

Helene Recovery in Biltmore Forest – By the Numbers

Vegetative Loss and Debris Removal

- Total Vegetative Debris Removed from Biltmore Forest:
405,187.30 cubic yards (equivalent to just over four football fields, 66 feet in depth)
 - By comparison, just over **3 million cubic yards** were removed from the remainder of Buncombe County.
 - The Town accounts for **3 square miles**, with the remainder of Buncombe County equaling **657 square miles**.
 - The Town's debris removal efforts accounted for **135,000 cubic yards per square mile**. This amount was **4,567 cubic yards per square mile** for the remainder of Buncombe County.
 - This does not disparage what the County accomplished, but rather, puts into sharp relief the extreme nature of the debris removal within Biltmore Forest.
 - For the twenty-three mountain counties generally considered to be within Western North Carolina, **the total land area is approximately 11,750 square miles**. The total removal from the public right of way and waterways in this area, as of September 10, 2025, is just over **14.5 million cubic yards**.
 - For this entire region, that equals **1,234 cubic yards per square mile**. Again, all efforts for debris removal from Hurricane Helene have been herculean, but when put into focus, these relative numbers demonstrate the outsized dramatic impact for debris removal within Biltmore Forest.
 - By percentage, the **Town's debris removal accounted for 2.79 percent of all vegetative debris removed**. The Town's land area accounts for **0.0255 percent of the total land area** for Western North Carolina.
- Total Vegetative Debris Converted into Wood Chips:
163,886.20 cubic yards
 - The bulk of this debris was taken to a mulch processing facility in Maggie Valley, NC. This site filled up in May 2024, and the Town subsequently began taking wood chips to a public landfill in Haywood County.
- It is estimated that somewhere between **15,000 and 20,000** trees came down or were damaged from the storm. The Town's debris contractor removed **489 trees** from public spaces, rights of way, or private property, and removed **360 hanging or dangerous branches** from trees.

Financial Impacts

- To date, the Town has expended **\$9,648,798** on Helene related recovery. The bulk of these expenses were paid for debris removal, in the amount of **\$9,349,558**.
- We have received **\$6,285,729** from FEMA, paid through the State of NC.
- The Town currently has over **\$500,000 in process** at the state level, and a third round of debris removal reimbursement of **\$2.5 million being processed at the federal level**.

- As of today, we estimate an **additional \$2.5-3 million** will be requested in reimbursement before our projects are fully paid out and then closed out.
- The Town has **received nearly \$2.5 million from the State of North Carolina** via disaster cashflow loans. These funds have allowed the Town to continue regular activities while still working through disaster recovery.
- In the Land of Sky Region (Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania Counties) over **\$275,000,000 in damages** have been inventoried. **\$79,485,677 has been obligated** from the federal level thus far.
- The Town has the **most obligated projects (12) in the entire region** and is fourth, behind Buncombe County, Henderson County, and the City of Asheville, in total funds obligated.
- **Total funds obligated for the Town as of 8/9/25 (the last reporting date) are \$9,659,648.80.**
 - **Publicly Available Source for this data, accessed 9/9/25:**
 - <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/publish?EQBCT=7798bf0c612a48dda3e29797f522661b>
 - **Note: Obligated funds do not equal funds *dispersed* to the local government. These are funds dedicated to projects that are approved.**