



Hurricane Helene Update

As of 5 p.m. May 23, 2025

Latest News

- Crews and contractors have completed repair or replacement of 447 (or 52%) of the 846 bridges, 55 (59%) of the 92 large culverts, and 1,064 of the 1,068 smaller culverts damaged by the storm.
- We have completed the permanent replacement of 16 bridges (including two this week) and anticipate 138 more bridges need to be replaced.
- To date, the Department has spent \$766.4M on Helene recovery and has been reimbursed with \$150.1M in federal funding (\$90.6M FEMA, \$59.4M FHWA).
- Gov. Stein issued the following statement Friday in response to news that FEMA had [denied](#) North Carolina's request for an extension of its 100% cost reimbursement for debris removal:
 - *"The first step to help western North Carolina recover is to clean up all the debris. So far, we have removed more than 12 million cubic yards of debris from roads and water ways, but given the immense scale of the wreckage, we have only scratched the surface. FEMA's denial of our appeal will cost North Carolina taxpayers potentially hundreds of millions of dollars to clean up out west. The money we have to pay toward debris removal will mean less money towards supporting our small businesses, rebuilding downtown infrastructure, repairing our water and sewer systems, and other critical needs.*
 - *Despite this news, we are going to stay the course. We will keep pushing the federal and state governments to do right by western North Carolina. We will keep working with urgency, focus, and transparency to get any appropriated money on the ground as quickly as we can to speed the recovery. We will not forget the people of western North Carolina."*

- Communications staff conducted an interview Friday with Richard Stradling (N&O) regarding progress on the I-40 recovery project. We have received similar requests from WLOS and Asheville Watchdog.
- Comms also issued a [press release](#) and [video](#) Friday on the Department's efforts to reconstruct a boat launch in a new location that will allow local rafting companies to operate this season without interfering with nearby Helene recovery activities.

Other Items of Interest

- NCDOT and its contract partners continue to make progress testing rock cores from several potential material borrow locations under a Special Use Permit from the Forest Service, to help identify which areas may be sufficient to help rebuild I-40 in the Pigeon River Gorge. We anticipate selecting a site or sites in the month of May.
- The Special Use Permit allows NCDOT to test up to seven sites, but we do not anticipate utilizing all seven locations.
- Activities currently ongoing for the I-40 recovery project include:
 - Crushing of aggregate material (I-40 Slide waste material) at the primary staging site (known as the Cotton Patch)
 - Construction of ramps into the Pigeon River channel for access to the causeway
 - Construction of causeway from the east end of double tunnel to the TN state line
 - Construction of three soil nail walls along the project to provide a higher level of safety for the traveling public and for workers on the causeway
 - Back dumping of aggregate material along the entire section of I-40 to improve the safety of the slopes
 - Geotechnical exploration along the causeway at the proposed toe of slope (five drills currently operating)