



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROY COOPER  
GOVERNOR

August 27, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500

Through: Regional Administrator Gracia B. Szczech  
DHS FEMA Region IV  
3005 Chamblee-Tucker Road  
Atlanta, GA 30341

Dear Mr. President:

Under the provisions of Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5207 (Stafford Act), and implemented by 44 C.F.R. § 206.36, I request that you declare a major disaster for the State of North Carolina due to the impacts of Tropical Storm Fred (Fred) remnants. Impacts were felt in the State on August 17-18, 2021. The significant amount of damage and other impacts associated with Tropical Storm Fred exceed the local and state capacity to recover. Accordingly, I am requesting Individual Assistance (IA) for Buncombe, Haywood, and Transylvania counties, all categories of Public Assistance (PA) for Avery, Buncombe, Haywood, Madison, Transylvania, Yancey, and Watauga counties and Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMPG) assistance statewide.

North Carolina experienced several rounds of heavy rain between Sunday, August 15<sup>th</sup> and the early morning hours of Wednesday, August 18<sup>th</sup>. The most widespread, heavy rain fell on Tuesday, August 17<sup>th</sup>, as Fred and its remnants spread northward. Prior to Tuesday, a stalled frontal boundary in conjunction with tropical moisture, brought periods of heavy rain to southwestern North Carolina on Sunday, August 15<sup>th</sup> and Monday, August 16<sup>th</sup>. Fred's remnants interacted with the mountains allowing for the highest rainfall totals across the southern Blue Ridge Escarpment, leading to severe widespread flash flooding, rapid rises of rivers and streams, and landslides across the North Carolina mountains on Tuesday, August 17<sup>th</sup>. There were multiple reports of greater than 20 inches of rainfall in Transylvania County, and portions of western North Carolina reported an additional 3-7 inches of rainfall, with locally higher amounts up to 10 plus inches, especially along the higher terrain.

Numerous river gauges rapidly climbed above flood stage, with the greatest flooding along the Pigeon River in Haywood County. The Pigeon River at Canton and the East Fork Pigeon River above Canton both climbed above Major Flood Stage, with the gauge located along the East Fork Pigeon River above Canton exceeding its previous record by more than 3 feet. The French Broad River at Rosman crested twice, once during the morning of Monday, August 16<sup>th</sup> above Moderate Flood Stage and then during the evening of Tuesday, August 17<sup>th</sup> above Major Flood Stage. The French Broad River at Blantyre, the French Broad River near Marshall, the Davidson River near Pisgah Forest, and the Swannanoa River at Biltmore also all crested above Moderate Flood Stage. Three (3) tornadoes were confirmed across western North Carolina, one that touched down in Iredell County and lifted in Alexander County, and two in Wilkes County.

The remnants from Fred caused widespread damage including downed trees and flooding that blocked roadways, damaged residential structures and businesses, and caused power outages to portions of western North Carolina that, at the peak, left 53,000 homes and business without power in the area. The investor-owned, municipal and co-ops utilities have reported significant damage to the electric infrastructure in western North Carolina and assessments are ongoing. Communication services were degraded or completely unavailable. Furthermore, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic remains a public health threat to the communities.

### **Action under State Law and Implementation of the State Emergency Operations Plan:**

Based on the National Weather Service Storm Prediction Center and the National Hurricane Center forecast on August 11, 2021, the Division of North Carolina Emergency Management (NCEM) placed the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) on standby status. NCEM created a WebEOC event on August 16, 2021. NCEM also took a proactive stance by reaching out to counties on August 12, 2021, to warn them that weather conditions were conducive to severe weather with the projected track of Fred and that the agency was ready to support any needs that may result from the weather. The SEOC was fully activated to a Level 3 (Fully staffed with essential State Emergency Response Team partners) status on Tuesday, August 17, 2021. In accordance with 44 C.F.R. § 206.36 in response to the situation, I have taken the appropriate actions under State law. On August 18, 2021, I declared a state of emergency and directed the execution of the North Carolina Emergency Operations Plan to respond to the event, as it had exceeded the capabilities of the local governments to effectively respond. The emergency area under the declaration included the entire state of North Carolina.

## **Preliminary Damage Assessment Findings**

### **Nature and amount of State and local resources that have been or will be used to alleviate the conditions of this incident (See Also FEMA Form 010-0-13)**

NCEM staff, including the human services branch, area coordinators, multi-hazard field planners, Individual Assistance, and Public Assistance staff deployed to the affected areas to work with the local governments and volunteer agencies to assist in the coordination of response and recovery efforts. NCEM also provided commodities and bottled water to the affected counties. North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) has also been performing debris clearance and removal operations in the affected areas. Congregate shelters were established by NCEM, county EMAs, the American Red Cross and local churches and, due to COVID-19, transitioned to non-congregate sheltering in the impacted counties. In addition, eight counties (Haywood, Jackson, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Rutherford, Transylvania, and Yancey) and several municipalities issued states of emergency and evacuations were ordered in Haywood County and Transylvania counties.

In response to both our residents' and communities' needs, State and local governments and volunteer organizations responded in a manner that saved both life and property. The State of North Carolina's SEOC was staffed with State Emergency Response Team (SERT) members and NCEM staff since August 17, 2021. NCEM, the American Red Cross, Baptists on Mission and other non-profits supported disaster relief through the distribution of meals, water, cleanup kits, comfort kits, and household disaster emergency supplies. Approximately 300 to 350 individuals sought refuge in the shelters established in the impacted areas. Additionally, the Red Cross, NCEM Human Services Branch and North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services continue to work with impacted counties to determine the unmet needs to assist survivors.

State, local government and non-governmental organizations have conducted many actions in response to Tropical Storm Fred. Over 200 people and 23 pets have been rescued throughout the event. Sadly, there were five fatalities and one person still unaccounted for in Haywood County. The following resources were deployed to respond to this event including but not limited to: 10 swift-water rescue teams, two urban search and rescue teams, two mountain rescue teams, one communications team, one Emergency Medical Service (EMS) strike team, four helicopter aquatic rescue teams, mass transportation and evacuation assistance, generator/power assistance, high water vehicles, All-Hazard Incident Management Teams (IMT), aviation support, dam safety engineers, supplemental oxygen, blankets, sandbags, and various other equipment.

Multiple State and local agencies continue to be involved in the response coordination including: North Carolina Department of Public Safety (NCDPS), NCDPS Division of Emergency Management (NCEM), North Carolina State Highway Patrol, North Carolina National Guard, NCDOT, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), NCDHHS Division of Social Services, North Carolina Wildlife Resources, North Carolina Forestry Division, North Carolina Department of Insurance, North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality.

Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) including the American Red Cross, North Carolina Baptists on Mission, and the Salvation Army have been deployed to provide individuals with basic needs including shelter, food, and emergency supplies. As of August 26<sup>th</sup>, those organizations and others have assisted in providing more than 9,000 meals to persons impacted by the storm.

While volunteer assistance has been critical toward recovery for the residents and businesses in impacted areas, unmet needs remain. Many households have suffered uninsured losses of personal belongings, appliances, furniture, vehicles, and homes. It is expected that recovery will be significantly more difficult for low-income individuals and other vulnerable populations, as well as for businesses impacted by previous disasters, to include COVID-19.

## **JOINT FEMA/STATE INDIVIDUAL ASSISTANCE AND PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PRELIMINARY DAMAGE ASSESSMENT**

### **Individual Assistance Factors**

Damage Assessments have been conducted in multiple stages. Initial damage assessments were conducted by search and rescue teams during response operation efforts in Haywood and Buncombe counties. This initial data collection reported over 203 buildings were completely destroyed because of Tropical Storm Fred. Transylvania County has been conducting damage assessments with an ARCGIS tool and are awaiting State staff to perform additional reviews and verifications. Transylvania County has reported at least 40 buildings completely destroyed with an additional 90 plus properties suffering damage.

Preliminary Damage Assessments began for the requested counties on Monday August 23, 2021, and are ongoing with efforts being made to verify data collected by the search and rescue teams. NCEM Recovery staff have been utilizing FEMA's Damage Assessment Resources platform to conduct windshield damage assessments in Buncombe and Haywood counties. Joint FEMA/State Individual Assistance Damage Assessments have been requested and will likely begin the week of August 30, 2021.

Most of the damage seems to be concentrated around major waterways including but not limited to North Fork French Broad, French Broad, Pigeon River, Davidson River, Lake Toxaway and the Swannanoa River. The core Individual Assistance Counties have a home ownership rate of 63.4% in Buncombe, 73% in Haywood, and 76% in Transylvania. Damages to property are most often attributed to flash flooding, flooding, and washouts. Insurance information is still being collected and a more complete picture will be established with ongoing Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDA) along with the Joint PDAs that have been requested.

The U.S. Department of Treasury lists North Carolina's most recent Total Taxable Resources as \$619.3 billion. However, the multitude and magnitude of disasters that have impacted the state in recent years, in addition to the Global Pandemic, have overwhelmed state resources and have strained our capacity to respond to Tropical Storm Fred appropriately. North Carolina has been experiencing a housing shortage with the National Low-Income Housing Coalition noting that the state lacks approximately 190,910 housing units to address the needs of North Carolinians. This shortage has also caused rental prices to increase substantially. The State of North Carolina has a robust Emergency Management team with dedicated Individual Assistance staff and programs which will be utilized to support any survivors of Fred that seek assistance.

The below chart addresses major demographic data points of the requested counties. In addition to the date shown below, Haywood County includes a portion of the Qualla Boundary, which is territory held by the Federally recognized Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Total Households</i>	<i>Poverty Rate for Population for whom Poverty Status is Determined</i>	<i>Percent of Households Receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) in Past 12 Months</i>	<i>Percent of Households Receiving Public Assistance Income or Food Stamps/SNAP in Past 12 Months</i>
<b>United States</b>	328,239,523	120,756,048	12.3%	5.3%	12.4%
<b>North Carolina</b>	10,488,084	3,965,482	13.6%	4.9%	13.0%

<b>Buncombe County</b>	261,191	107,479	12.2%	3.8%	9.0%
<b>Haywood County</b>	62,317	26,653	10.6%	7.1%	12.2%
<b>Transylvania County</b>	34,385	14,567	13.1%	4.0%	12.7%

Source	2019, U.S. Census Bureau, PEP Population Estimates	2019, U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates	2019, U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates	2019, U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates	2019, U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates
	<i>Pre-disaster unemployment rate</i>	<i>Population 65 years and older</i>	<i>Population under 18 years of age</i>	<i>Total civilian noninstitutionalized population with a disability</i>	<i>Population 5 years and over who speak a language other than English</i>
<b>United States</b>	8.1%	50,783,796	73,429,392	40,335,099	65,947,773
<b>North Carolina</b>	7.3%	1,628,013	2,296,614	1,352,783	1,139,787
<b>Buncombe County</b>	8.3%	49,925	48,156	33,752	20,269
<b>Haywood County</b>	7.5%	14,865	11,149	11,167	2,176
<b>Transylvania County</b>	6.1%	10,112	5,406	5,214	1,454

Source	2020 Annual Averages, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics	2019, U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates	2019, U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates	2019, U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates	2019, U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates
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## Public Assistance

The initial preliminary damage assessments for Public Assistance shows that the State exceeds the minimum state indicator of \$14,779,998.65 by \$6,040,919.35. Damage assessments are ongoing, and FEMA and the State will confirm these initial estimates.

County	NCDOT	EMC	County	Total	Threshold
Avery	\$ 109,867.00			\$ 106,041.00	\$ 69,230.00
Buncombe	\$ 2,102,924.00	\$ 48,652.00		\$ 2,151,576.00	\$ 927,057.02
Haywood	\$ 6,142,310.00	\$ 162,815.00	\$ 5,351,140.00	\$ 11,656,265.00	\$ 229,650.04
Madison	\$ 749,534.00			\$ 749,534.00	\$ 80,700.00
Transylvania	\$ 1,183,273.00	\$ 53,998.00		\$ 1,237,271.00	\$ 128,720.10
Watauga	\$ 498,000.00			\$ 498,000.00	\$ 198,697.31
Yancey	\$ 744,549.00		\$ 492,000.00	\$ 1,236,549.00	\$ 69,312.02
NCEM			\$ 3,185,682.00	\$ 3,185,682.00	
State Fish Hatchery					
<b>Total</b>	\$ 11,530,457.00	\$ 265,465.00	\$ 9,028,822.00	\$ 20,820,918.00	

## Disaster History

The State of North Carolina has a strong Emergency Management Division, with both an Individual and Public Assistance recovery program. However, the State has been inundated with a number of federal and state declared disasters that have strained its capabilities and resources on top of combating a global pandemic. Not taking into consideration the statewide COVID-19 emergency, over three quarters of the state is recovering from federally declared events that are still open, some with active Joint Field Operations. The damages for those events are far into the billions.

### Events:

- a. Hurricane Matthew devastated over half of the state in 2016, resulting in a Stafford Act declaration requiring in excess of \$100 million dollars of State cost share for both Public and Individual Assistance.
- b. The State suffered from two significant fires, one on November 9, 2016, and one on December 24, 2016, resulting in Stafford Act Fire Management Assistance Grant Declarations. Combined Cost Estimate - \$858,992.29.
- c. In May 2017, there was a straight-line winds and severe weather event in Sampson County, which resulted in a US Small Business Administration (hereafter SBA) and State Type I Individual Assistance declaration for that County. Estimated Cost - \$650,000.
- d. On August 16, 2017, a State Type I disaster was declared for the Town of Windsor, from the effects of Tropical Storm Julia. Estimated Cost - \$66,704.66.
- e. On November 15, 2017, a State Type I disaster was declared for the City of Eden for a straight-line wind event. Estimated Cost - \$186,301.
- f. On November 22, 2017, a State Type I disaster was declared for Ashe, Avery, Caldwell, Watauga, and Wilkes counties for flooding and heavy winds. This also resulted in an US SBA disaster Declaration. Estimated Cost - \$87,084.
- g. On April 24, 2018, a State Type I disaster was declared for the Village of Cedar Creek, and the Town of Tryon for the effects of Tropical Storm Nate. Estimated Cost - \$44,410.69.

- h. The State of North Carolina declared disasters for four towns that suffered from the effects from Hurricane Alberto, which caused flooding and mudslides in the Western part of the State. Estimated Cost – \$1.38 million.
- i. Hurricane Florence, which has been referred to as a 'Historic Storm', made landfall in the State of North Carolina on September 14, 2018. A major Stafford Act disaster declaration was issued for both Individual and Public Assistance. After insurance PA estimated costs - \$1.32 billion.
- j. On October 10, 2018, Tropical Storm Michael resulted in a Major Disaster Declaration under the Stafford Act for Public Assistance being issued on February 1, 2019. The storm affected twenty-one (21) counties. Estimated Damages Costs - \$31 million.
- k. On September 6, 2019, Hurricane Dorian devastated the Outer Banks, and led to twenty-eight counties receiving a Stafford Act Public Assistance Declaration. Hyde County and the contiguous counties received a Type I State Individual Assistance Declaration as a result of damages from Hurricane Dorian. Much of the damage affected areas were still trying to recovery from Hurricane Florence. Estimated Damages Costs - \$98 million.
- l. On March 13, 2020, an Emergency Declaration was issued for COVID-19 followed quickly on March 25, 2020, by a Major Disaster Declaration. COVID-19, a global pandemic, has imposed widespread health and economic adverse impacts and materially altered the tools and resources the State can deploy to respond to disasters. The incident period has been extended indefinitely. There is no cost-share to the state for this event.
- m. As a result of a severe weather event on or about February 6, 2020, the State received a Public Assistance declaration under the Stafford Act on May 8, 2020. Eighteen (18) counties were declared given the amount of flooding and damage that resulted. Estimated Costs – \$15 million
- n. An earthquake occurred near the town of Sparta, North Carolina in Alleghany County on August 9, 2020. It had a magnitude 5.1 which resulted in both a Type I State Declaration and an SBA declaration for Alleghany County as well as the contiguous Counties. Budgeted Costs – \$27 million



- o. Bertie County, as well as the contiguous counties, received an SBA disaster declaration and a Type I State Declaration on August 21, 2020, for IA because of Hurricane Isaias and the severe weather and tornadoes that it prompted. Budgeted Costs - \$750,000.
- p. On October 14, 2020, the State received a Stafford Declaration for the impacts of Hurricane Isaias, which affected fifteen (15) coastal counties on August 3, 2020. Estimated Damages Cost - \$40 million
- q. Severe Weather from Tropical Storm Eta in November 2020, lead to a State Type I Individual Assistance declaration in Alexander County. Budgeted Costs - \$231,800.
- r. As a result of Tropical Storm Eta, a major disaster declaration for public assistance was declared on March 3, 2021 for nineteen (19) counties. Estimated Costs – \$48 Million.
- q. On May 14, 2021, a State Type I disaster was declared for Town of Lillington in Harnett County, North Carolina and the City of Marion in McDowell County, North Carolina for severe weather. Budgeted Costs - \$1.2 million.

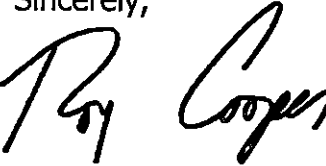
I have determined that this incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective recovery is beyond the capabilities of the State and affected local governments and that supplementary Federal assistance is necessary. The State has expended an extraordinary amount of money on Stafford Act and non-Stafford Act disasters in the previous four years, as well as the current fiscal year. Serious remaining impacts still need to be addressed. Therefore, I am respectfully requesting that you issue a Major Disaster Declaration for Individual Assistance, including the Individuals and Households Program (IHP), the Small Business Administration's Disaster Assistance Loans, Crisis Counseling, Disaster Legal Services, Disaster Unemployment Assistance, and the Disaster Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program for the counties of Buncombe, Haywood, Transylvania. I am requesting Public Assistance for Avery, Buncombe, Haywood, Madison, Transylvania, Yancey, and Watauga counties Categories A (debris removal) and B (emergency protective measures), and C-G (Permanent Work) and HMPG assistance statewide.

I certify that for this major disaster, the State and local governments will assume all applicable non-Federal shares of costs required by the Stafford Act.

President Biden  
August 27, 2021  
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I have designated William C. Ray as the State Coordinating Officer for this request. He will work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency in damage assessments and may provide further information or justification on my behalf.

I appreciate your support and recognition of the continued impact that this tropical storm poses to the state.

Sincerely,  
  
Roy Cooper

Enclosures

OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA Form 010-0-13

A: Individual Assistance

B: Public Assistance

C: Executive Order No. 227