



Governor's Advisory Committee on Western North Carolina Recovery

March 6, 2026

10:00 am – 12:00 pm



Blue Ridge Parkway: Status of Repairs and Timeline for Future Work

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Blue Ridge Parkway, National Park Service

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AGENDA



1. Speaker Introductions
2. State of the Park
3. Year 1 Recovery Accomplishments
4. What to expect in 2026
 - a. Transportation Projects
 - b. Non-transportation Projects
5. Looking Ahead



INITIAL IMPACTS on the BLUE RIDGE



100%
of the 469-mile
route closed

300+
first responders
rotated through NPS
Incident Team



58
catastrophic
landslides



Six-week initial
response by NPS
Type 3 Team

115+
barriers
deployed



55,025
acres with rapid
assessment of natural
and cultural features in
recovery area

12,287
acres of forest
canopy impacted



Record low visitation
decimates local
economies

740K visitors in Oct. 2024



YEAR 1 RECOVERY ACCOMPLISHMENTS



350,000

cubic feet of storm debris removed from 11-mile Asheville corridor within the first six weeks

400+

miles of the Parkway restored for public use



579+



volunteers supported recovery

22,606+

hours contributed from volunteers

140

miles of trails reopened



14

contracts awarded

58

sites under contract

10

comprehensive compliance packages supporting slope failures, debris removal, building repairs and more

11

roof replacements on damaged structures



8

impacted vistas restored
by March 2026 number will jump to 28



13

slide stabilization and road repair projects complete

18

sites completed



50+

community meetings and presentations



2

historic structures repaired in partnership with HPTC

2.3 Million
park visitors in October 2025

Up 70% from 2024



SHOW & TELL



Milepost 375 – Work Progression



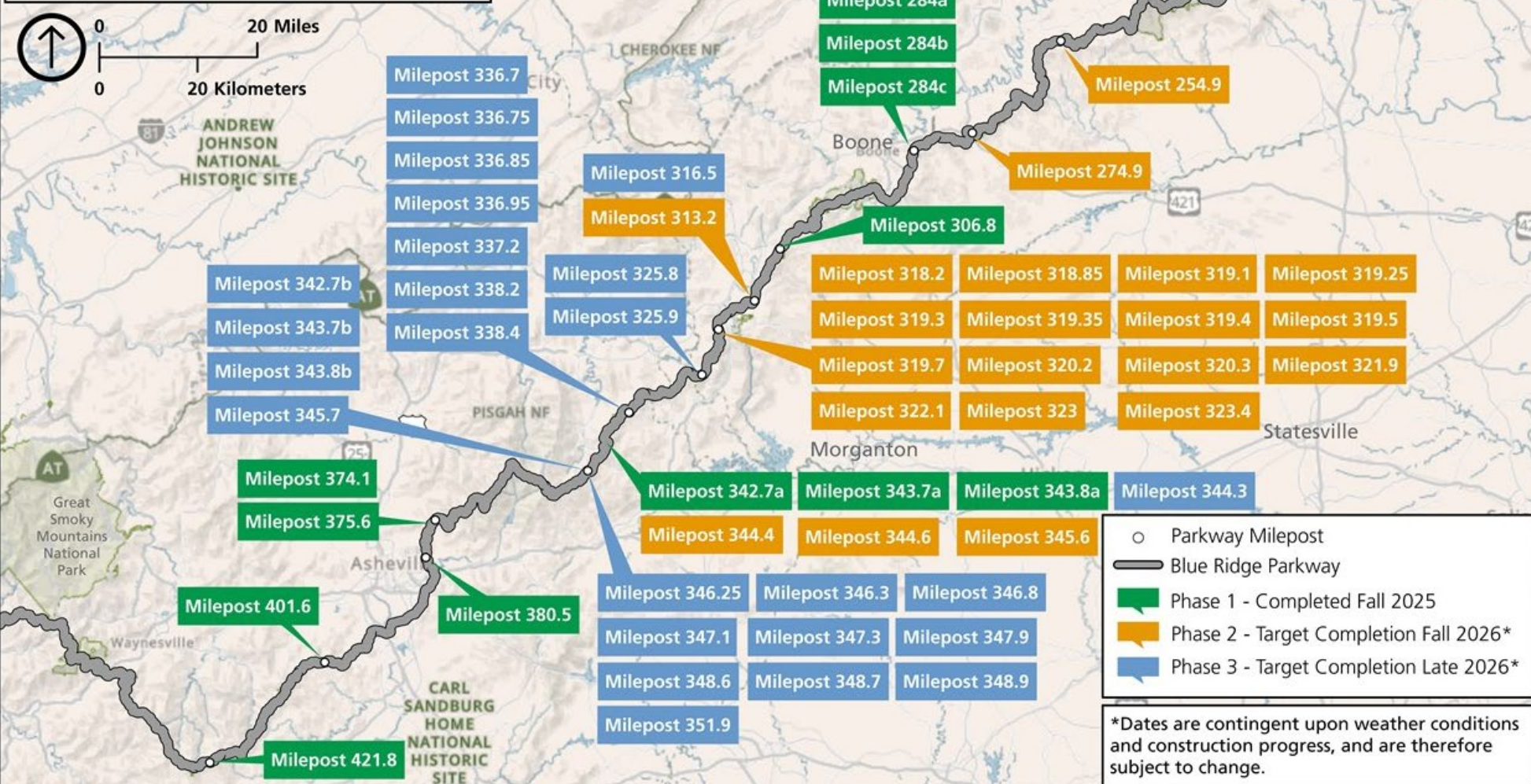
Milepost 401 – Work Progression



HELENE ROAD PROJECTS



This map reflects initial locations along the Parkway in NC where emergency repair and recovery work is underway. It does not represent all affected areas where damage occurred. As recovery efforts continue, this map will be revised.



TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS



Helene Recovery Road Project Phases 2 & 3

- All Phase 2 & 3 Task Orders are Awarded, Construction Underway
- FHWA Task Orders using Multiple Award Task Order Contract (MATOC) with incentives.
- Recent winter storms impacting work crews' access to sites.
- Anticipated Summer 2026: 35 miles of shared public/construction route from Asheville to active construction sites.

Additional road project work...



NC ROAD PROJECTS



Blue Ridge Parkway – 2026 Road Projects (N to S)				
Milepost/Location	Location /Park neighbors affected	Project	Target completion dates	What to expect
MP 276	Deep Gap/FLTP	Bridge project (over US 421)	Early Spring – Early Winter 2026	Full closure: MP 274.3 to MP 276.4 Detour: MP 269.8 to MP 276.4
MP 280-285 MP 291.7 – 305.1	Last section of remaining of ongoing GAOA investment project.	Reconstruct pavement, repair drainage structures, repair bridges, and slope reconstruction	Fall 2026	Variable full closures maintaining access to key nodes including Cone Memorial Park, Price Lake, Rough Ridge trail head parking and Linn Cove parking.
MP 317.5-324.7^	Mainline Parkway south of Linville Falls McDowell/Burke counties	Slope reconstruction and stabilization, repair drainage structures, rebuild and pave road and curbing as needed	Summer 2026	Full closure Restores access from US 221 (MP 317.5) to Heffner Gap (MP 324.7) when complete
MP 316.4 ^	Linville Falls spur road	Repair and reconstruct	Summer 2026	Several trails remain accessible from the USFS gravel parking area on Old NC 105
MP 336.3 – 355^	Little Switzerland to Mount Mitchell	Slope reconstruction and stabilization, repair drainage structures, rebuild and pave road and curbing as needed	December 2026	
344.4 – 345.6^	Near Buck Creek Gap	Slope reconstruction and stabilization, repair drainage structures, rebuild and pave road and curbing as needed	December 2025 (section will remain closed after completion due to other slides)	Full Closure Public access to this section will be restored as part of Phase 3.

NON-TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS



FACILITY RECOVERY PROJECTS



Ongoing Cleanup and Removal Efforts

Clearing and removal of debris from waterways and flood-affected zones

Demolition of compromised structures

Dredging operations in historic millponds

Facility and Grounds Maintenance

Repairs to both historic and non-historic buildings

Mitigation of hazardous trees; Restoration of roadside landscapes, vistas, and features

Trail maintenance, including backcountry, front country, and Cone Estate Carriage Trails

Infrastructure Repair and Reliability Enhancements

Dam repair and measures to enhance reliability

Repairs and reliability improvements for telecommunications

Utility repairs, including relocating comfort stations away from flood-prone regions

Planning for Restored Visitor Services

Area planning focused on visitor service requirements, such as Linville Falls Campground, trails, picnic sites, and housing facilities

RESOURCE RECOVERY PROJECTS



Cultural Resource Projects

Archeology & Cemeteries – Surveys and stabilization of cemeteries along the Parkway.

Collections – Repair/conservation of impacted collection pieces.

Cultural Landscapes – Restoration of impacted landscapes along the motor road, slide areas, and flooded areas; includes Cone Manor and Price Park

Natural Resource Projects

Wetlands and Streams - Stabilizing and restoring aquatic systems impacted by flooding and erosion to protect water quality and habitat connectivity.

Invasive Plants - Addressing the spread of invasive plant species accelerated by Hurricane Helene's disturbance, which created openings for rapid spread and displacement of native vegetation.

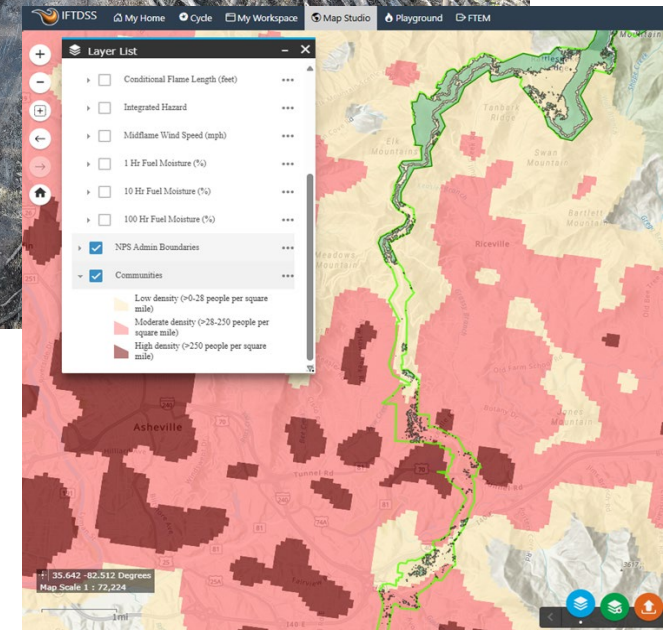
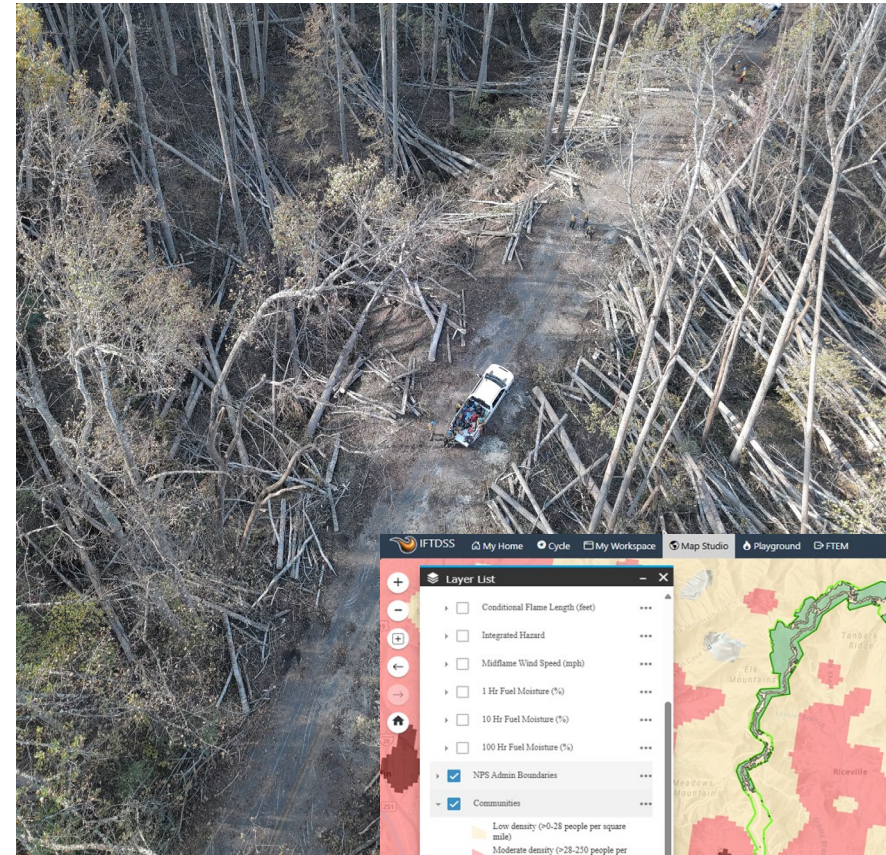
Habitat- uplands and Wildlife- Repairing upland habitats and ensuring wildlife corridors remain intact to sustain biodiversity and ecological balance.

FOCUS: WILDFIRE FUEL REDUCTION



Woody debris left by Hurricane Helene in forested Wildland–Urban Interface (WUI) areas along the Parkway has increased wildfire risk, requiring removal to restore park lands and reduce potential fuel loads.

- NPS/USFS used Interagency Fuel Treatment Decision Support System (IFTDSS) to perform risk assessment and plan for initial treatments along the Parkway post-Helene
- Underway: Contract development and NEPA/S106/Section 7 compliance reviews for summer and fall debris removal work
- Summer/Fall 2026: Contracting with USFS
- Revegetation and invasives treatment 2026-2029, requires three growing seasons post-debris removal
- Continued collaboration with USDA/USFS and local fire reps in support of community firewise actions



FOCUS: DEVELOPED AREA RECOVERY



Problem Statement: Flooding from Hurricane Helene severely damaged facilities and infrastructure at the Linville Falls developed area, creating urgent need for redevelopment incorporating resilient design to withstand future floods

Linville Falls Site Plan includes:

- Restoration of the Linville Falls Visitor Use Area (visitor center, picnic area, campground, utilities)
- Facility relocation out of floodplain and upgrades to septic and water systems to restore function, improve resiliency
- Repairs to the Linville Gorge Trail, site features, and park residences and quarters.
- Provides framework for investments, facility types, locations and relationships, and ensures that components function together as a cohesive system, resilient to future storms.

Timeline: Planning and public engagement now through late 2027, Construction timeline TBD

Compliance: An Environmental Assessment (EA) is anticipated for this planning effort.

Cost: \$46M+

Partners: NPS-DSC, A/E contractors, civic engagement, gateway communities



FOCUS: TRAILS RECOVERY



Problem Statement: Hurricane Helene's heavy rain and wind caused ground instability, washouts and downed trees along dozens of miles of Blue Ridge Parkway trails, blocking access and creating unsafe conditions requiring immediate repair and rehab to restore safe visitor use.

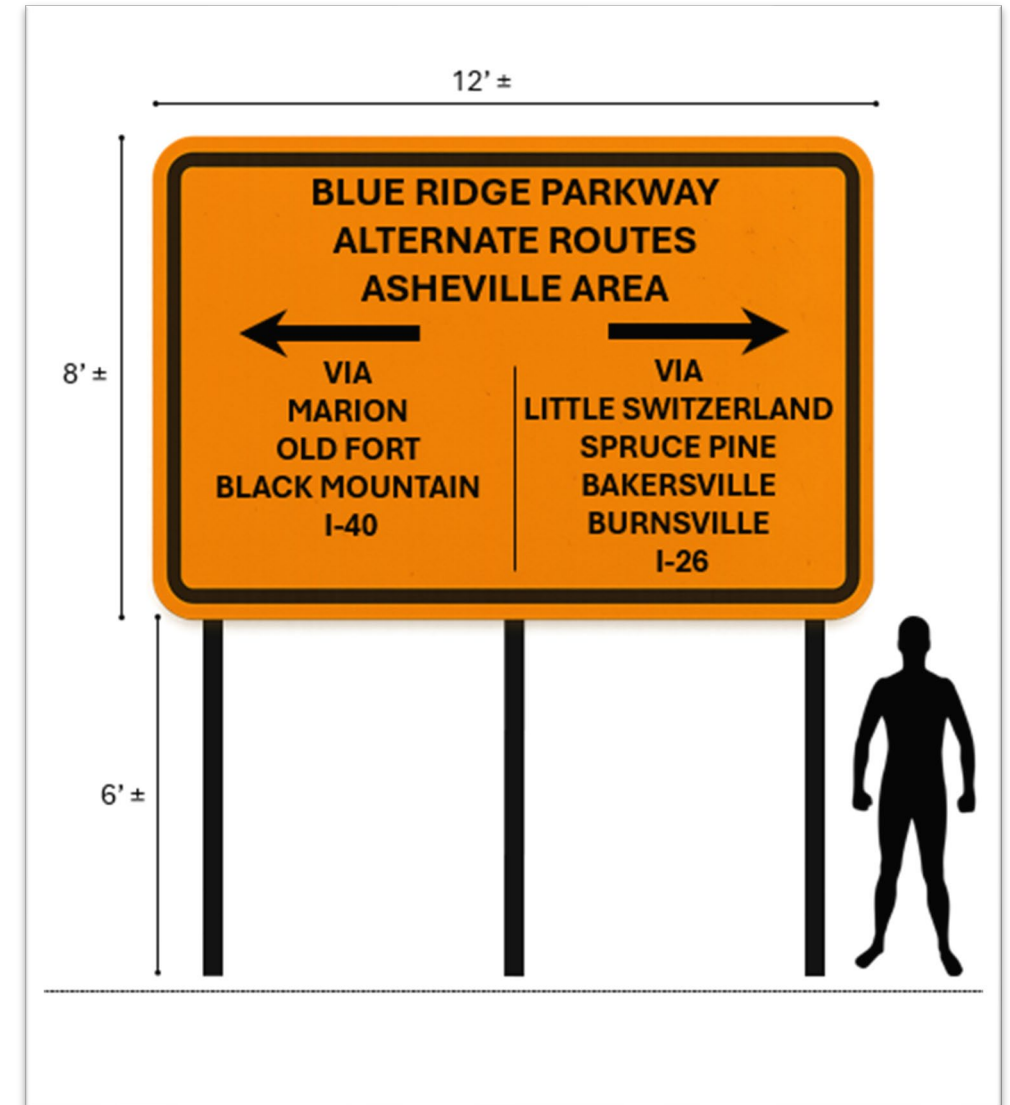
- NPS has developed a damage characterization map for trails based on remotely sensed tree damage data and site visits.
- Developing Cooperative Management Agreement with State of NC to expedite repairs to the Mountains-to-Sea Trail (MST). Work will include volunteer orgs.
- Conservation Corp Trail Crew tours and GIS Support provided by Park Philanthropic Partner.
- Team will continue to develop additional contracts and agreements to support trail recovery and reconstruction.



WRAP UP



- Anticipate another strong year in visitation based on 2025 figures
- Visitors and Communities will continue to see majority of facilities open.
 - 390+ miles of Parkway open
 - 6 of 8 campgrounds open – Linville Falls, Crabtree Falls out years
- Restored visitor access to Linville Falls trails from NPS lands coming this summer
- Completion of Phase 2 & 3 critical landslide and road repairs by end of 2026.
- Continue stakeholder engagement and strategic communications- (upcoming High Country & 2-state)





QUESTIONS

