

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

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

132. WZA Consultant