Buncombe County Air Quality Recognizes Post-Helene Monitoring Partners and Former Advisory Committee

Air Quality *Posted on September 08, 2026 | Last Updated on September 08, 2026*

Buncombe County Air Quality recognized local partners who hosted post-Helene air monitors and former advisory committee members at a special meeting.

WNC Post-Helene Particulate Monitoring Project



Tropical Storm Helene left a lot of vegetative debris in the region, much of which was burned during the cleanup process. These burns release fine particulates into the atmosphere. To better monitor the potential impacts of these burns, Buncombe County Air Quality (BCAQ) partnered with DAQ and the EPA to deploy monitors and sensors across the County where we don't currently have coverage. Several organizations responded to the call and allowed these monitors to be placed at their facilities. These monitors provides new data to see how smoke events may be impacting their communities in real time.

The Air Quality Index (AQI) is generated from data collected at monitoring sites throughout Western North Carolina and reports air quality for two pollutants, ground-level ozone and fine particulates. Fine particulate pollution could be affected by smoke from open burning of storm debris or dust from storm damage. The data that is being collected with the new non-regulatory sensors can be used to strengthen the current and forecasted AQI because the sensors are in more remote settings such as Leicester, Barnardsville, Swannanoa, and others throughout the county. This new data, along with the regulatory monitoring data collected by BCAQ and DAQ is available on the EPA's AirNow fire and smoke map.

These low-cost sensors will continue to be used at these sites for at least another year.

BCAQ and DAQ would like to thank those organizations for their assistance with our post-Helene particulate monitoring project and recognize their contribution to that effort.

Participants include:

- ArtSpace Charter School
- Barnardsville Fire Station 15
- Broad River Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department
- Edneyville Fire and Rescue
- Fairview Elementary School
- Fairview Public Library
- Hi-Wire Brewing Biltmore Village
- Leicester Public Library
- Skyland/South Buncombe Library
- Upper Hominy Fire and Rescue

Recognition of Former Air Quality Agency Advisory Committee Members



At the special meeting, BCAQ also recognized the time and commitment that the members of the now-defunct committee gave over the years. In addition to the Clean Air Excellence Awards program creation and implementation, the committee assisted with several policies and initiatives, including the low-cost air sensor program and community science station, different projects with UNC Asheville including the Asheville-Buncombe Sustainable Microbrewery Initiative, reviewed and commented on the County Fire Prevention Ordinance, new board member orientation packet and advertisements, and numerous other projects over the years.

Former Members

- Keith Bamberger
- Caitlin Cook
- Ichaya Dhungel
- Ned Guttman
- Jay Haney
- Jim Neely
- Kevin Tipton