



Hurricane Helene Landfall

Sept. 26, 2024 - 11:10 p.m. EDT

10 Miles WSW of Perry, FL

Winds: 140 mph Cat 4



Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program

Hurricane Helene hammered Florida and the Southeast in late September 2024. It was the strongest landfall and highest storm surge on record in the Big Bend of Florida. It also produced the highest modern-era surge and damaging winds in Tampa-St. Petersburg. Prolific rain triggered catastrophic flooding in the southern Appalachians, shattering some 100-plus year records.

The devastating storm not only damaged homes, businesses and infrastructure such as roads, bridges and dams in multiple states, it also caused massive damages to agricultural land from erosion and flooding. Recovery from such a disaster will require states and counties to utilize all available resources. The Emergency Watershed Protection Program administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is a resource that is available for help in recovery efforts.

The EWP Program offers technical and financial assistance to help local communities relieve imminent threats to life and property caused by floods, fires, windstorms and other natural disasters that impair a watershed.

EWP does not require a disaster declaration by federal or state government officials for program assistance to begin. The NRCS State Conservationist can declare a local watershed emergency and initiate EWP program assistance in cooperation with an eligible sponsor.

NRCS offers financial and technical assistance for various activities under the EWP Program, including:

- Remove debris from stream channels, road culverts and bridges;
- Reshape and protect eroded streambanks;
- Correct damaged or destroyed drainage facilities;
- Establish vegetative cover on critically eroding lands;
- Repair levees and structures;
- Purchase of EWP Buyouts.

Eligibility

All EWP projects must have a sponsor and demonstrate that they reduce threats to life and property; be economically, environmentally and socially sound; and must be designed to acceptable engineering standards.

Sponsors can be ***cities, counties, towns, conservation districts, or any federally-recognized Native American tribe or tribal organization.***

Sponsors can apply for EWP Program assistance directly to NRCS while public and private landowners can apply for this assistance through a local sponsor.

Sponsors are responsible for:

Providing land rights to implement repair work, securing all necessary permits, furnishing the local cost share, accomplishing required works of improvement to remove the imminent threat to life and property, performing any necessary operation and maintenance

For more information contact your local NRCS or state office or go to the NRCS website:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/ewp-emergency-watershed-protection>

October 3, 2024