FEMA Public Assistance Funding

Navigating the Process from the Local Perspective



A Brief History of Potential Tropical Cyclone (PTC) #8

July–August 2022

Beach Nourishment Completed

1.2 million cubic yards of sand placed on Buxton's beach.

September 2024

PTC #8 Impacts Dare County

Entirety of 2022 nourishment project is lost - later determined by FEMA claim to be 1.35 million cubic yards.

January 2025

"Buxton Beach Sand Loss"

FEMA creates project and work begins to quantify impact of storm.



Conditions Continue to Deterioarate

21 Houses Collapse in Buxton Village Following Loss of Dune Protection
Hundreds of volunteers move debris to roadways. Commisioners approve emergency allocation of $2 million for debris removal.



April 2026

A Modified Plan
With uncertainty in FEMA funding, the Dare Commissioners advance a reduced-size project one year ahead of the five-year cycle.



May 2026

Beach Nourishment
Dare County begins with a smaller project in Avon before Buxton. The sequence allowed time for FEMA approval but left Buxton and critical infrastructure vulnerable for a longer period.



June 2026

FEMA Obligates Buxton Project
Approval allowed the completion of the full permitted 2 million cubic yards of sand.

Dare County 2026 Buxton Nourishment Project

Final Project Design: 2 million Cubic Yards

July 31, 2026 to October 3, 2026

Sand nourishment completed along Buxton Village and the Cape Hatteras National Seashore.

- Design included a +12 NAVD dune line
- Approximately 100 yards of engineered dry sand beach

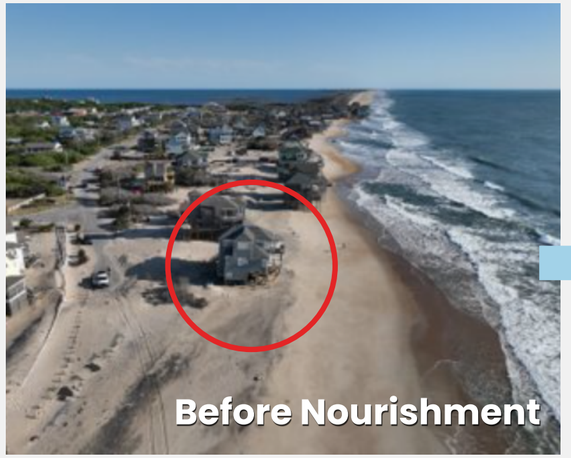


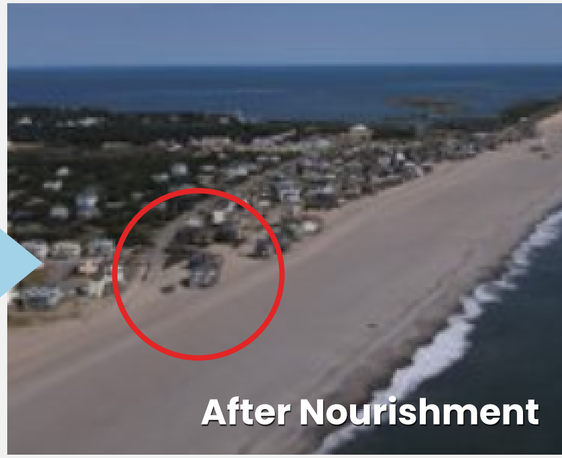


Severe Nor'easter Washes Out NC 12 at Pea Island

September 24–27, 2026

Buxton’s nourished dune holds, with no ocean overwash, road closures, or damaged structures reported in Buxton.







Dare County's Experience with Public Assistance Funding

Factors Affecting Processing:

FEMA Shutdown and Staffing Reductions
Government shutdown and FEMA staffing reductions affected the pace of application review and processing.

Approval Thresholds
Funding thresholds triggered additional approval and signature requirements.

Availability of Funding
In March of 2026, a new Department of Homeland Security Director was appointed. In June, FEMA announces $267 million in funding for over 65 projects repairing damages from Helene and the Buxton project.



Dare County's Beach Nourishment Funding Model

Fund limitations create a dependence on FEMA for emergency events

- A 2% Occupancy Tax is restricted for the Beach Nourishment Fund.
- The fund supports the debt service required to maintain the existing beach nourishment projects on a five-year cycle.
- The fund contributes to town-funded projects on this cycle. Towns assess a separate beach nourishment tax on proprety owners to fund their portion of the project expense.
- The Beach Nourishment Fund is dependent on tourism and does not have capacity for additional projects or off-cycle events.

FEMA

PA Work Categories	
Category A Debris	*Emergency Work* *This work must be done immediately to save lives; protect public health and safety; protect improved property; or eliminate or lessen the threat of additional damage.*
Category B Emergency Protective Measures (EPM)	
Category C Roads and Bridges	*Permanent Work* *Work that is required to restore a facility damaged by the event to its pre-disaster size, capacity, and function in accordance with applicable codes and standards.*
Category D Water Control Facilities	
Category E Buildings and Equipment	
Category F Utilities	
Category G Parks, Recreational, and Other Facilities	

Public Assistance Categories

Emergency Work

- Category A and B fund work that must be done immediately to save lives; protect health, safety and property

Permanent Work

- Categories C through G fund work that restores a facility to its pre-disaster function

Beach Nourishment is Category G

- Parks, Recreational, and Other Facilities

So What Can We Do?

Advocate to Reclassifying Engineered Beaches

- Recategorize engineered beach projects from Category G (parks, recreational, and other facilities) to Category F (public utilities) to better reflect their role in **protecting critical infrastructure**.

- In Dare County this is Highway 12, the only access to Hatteras Island for both travel and utilities - electricity, water and telecommunications.

- Maintaining these systems during and after storms is essential to safe, functional communities. In extreme events, their restoration is necessary before evacuated residents can safely return.

Advocate for the Importance of FEMA and Public Assistance to Your Community





QUESTIONS

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