



**BACKCOUNTRY
HUNTERS & ANGLERS**
NORTH CAROLINA

June 3, 2025

To N.C. Senate Committee on Rules and Operations

Re: BHA Opposition to H.B. 1012 Disaster Recovery Act of 2025

Dear esteemed member of the N.C. Senate Committee on Rules and Operations,

On behalf of the North Carolina Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, I wish to bring your attention to a troubling section of H.B.1012 – Disaster Recovery Act of 2025-Part III Section 3.1. Specifically, Part III “directs state agencies and local governments to use the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for removal of debris from lands and waterways before using private contractors.”

Our members living within the disaster area caused by Hurricane Helene, and those who have visited since the storm, describe the stark contrast between debris removal projects overseen by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and those headed by local county governments. The sad and shocking truth of what USACOE contractors have done to western North Carolina’s rivers and streams is a legacy of unnecessary channelization, riverbed mining and compaction, and aquatic and riparian habitat destruction that we will be dealing with for generations. Time and time again, these crews ignored NC Wildlife Resource Commission and NC Department of Environmental Quality’s expert guidance on “best practices” to minimize ecological harm to these critical habitats and the aquatic life they support. In fact, much of the storm damage “clean up” they conducted has left our valley communities more vulnerable to flooding and bank erosion.

By comparison, the waterway debris removal conducted in those counties that hired and oversaw their own contractors; Henderson, Madison, Haywood, Yancey, Burke, Jackson, Caldwell and Rutherford, have been decidedly more mindful of maintaining the natural elements of our rivers and streams that make them so uniquely valuable to both wildlife and the outdoor recreational businesses that are vital to the mountain region economy.

The North Carolina chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers urges you to remove the language of Part III and allow county governments to continue to direct disaster recovery in the manner they deem to be most beneficial and protective towards the quality of outdoor recreation and natural beauty that is synonymous with western North Carolina.

I thank you for your time and service to the people of our great state.

Sincerely,

Phillip Widener

Chairman, North Carolina chapter, Backcountry Hunters & Angler

