

Hickory Nut Gorge Land Use Recovery Plan Community Survey



Background & Purpose

The Hickory Nut Gorge Land Use Recovery Plan (HNG Plan) is a long-term plan to guide rebuilding, recovery, and resilience efforts in Henderson County’s Hickory Nut Gorge communities – Gerton, Bat Cave, and a portion of Edneyville – in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. The HNG Plan will identify short-term (1-2 years), intermediate-term (2-5 years), and long-term (5-10 years) recommendations to guide recovery. Recommendations could include: river and ecological restoration, hazard mitigation, transportation and utility improvements, economic development, public health, and recreation considerations, all to help the community and land remain strong and safe in the future. On June 2, 2025, Henderson County Commissioners appointed members of the community to the Hickory Nut Gorge Community Partners Group (HNG Group) to advise the recovery planning process over the next 6 months. The goal is to have a final plan in December 2025.

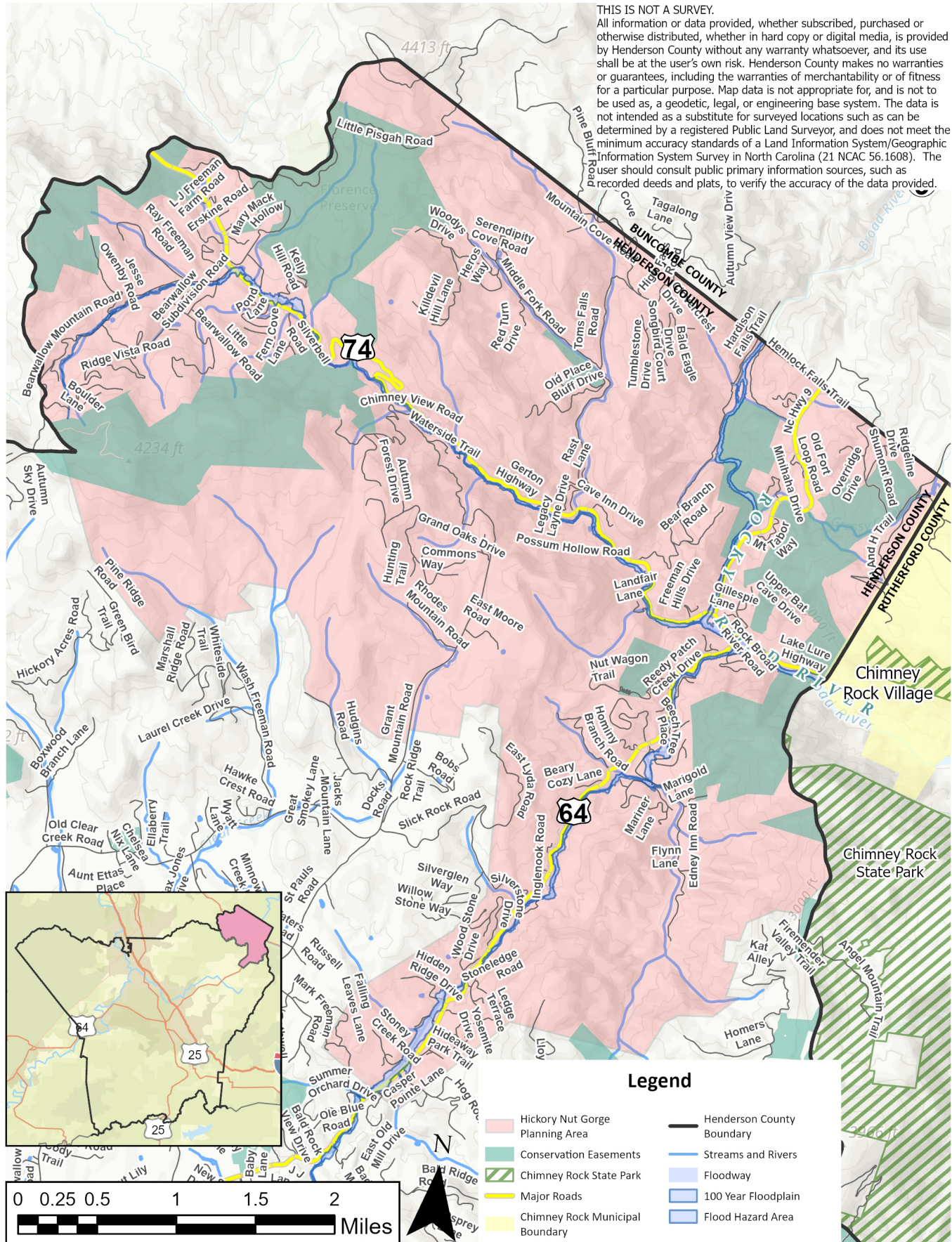
The project team, consisting of County, NCDOT, local fire departments, and emergency management staff as well as local consultants led by Equinox, wants to acknowledge the incredible heroism of local residents and community leaders that stepped up in the immediate aftermath of the storm and are still working daily to ensure residents’ basic needs are met. Henderson County established a “Recovery Taskforce” in November 2024 to focus on immediate and short-term recovery needs, which serves as the County’s connection to the state’s ReBUILD NC Recovery Taskforce.

While this plan does not intend to address immediate needs, you can still reach out to Henderson County staff at helene-info@hcem.org or (828) 771-6670, or contact United Way by dialing 211, or visit <https://www.liveunitedhc.org/community-resources> for more information about resources for residents.



Scan this QR code if you would prefer
an online version of the survey, or visit
www.surveymonkey.com/r/HNGsurvey

Hickory Nut Gorge Study Area Map



Community Survey Questions

We understand the heavy impact Hurricane Helene had on the Hickory Nut Gorge. Some residents are still displaced and debris removal is ongoing. This survey is an opportunity to provide input and shape the outcomes of this recovery plan. To stay up to date on progress, be sure to check the project landing page on the Henderson County website. (www.hendersoncountync.gov/planning/page/hickory-nut-gorge-recovery-plan).

Section 1: About You

1. After reviewing the study area map on the previous page, what is your primary connection to the area?
(You may choose more than one answer)

- ☐ Full-time resident
- ☐ Part-time resident
- ☐ Property owner
- ☐ Renter
- ☐ Lease business space
- ☐ Business owner
- ☐ Work or volunteer locally
- ☐ Frequent visitor
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

2. Based on your previous answer, which area best describes the location of your primary connection?

- ☐ Gerton
- ☐ Bat Cave
- ☐ Edneyville (within study area)
- ☐ Other Henderson County Resident
- ☐ Not a Resident
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

3. As of today, to what degree do the following still impact our life? Please indicate the degree of impact you experienced by circling a number 1 through 5, with 1 being little impact and 5 being severe impact. Leave any item blank if you have not experienced an impact from Helene.

<input type="checkbox"/> Limited access to roads and/or transportation services	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Loss of bridge into/out of community	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Limited access to essential services (e.g. water, electricity, health care, communications, post office)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Emotional or mental health challenges related to the storm	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Damage to home or vehicle	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty accessing food, prescriptions or other supplies	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Economic loss (employment or income)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Having to leave your home after the disaster (temporary or long-term)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Closures impacting childcare, work, or learning	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Having to leave your business after the disaster (temporary or long-term)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Damage to business or commercial property that I own	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Damage to business or commercial property that I lease	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Injury or other impact on personal health	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Loss of community spaces	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Loss of support networks (e.g., neighbors, church communities)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Damage to personal property	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Damage to private roads, driveways, and/or private bridges	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Security concerns (Looters, scavengers, and disaster tourists)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Clarity on how to get help (e.g., identifying resources available, how to apply, and support through the application process, where applicable)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)	1	2	3	4	5

Section 2: Recovery Priorities

4. On a scale from 1-5 (5 being essential and 1 being least important), how would you rank the following recovery priorities in the three categories below? Assign each item one of the following options: 5 (Essential), 4 (Very Important), 3 (Neutral), 2 (Somewhat Important), 1 (least important)

Immediate Needs:

<input type="checkbox"/> Rebuild roads and bridges (back to the way they were before the storm)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Rebuild roads and bridges (in a way that makes them stronger and more resistant to damage during natural disasters, even if this creates greater cost and requires additional right-of-way)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Rebuild septic/sewer, and water infrastructure (back to the way it was before the storm)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Rebuild septic/sewer, and water infrastructure (in a way that makes them stronger and more resistant to damage during natural disasters)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Rebuild housing	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Home repair resources	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Connection to other resources for recovery like grants, nonprofit assistance, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Access to physical, mental, and emotional health services	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):	1	2	3	4	5

Restoration:

<input type="checkbox"/> Restore trails and recreation infrastructure that includes emergency personnel access	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Support rebuilding the Upper Hickory Nut Gorge Community Center	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Restore the environment and the special natural places of the Hickory Nut Gorge, including reforestation of trees lost during the storm	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Support local businesses to help the economy recover and grow	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Support local businesses that rely on tourism as their customer base	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):	1	2	3	4	5

(Question 4 Continued)

New Opportunities:

<input type="checkbox"/> Improve communication and emergency alert systems (e.g. river gauges, siren evacuation systems, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify a Community Resource Center - a place for people to gather and get help after a natural disaster (e.g. local fire stations)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Support for sidewalks, pathways, or bike lanes	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Support new recreation infrastructure development and river access that includes emergency personnel/response access	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Support research and implementation of additional funding sources for local fire and rescue operations	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Reinforce the fire departments to be able to withstand disasters	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Support for housing that local people can reasonably afford	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Address environmental and natural resource protection (flooding, landslides, wildfires, habitats, water quality)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Planning how land is used and building back in a way that reduces damage during disaster	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify the land uses that are appropriate for Hickory Nut Gorge	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Create plans and actions that help the community prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____	1	2	3	4	5

Section 3: Yes or No Response

5. Henderson County is focused on facilitating septic system repairs, but due to the loss of soil from the storm, some areas will no longer support any type of septic system. Do you support extending sewer utilities from the east, along US 74A, to no further west than Hwy 9 in place of septic repair if there is an agreement to limit future development? *Please circle one:*

YES

NO

Section 4: Open Ended Questions

6. What improvements or features would you like to see in a restored Gerton?

7. What improvements or features would you like to see in a restored Bat Cave?

8. What concerns do you have about land use or development in Gerton post-Hurricane Helene?

9. What concerns do you have about land use or development in Bat Cave post-Hurricane Helene?

10. What environmental or infrastructure (roads, water, sewer, power) improvements would you like to see to increase the community's resilience?

11. What is one thing you hope the recovery plan includes?

Section 5: Optional Demographic Questions

The following questions are optional. Responses will be used to gauge survey participation only

12. What is your age range?

- ☐ 18 to 20 years old
- ☐ 21 to 29 years old
- ☐ 30 to 39 years old
- ☐ 40 to 49 years old
- ☐ 50 to 59 years old
- ☐ 60 or older
- ☐ Prefer not to say

13. Which of the following best describes you?

- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- ☐ White
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Prefer not to say

14. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

15. What is your gender? _____

Immediate Assistance: If you have questions regarding immediate needs, you can reach out to helene-info@hcem.org, call 211, or visit www.liveunitedhc.org/community-resources for information about resources for Henderson County residents.

Next Steps: Henderson County will host a Community Meeting on Tuesday, August 19th, at Bat Cave Baptist Church from 5 PM to 7 PM. If you live or work in the Hickory Nut Gorge community, you are invited to come give input and learn more about the plan's progress.

Personal Helene Experience: If you're interested in writing a narrative about your experience during the hurricane or would like to be interviewed, please reach out to Janna Bianculli at jbianculli@hendersoncountync.gov.

Questions: If you have any questions about this survey or the Hickory Nut Gorge Recovery Plan, please contact Janna Bianculli at jbianculli@hendersoncountync.gov.