

GEORGIA FORESTRY
COMMISSION



Hurricane Helene Forest Access Road and Firebreak Debris Clearing Program

In October 2024, emergency disaster relief for debris cleanup in the wake of Hurricane Helene was authorized by Governor Brian Kemp and GSFIC. In an effort to prevent future wildfires and insect infestations, \$25 million in aid was made available for Georgia timberland owners in affected counties, to be administered by the Georgia Forestry Commission and the Georgia Development Authority.

The Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) has established procedures for landowners seeking assistance with debris clearing and restoration of pre-existing forest roads and firebreaks. Private forest landowners within the designated 91-county disaster area impacted by Hurricane Helene are eligible. These counties are: Appling, Atkinson, Bacon, Banks, Ben Hill, Berrien, Bleckley, Brantley, Brooks, Bryan, Bulloch, Burke, Butts, Camden, Candler, Charlton, Chatham, Clinch, Coffee, Colquitt, Columbia, Cook, Dawson, Decatur, Dodge, Dooly, Echols, Effingham, Elbert, Emanuel, Evans, Franklin, Fulton, Gilmer, Glascock, Glynn, Grady, Greene, Habersham, Hancock, Hart, Irwin, Jackson, Jasper, Jeff Davis, Jefferson, Jenkins, Johnson, Lamar, Lanier, Laurens, Liberty, Lincoln, Long, Lowndes, Lumpkin, Madison, McDuffie, McIntosh, Mitchell, Monroe, Montgomery, Newton, Oglethorpe, Pierce, Pike, Pulaski, Putnam, Rabun, Richmond, Screven, Stephens, Taliaferro, Tattnall, Telfair, Thomas, Tift, Toombs, Treutlen, Turner, Twiggs, Ware, Warren, Washington, Wayne, Wheeler, White, Wilcox, Wilkes, Wilkinson, and Worth Counties.

Eligible tracts of forestland must have had existing forest/tree cover containing forest roads and established firebreaks immediately prior to the storm's arrival. This program is not intended for the creation of new forest roads nor the installation of new firebreaks. Lands enrolled in any other local, state, or federal reimbursement or cost sharing programs for similar or like activities are not eligible for assistance under this Forest Access Road and Firebreak Restoration Project.

Georgia Forestry Commission personnel and equipment will be available to clear wind-blown debris such as trees, tree tops, limbs, and other vegetation from existing forest roads to allow wildland fire operations access to forestlands. In addition, wind-blown debris may be removed from existing firebreaks by heavy equipment and/or harrowing to return them to a condition that prohibits the spread of wildland fires.

There is no cost to the landowner for these services. Initially, there will be a limit of 25 hours of service allowed per landowner, until all pending service requests are met. This service will initially be limited to perimeter firebreaks and roads or to break up large acreages of continuous fuel (more than 100 acres).

Landowners must complete an online application for these services. On-site visits may be required to determine eligibility and evaluation of priority needs. Priority will be given based on damage and the wildfire risk for the area, as well as date and time of submitted application.

Post-Hurricane Helene work already completed by GFC is eligible. This includes work to restore forest roads and firebreaks by the GFC on pre-existing forest roads and firebreaks, to remove downed trees, tree tops, limbs, and vegetation as a result of the hurricane.

Application period ended on December 6, 2024.