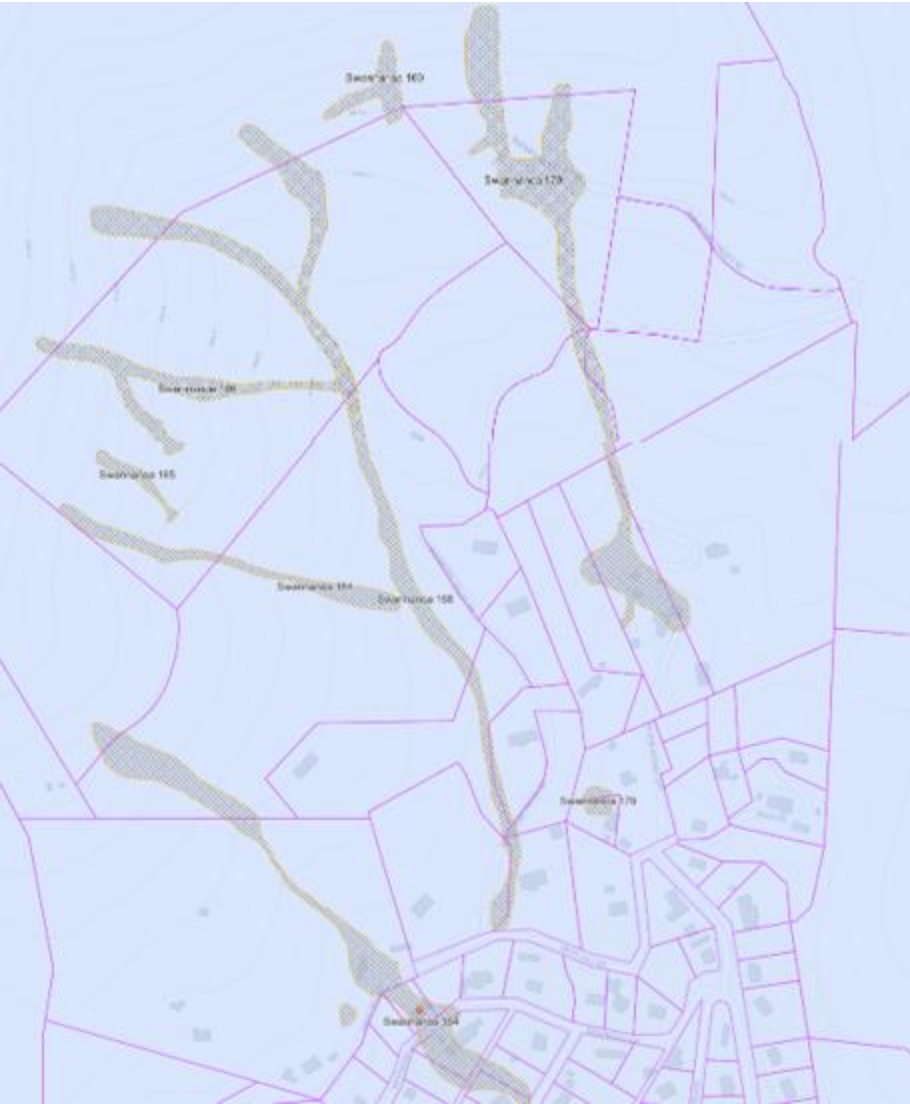
# Landslide Overview

- 2,000+ landslides occurred in Western NC due to Helene
- Buncombe County accounts for approximately 50% of the total with varying magnitudes of size and damage
- According to FEMA the scale is unprecedented
- County does not have subject matter experts on staff
- FEMA & North Carolina Emergency Management have no existing policy guidelines for the magnitude of slides in the region
- FEMA Pilot program in place
- Initial assessments conducted on the County's larger slides to determine level of imminent danger
- Staff has been working diligently to identify the # of properties impacted



# Landslide Data

- County's GIS team has partnered with the North Carolina Geological Survey to develop GIS maps of landslides impacting specific properties in the county
- 145 unique slides identified as impacting 246 residential properties
- 55 slides identified as impacting 2 or more properties
- Currently working with FEMA to conduct assessments of slides in this category
- Assessments serve to determine if imminent threat exists and if so, leads to development of a cost estimate for an engineering study
- Engineering study will provide stabilization strategy and cost
- An example: Grovemont slides engineering estimate is \$1.3M (based on rough stabilization estimate of \$17M)



# Landslides – The Path Forward



## Next Steps for Large Slides:

- Partnering with FEMA and NCEM to conduct pilot for engineering estimate of Grovemont slide
- Working to define:
  - Funding Model – process & timing
  - Resources / Project Management
- Model to serve as best practice for all other counties in Western N.C. impacted by slides
- Exploring options for an early warning system



# Landslide Resources

## Helpful Resources:

- HMGP State Site – <https://www.ncdps.gov/HMGP>
- Helene Resource Center – 94 Coxe Ave. 8am – 5pm Monday through Friday
- County’s HMGP help desk – [hmgp@buncombecounty.org](mailto:hmgp@buncombecounty.org)
- County’s infrastructure / land slide help desk – [infrastructure@buncombecounty.org](mailto:infrastructure@buncombecounty.org)
- North Carolina Geological Survey Landslide Site – <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/b55c8497d115400aa09d9cb7a27f5dc8/page/Home>





# Questions?



# Private Roads & Bridges Overview

- 3,000+ damaged private bridges and roads in Western North Carolina
- Buncombe County accounts for approximately 30% of total Helene damages in NC with varying magnitudes of size and damage
- According to FEMA the scale is unprecedented
- County does not have subject matter experts on staff
- Initial assessments conducted by Fire Marshals and National Guard to identify priority bridges and roads
- Disaster Recovery Act of 2025 called for State-Centric repair program



# Private Roads & Bridges

## Key Dates

- 2 January 2025 Executive Order 2
- 19 March 2025 Disaster Recovery Act of 2025, Part I
- March 2025 NC-PRB interest form launched to gather locations of private roads and bridges needing repairs
- March-April 2025 Pilot program developed for Buncombe and McDowell counties
- April-May 2025 Onboarding consultants for program support & identification of contractors for prequalification to assist with performing repairs and construction
- 3 August 2025 Deadline for communities to identify damaged or destroyed roads and bridges and provide coordinates to NCEM
- 26 Sept. 2026 All construction must be completed under DSG



# Private Roads & Bridges

## Eligible

- Repair and replacement of private roads or bridges damaged or destroyed by Helene that provide the sole option for ingress and egress for emergency services to:
    - a residential property occupied by the owner for more than six months of the calendar year,
    - multiple residential homes, or
    - recreation or commercial facilities.
  - $\leq$  50% cost share for HOAs that own the private road or bridge
- 
- Ownership and responsibility of the repaired/replaced road or bridge stays with the property owner.
  - NCEM will take all reasonable steps to obtain any federal assistance or alternative funding that may be available *prior to* obligating NC-PRB funds.

## Ineligible

- Reimbursement for:
  - completed repairs or replacements
  - property owners or HOA/POAs who want to obtain their own engineer and/or contractor
- Temporary repairs (note: if you are aware of continued needs for temporary assistance, please contact the PA Hotline at: [pahotline@ncdps.gov](mailto:pahotline@ncdps.gov))
- Properties outside of the federal declaration for Helene



# Private Roads & Bridges

## How will work be performed?

Permanent repairs/replacements will be:

- engineered by NC-PRB engineering firms and constructed through NC-PRB contracts;
- engineered and constructed by VOAD/non-profits according to program, state, and contract licensure requirements; or
- supported via technical support and assistance for individuals and local governments





# Private Roads & Bridges

## Disaster Specific Guidance for NC-PRB

- Requirements
  - Communities must identify damaged or destroyed roads and bridges and provide coordinates to NCEM by **3 August 2025**.
  - PRB projects must be permitted by the authority having jurisdiction.
  - Bridge/culvert plans must be certified by a Professional Engineer (PE) and demonstrate the newly designed structure provides equal or greater conveyance than the destroyed crossing
  - Documentation must be sent to [NCEMPRBDocuments@ncdps.gov](mailto:NCEMPRBDocuments@ncdps.gov)
- All construction must be completed by **26 September 2026**.
- NCEM's Flood Mapping Program will restudy streams post-construction



# Private Roads & Bridges

## State-County Partnership

- Collaboration and partnership is key to a successful program.
- The State and Counties will continue to encourage survivors to fill out the online interest form located at [www.ncdps.gov/helene/prb](http://www.ncdps.gov/helene/prb).
- We respectfully ask that counties:
  - Place a link to the NC-PRB website on your webpage.
  - Provide a point of contact for site prioritization and visit coordination.
  - Provide NC-PRB with the minimum county specifications and requirements for roads & bridges.
  - Route any local contractors that are interested in participating in the program to the NC-PRB program.
  - Assist with maintaining the list of potential projects as submitted to the NC-PRB interest form.



# Private Roads & Bridges

## Next Steps

- NC-PRB is in the process of onboarding design services firms; assigning county priorities for completion of site assessments.
- Establishment of design criteria, plans, and specification requirements.
- Development of construction contracting mechanisms
  - It is expected multiple types of contract mechanisms will be used based upon the various types of road and bridge repair needs.
- Finalizing process and requirements for non-profit participation.
- NC-PRB to provide email update monthly to survivors.
- NCEM will continue to develop, update, and maintain FAQs on the NC-PRB webpage.



# Private Roads & Bridges Resources

- Learn more about State Program:
  - <https://www.ncdps.gov/Helene/PRB>
- Apply for State Assistance Program
  - <https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/30bab5df7693435b848b907d1a3b2147>
- Contact the State for more information
  - Call 1-844-746-2326
  - Email [ncemprb@ncdps.gov](mailto:ncemprb@ncdps.gov)



# Questions?





# Peer-to-Peer Learning with Lee County, FL

## Background:

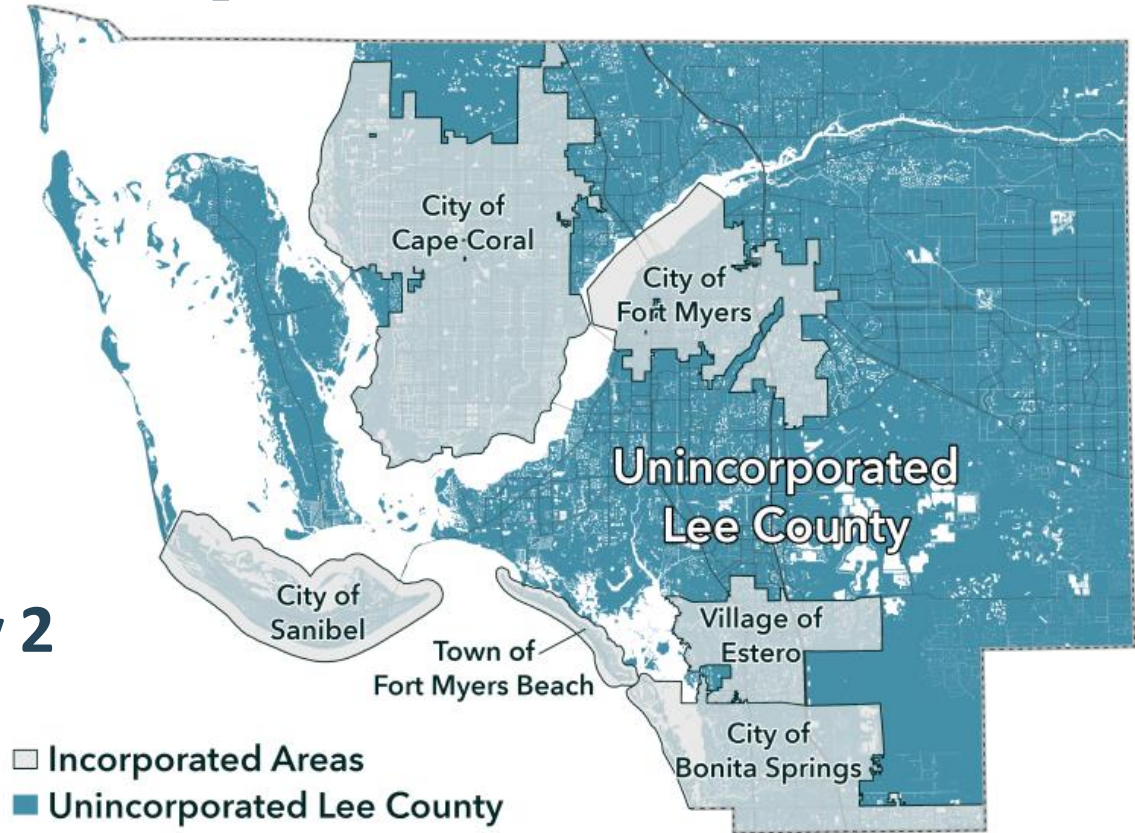
- Lee County, FL experienced 5 hurricanes 2017-2024 (Irma, Ian, Idalia, Milton, Helene)
- Visitors to the Buncombe County T.S. Helene EOC included:
  - Public Safety Director
  - Director of Strategic Resources & Public Affairs
  - Visitor & Convention Bureau Director
  - Collaboratory Community Foundation



# Peer-to-Peer Learning with Lee County, FL

## Topics:

- **Recovery and Rebuilding: Day 1**
  - Natural, Cultural, & Community Resources Development
  - Public Health, Life Safety & Emergency Management
  - Grants, Funding, & Economic Revitalization
- **Creativity, Hardening, and Resiliency: Day 2**
  - Infrastructure & Built Environment
  - Social & Environmental Connectivity
  - Foundational Preparedness & Mitigation



# Peer-to-Peer Learning with Lee County, FL

## Take-aways & connections:

- Opportunities to enhance response & preparedness through disaster staffing policies
- Field engagement – ensure planners are involved with affected areas
- Importance of creativity & envisioning a desired future state in recovery, beyond building back exactly as before
- Recovery process belongs to the community, not local governments alone



# Peer to Peer Learning with Lee County, FL

- **What we need to remember**

- Create & Maintain Bench Depth in Key Positions
- Create & Maintain Redundancies
- Attrition Will Occur
- Utilize Existing Plans
- Don't Recreate what You Have
- Understand Plans vs Application
- Leverage Partnerships
- Bring Others to the Table
- Long Term Recovery is Long Term
- The New Norm

- **What we need to give ourselves**

- Grace
- Kindness
- Rest





# Questions?



# End of Presentation

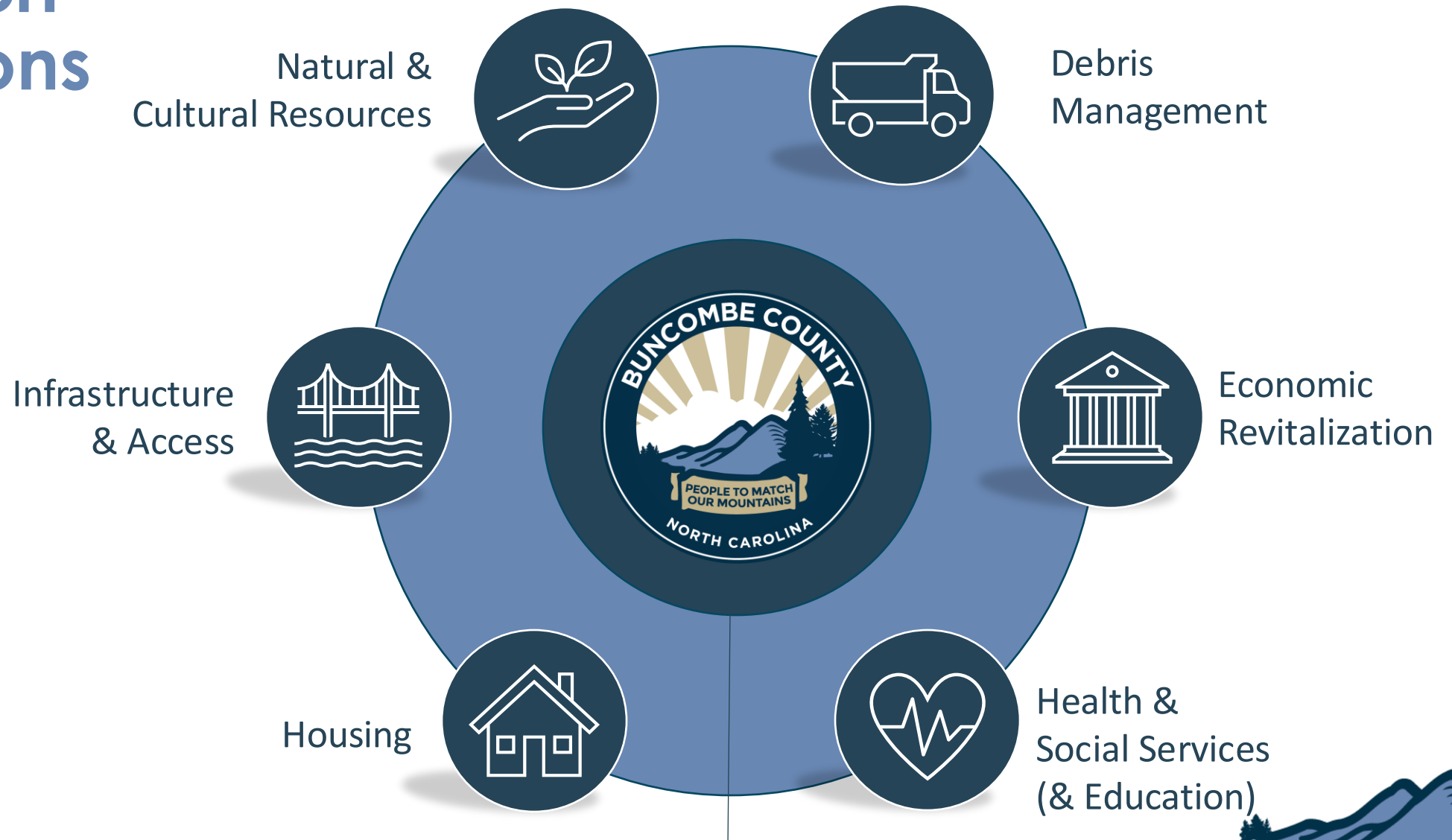


# APPENDIX – DATA UPDATES

Reference Data by Recovery Support Function



# Recovery Support Functions



# DEBRIS MANAGEMENT



Focused on storm debris, including solutions for debris removal on public and private property and waterways, managing specialized debris types, evaluating hazardous materials considerations, coordinating disposal, and exploring sustainable re-use of debris.





# DEBRIS MANAGEMENT

- Cubic yards of debris collected (right of way): 1,554,221 (1% increase over last update)
- Cubic yards of debris collected (waterway): 1,399,809 (8% increase over last update)
- Tons of mud, silt and soil collected: 151,198 (no change compared to last update)
- PPDR applications received: 6,073 (no change compared to last update)
- PPDR applications ready for site inspection: *No data available at this time*
- PPDR applications delivered to FEMA: 4,993 (14% increase over last update)
- PPDR inspections complete: 5,253 (9% increase over last update)
- % of applications received on-line: 59%
- % of applications received in-person: 41%
- % of applications requesting debris removal only: 93%
- % of applications requesting debris and demolition: 6%
- % of applications requesting demolition only: 1%



# ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION



Focused on stimulating economic recovery, supporting local businesses, responding to workforce needs, and ensuring the long-term economic stability and prosperity of the area with a focus on revitalization of critical economic sectors



# ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION

- Asheville-Buncombe "Rebuilding Together" Business Grant [www.mountainbizworks.org/helene/fund/](http://www.mountainbizworks.org/helene/fund/)
  - 843 applications received totaling more than \$18M (no change compared to prior update)
  - Buncombe County Only
    - 137 small businesses awarded grants, totaling \$1,567,480 (no change compared to prior update)



# ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION

## Small Business Association Loans\*

	Home Loans	For Profit Business Loans	Nonprofit Business Loans	Total
Number of Applications	3,485 (0% increase)	6,757 (0% increase)	232 (0% increase)	10,474(0% increase)
Number of Loans Disbursed	606 (0% increase)	1,944 (0% increase)	4 (0% increase)	2,554 (0% increase)
\$ Amount of Loans Disbursed	\$28,544 (0% increase)	\$124,653,413 (0% increase)	\$163,000 (0% increase)	\$153,360,463 (0% increase)



# ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION

## Unemployment Estimates: Reported February 2025, Revised January 2025 and December 2024 (Updated as of 5/19/2025)

	Reported May 2025	Reported Feb 2025	Revised Jan 2025*	Revised Dec 2024*
Buncombe County	5.3%	6.2%	6.8%	6.0%
Asheville Metro**	No update	5.5%	6.0%	5.3%

\*Revised unemployment did not change in January or December

\*\*Asheville Metro includes Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, and Madison counties

## Helene Impact on County Unemployment Rankings December 2024 (Updated as of 4/9/2025)

County	Labor Force*	Unemployment **	Rate	Rank
Buncombe	143,725	8,956	6.2	96
Tyrell	1,269	82	6.5	97
Mitchell	7,134	470	6.6	98
Dare	17,393	1,248	7.2	99
Hyde	1,608	139	8.6	100

\*Number of people working and number of people unemployed combined

\*\* Number of people unemployed





# HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES



Focused on ensuring the health and well-being of residents with attention to the social determinants of health, including consideration of medical, behavioral, educational, and environmental health concerns and social service recovery needs



# HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

- Applications submitted for individual assistance thru Buncombe Co.: 5,826 (no change compared to last update)
- Applications approved for individual assistance: 539 (no change compared to prior update)
- Funds approved for individual assistance: \$1,836,062.29 (no change compared to prior update)
- Total loads of laundry at Community Care Sites: 61,921 (final CCS locations closed 4/30/25)
- Total number of showers at Community Care Sites: 48,818 (final CCS locations closed 4/30/25)
- Mass care meals provided (avg. / day): World Central Kitchen mass feeding services ended 4/1/25
- Current individuals in emergency shelters: Shelter closed as of 12/31/24
- NC DHHS Disaster Energy Assistance: \$2,101,934
- NC DHHS Disaster Adult Service Assistance: \$64133
- NC DHHS Disaster Child Welfare Assistance: \$456754
- NC DHHS Disaster Rental Assistance: \$156992



# EDUCATION

- The number of homeless (unhoused) students identified under the McKinney-Vento Act:
  - Asheville City Schools – 262 (no new data since previous update)
    - **79 of these cases are due to Helene** (no new data since previous update)
  - Buncombe County School - 1458 (2% increase over previous update)
    - **983 of these cases are due to Helene** (1% increase over previous update)
- 100% of **Buncombe County Schools** sites have resumed normal water usage after receiving lead test results
- 100% of **Asheville City Schools** sites have resumed normal water usage after receiving lead test results



# HOUSING



Focused on supporting people in moving toward housing permanence through home repair, removing barriers to temporary housing units, connecting survivors to short- and long-term rental, and coordinating rental and mortgage assistance for survivor households with economic impacts



# HOUSING

- Residential units destroyed: 372 (no change compared to prior update)
- Residential units with major damage: 734 (no change compared to prior update)
- Residential units with habitability repairs: 11,133 (no change compared to prior update)
- Total residential units damaged: 12,239 (no change compared to prior update)
- Households currently in TSA: 3 (no change compared to prior update)
- Households approved for FEMA direct housing: 70 (no change compared to prior update)
- FEMA temporary housing units complete: 72 (no change compared to prior update)
- FEMA temporary housing units in-progress: 0 (no change compared to prior update)
- Households approved for rental assistance: 1,495 (3% increase over prior update)





# INFRASTRUCTURE & ACCESS



Focused on restoring and enhancing essential public infrastructure and accessibility to private property, including comprehensive damage assessments, coordination of repairs/restoration, and mitigation of future hazards such as floods and landslides



# INFRASTRUCTURE & ACCESS

- 329 Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) applications have been submitted to NCEM (no change compared to last update)
  - 216 for acquisition & 74 for elevation/reconstruction & 24 for slope stabilization
- Helene related building permit apps filed across 1,515 unique locations (3% increase over last update)
- Helene related building inspections conducted at 1,256 unique locations (3% increase over last update)
- State has stood up a private bridge and road repair program with 900+ county residents applying for help
- 100+ landslides impacting residential properties identified for FEMA assessments
- 1,400 assessments conducted of properties in flood plain
  - 365 letters of significant damage have been sent



# NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES



Focused on the restoration and sustainable management of natural and cultural resources, including capabilities to maintain, conserve, renew, and rehabilitate resources such as parks, farmland, watersheds and streambanks in alignment with environmental and historical preservation laws



# NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

- Emergency watershed protection potential applicants identified: 325 (14% decrease compared to prior update)
- Emergency watershed protection Field Visits Completed: 235 (new data point since 3/3 update)
- Emergency watershed protection applications approved: 25 (new data point since 3/3 update)
- 7 County parks open to the public (no update compared to prior update)
- 12 County libraries open to the public (no update compared to prior update)





# FOUNDATIONAL

Focused on coordinating the resources needed for an effective recovery for and linking recovery with organizational operations –such as grants & funding, data sharing, county property damage, staffing considerations, communications, funding, facilities, fleet, human capital and technology





# FOUNDATIONAL

- \$ 21.9 M expended for Helene; \$6.7 M committed
- Category A\* project submitted in FEMA grants portal
  - Submitted: \$68,240,087.00 (no change compared to prior update)
  - Received: \$34,120,044.00 (no change compared to prior update)
  - *\*expedited funding*
- Category C,E, & G projects submitted in FEMA grants portal
  - Submitted: \$17,857,035 (24% increase over prior update)
  - Received: \$0
- 1 active staff reassignments being managed by HR
- 127 internal county staffing vacancies (not including BCSO) –3% increase over prior update
- Insurance claim for County-owned assets:
  - Claims submitted: \$3.99 M (1% increase over prior update)
  - Claim received: \$1.99 M (no new data compared to prior update)
- Recovery-related grant funding:
  - Requested: \$19.8 M (no change compared to prior update)
  - Awarded: \$3.4 M (no change compared to prior update)

