

Tuesday, November 19, 2024

The Honorable Charles Schumer
U.S. Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairman Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Chair Murray, Vice Chair Collins, Speaker Johnson, Leader Jeffries, Chairman Cole, and Ranking Member DeLauro,

We write to you today as the undersigned coalition of 131 organizations, businesses, and allies including public health professionals, community associations, think tanks, land trusts, floodplain managers, conservation districts, waterkeepers, rural voices, farm workers, and more, calling on Congress to expedite the passage of an emergency supplemental appropriations bill. Additionally funding is necessary to help families, businesses, and already devastated communities get back on their feet.

On September 26th, 2024 Hurricane Helene made landfall on Florida's Gulf Coast as a Category 4 storm which made its way across Georgia, the Carolinas, and Tennessee. Less than two weeks later, on October 9th, 2024, Hurricane Milton hit Florida as a Category 3 hurricane. By some estimates nearly 100,000 farms were in the direct path of the hurricanes. Collectively, these extreme weather events have amassed nearly \$300 billion in damages causing widespread agricultural issues, economic hardship, and infrastructure concerns. To date, 261 people have lost their lives resulting from both hurricanes.

As we work to help rebuild the Southeast with resilience in mind, we urge Congress to approve immediate funding for the programs below which builds on and supports [the White House request](#):

- \$40 billion for the Disaster Relief Fund to support FEMA's response to Hurricanes Helene and Milton;
- \$1.1 billion for the Emergency Watershed Protection Program with report language directing prioritization of activities that enhance long-term river processes rather than short-term fixes.; and
- \$3 billion for State and Tribal Assistance Grants to go to affected States and Tribes to adopt long-term water system upgrades and mitigate damages.

Additionally, the federal funding recommendations below are necessary to support the recovery for the region and prepare for future storms in North Carolina:

- \$100 million for U.S. Army Corps' Environmental Infrastructure Program to assess dams;
- \$35 million for EPA's 319 program to support the implementation of gray water systems;
- \$42 million to AmeriCorps to support the development of regional stream debris removal teams;
- \$35 million for U.S. Forest Services' Dam Engineering and Management Program to support the assessment and removal of dams within their boundaries;
- \$50 million for the National Fish Passage Program to retrofit, rehabilitate, and/or remove dams where they no longer serve a purpose;
- \$24 million for the National Dam Safety Program's State Assistance Program to provide states financial assistance to strengthen dam safety.

Pre- and Post-Disaster Policy Solutions

The following mitigation policies offer a significant downpayment that will help bolster both current and future federal resilience capabilities in a smart and efficient manner.

- Congress should address the White House administration request to forgive all or some of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) debt to ensure policyholders and disaster survivors receive the assistance necessary after a flood..
- Congress needs to reauthorize FEMA's National Dam Safety Program and eliminate barriers that often prevent communities from accessing assistance.
- Congress should require FEMA and HUD to better integrate programs for affordable housing with healthy floodplain management to meet the housing needs of families and communities who need to relocate to safer ground.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to working with Congress in a bipartisan fashion to help communities recover from recent disasters and ensure that the policies and support are in place to prepare for future disasters.

We stand ready to work with you and your respective committees to pass significant disaster relief so that the road to long term recovery can begin sooner than later. Our communities do not have the luxury of waiting any longer. They need help now.

Sincerely,

1. 350 Bay Area Action
2. Alabama Rivers Alliance
3. Alabama State Association of Cooperatives
4. Allegheny County Clean Air Now (ACCAN)
5. Alliance for Appalachia
6. American Muslim Health Professionals
7. American Rivers
8. American Shore & Beach Preservation Assoc.
9. American sustainable business network
10. American Whitewater
11. Americas for Conservation
12. Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy
13. Anchor QEA of North Carolina, PLLC
14. Anthropocene Alliance
15. Appalachian citizens' law center
16. Asheville GreenWorks
17. Association of State Floodplain Managers
18. Beaver County Marcellus Awareness Community
19. Birds Georgia
20. Brown & Associates Environmental Group
21. Cacapon Institute
22. Cahaba Riverkeeper
23. Cape Fear River Watch
24. Catawba Riverkeeper Foundation
25. Center for a Sustainable Coast
26. Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development (CSED)
27. Chesapeake Climate Action Network
28. Clean Water Action
29. Climate Crisis Policy
30. Coal River Mountain Watch
31. Community Outreach, Inc.
32. Concerned Citizens Table of Lake Charles
33. Conservation Voters of SC
34. Dogwood Alliance
35. Earth Bill Network
36. Earth Ethics, Inc.
37. Emergency Legal Responders
38. Endangered Species Coalition
39. Environmental Justice Community Action Network
40. Extreme Weather Survivors
41. Familias Unidas En Acción
42. Farmworkers Association of Florida
43. Food & Water Watch
44. Food Bank of Northern Nevada
45. For a Better Bayou
46. French Broad Adventures
47. Freshlist
48. Freshwater Future
49. Friends of the Big Sioux River
50. Friends of the Chemung River Watershed
51. Friends of the Edisto
52. Friends of the River
53. Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association
54. Greater-Birmingham Alliance to Stop Pollution (GASP)
55. GreenLatinos
56. Hands of love center
57. Hannahs House MALC
58. Healthy Ocean Coalition
59. Heritage Works, Inc.
60. Hispanic Federation
61. Inland Ocean Coalition
62. Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
63. Kansas Alliance for Wetlands and Streams
64. KCI Technologies
65. Kentucky Heartwood
66. Kentucky Resources Council, Inc.

67. Kentucky Waterways Alliance
68. Kids for Saving Earth
69. La Mesa Boricua de Flo
70. Latino Farmers & Ranchers International, Inc.
71. Latino Outdoors
72. Little Listeners
73. Long Beach Gray Panthers
74. Love The Everglades Movement
75. Low Impact Hydropower Institute
76. Massachusetts Rivers Alliance
77. Micah Six Eight Mission
78. Michigan Hydro Relicensing Coalition
79. Milwaukee Riverkeeper
80. Missisquoi River Basin Association
81. Mountain Watershed Association
82. MountainTrue
83. National Association for Family Child Care
84. National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium
85. National Wildlife Federation
86. NC Conservation Network
87. Neighborhood Improvement Association
88. Next 100 Coalition
89. North American Climate, Conservation and Environment (NACCE)
90. North Carolina Association of Black Lawyers Land Loss Prevention Project
91. Nourish Up
92. Partnership for Southern Equity
93. Person Soil & Water Conservation District
94. Physicians for Social Responsibility
95. Piedmont Conservation Council
96. Predator Defense
97. Protect Our Water, Heritage, Rights
98. Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
99. Public Justice Center
100. Rachel Carson Council
101. Regenerative Agriculture Coalition
102. ReImagine Appalachia
103. Resource Environmental Solutions
104. Resource Renewal Institute
105. Responsible Alpha
106. Restore America's Estuaries
107. River Network
108. RiverLink
109. Rural Coalition
110. Silvix Resources
111. South Bronx Unite
112. Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership
113. Soy del Pueblo TV
114. Springfield Food Policy Council/40 Acres Farm
115. Taunton River Stewardship Council
116. Taunton River Watershed Alliance
117. The Conservation Angler
118. The Neutral Ground Collective
119. The Water Collaborative of Greater New Orleans
120. Three Rivers Waterkeeper
121. Toxic Free NC
122. Turtle Island Restoration Network
123. Union of Concerned Scientists
124. UpstreamPgh
125. Voters Legal Justice Watch Group
126. WE ACT for Environmental Justice
127. Western Nebraska Resources Council
128. Wilcox Youth Entrepreneurship Program
129. Winyah Rivers Alliance
130. Womxn From The Mountain
131. WZA Consultant