

## Ela Campground

### Timeline: Events Surrounding the Closure of Ela Campground

**9/26/2024**

- The Tribe's emergency management placed voluntary evacuation notices at Ela Store due to an impending tropical storm. No similar action was taken by Swain County.
- Campground staff informed campers about the need to evacuate, posting notices.

**9/27/2024**

- Water started rising in Section D by 9:30 a.m., and staff, including Blake, helped evacuate reluctant campers.
- Floodwaters reached 36-45 inches, inundating Sections A, B, C, and D, with fast-moving, debris-filled water. Storm water entered trailers and individual site power distribution pedestals were underwater for over 24 hours.
- One camper returned to retrieve a pet and had to be rescued by a swift water boat team.
- Duke Energy was asked to cut off power due to safety concerns.
- **Damage:** Electrical pedestals, septic systems, and water wells were all submerged and damaged. The electrical system sustained extensive damage from water, sediment, and debris.
- Despite the flood, some campers returned overnight, cut the locks off the master power box, and restored power, creating further hazards.

**9/28/2024**

- █████ contacted █████ █████ from Swain County regarding the compromised septic system.

**9/29/2024**

- Staff replaced locks on power panels that had been tampered with, but some campers cut them again.
- A strong sewage odor was detected, suggesting damage to the septic system.
- The campground was officially closed, with notices posted online and in the store. FEMA information was provided to campers.

**9/30/2024**

- Despite concerns from Kituwah staff, Swain County Health Department representatives did not adequately assess the damage to water, septic, and electrical systems. They ignored staff concerns and did not perform proper inspections.

10/01/2024

- **Meeting with Swain County Officials:** Kituwah staff ([REDACTED]) met with [REDACTED] from PHHS and representatives from the Swain County Health and Building Inspection departments. The Swain inspectors arrived uninvited and only inspected Section B.
  - **Septic System:** Despite Kituwah staff opening a septic tank for inspection, Swain County officials did not inspect the system, nor did they properly examine any structures.
  - Swain County's [REDACTED] stated that the campground could reopen and restore power, despite the visible damage. This contradicted the findings of Kituwah staff, who reported significant concerns regarding the electrical and septic systems.
  - Kituwah staff informed campers via letter that the campground would remain closed.

10/02/2024

- **Electrical System Analysis:** An electrical inspection confirmed that all site power was severely compromised. The electrical pedestals in Sections A, B, C, and D were underwater for over 24 hours, and no equipment could be reused safely. According to the **National Electrical Code (NFPA-70)**, all electrical components, including breakers, pedestals, pumps, and control panels, must be replaced due to corrosion risks.
- **Further Inspections:** Kituwah staff ([REDACTED]) met with the Swain County Fire Department to assess structural damage for potential FEMA claims. However, Kituwah LLC made it clear they were not seeking FEMA funds at that time.

## Updated Press Release

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### Ela Campground Announces Temporary Closure Due to Extensive Flood Damage

Bryson City, NC – October 2024 – Ela Campground has made the difficult decision to close due to significant damage from flooding caused by the remnants of Hurricane Helene.

Floodwaters inundated the entire campground by at least 3 feet of water, causing severe damage to the water supply, septic systems, and electrical infrastructure:

- The **water wells** were contaminated by silt and debris, rendering them unsafe for use.
- The **septic system** was overwhelmed, making it non-functional and requiring repairs.
- The **electrical system** was submerged for over 24 hours. According to the **National Electrical Code (NFPA-70)**, all electrical components must be replaced due to water and sediment damage, as corrosion and failure are now inevitable.

Power has been cut off by Duke Energy to prevent hazards. The campground will remain closed until further notice.

For more information, please visit [www.elacampground.com](http://www.elacampground.com).



**\*\*NOTICE To EVACUATE / CLOSURE TO PUBLIC\*\***

October 1, 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to inform you that the property located at 5100 Ela Road (All Ela Campground Properties) Bryson City, NC 28713 has been **officially closed due to safety concerns for an indefinite period and MUST be evacuated**. Infrastructure, including sewer, water and electrical systems suffered major catastrophic damage during the recent flooding event. Due to the damage and loss of these systems it is unsafe to occupy the campground. Duke Energy will be disconnecting power to the campground due to the safety hazards.

Failure to vacate or engaging in vandalism to property may result in trespassing and enforced by local law enforcement.

Refer to the handout with information for emergency resources.

We recommend you reach out to your insurance company to file an insurance claim as this is a necessary step in the disaster recovery process.

To schedule the removal of personal items, please coordinate with [REDACTED] via email at [REDACTED] or by phone at [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

Ela Campground Management



## SWAIN CO. HOUSING RESOURCES

### Emergency Shelter

**Agency Name:** HERE in Jackson County  
**Address:** 77 East Gate Dr, Sylva, NC 28779  
**Phone:** 828.477.4946  
**Website:** <https://www.hereinjacksoncounty.org>  
**Service (s) Offered:** Home Equity Resources & Education

**Agency Name:** Restoration House WNC  
**Address:** 81 Academy St., Bryson City, NC 28713  
**Phone:** 828.538.4540  
**Website:** <https://www.restorationhousewnc.org>  
**Service (s) Offered:** Medical services, financial counseling, relational mediation

### Housing / Utilities / Rent

**Agency Name:** HUD  
**Address:** 101 Mitchell Street, PO Box 2321, Bryson City, NC 28713  
**Phone:** 828.488.2685  
**Website:** [https://www.hud.gov/states/north\\_carolina/offices](https://www.hud.gov/states/north_carolina/offices)  
**Service (s) Offered:** Housing assistance



**\*\*\*ATTENTION - ELA CAMPGROUND FEMA UPDATE\*\*\***

Ela Campground is located in Swain Co., one of the counties currently awaiting a Hurricane Helene FEMA Disaster Declaration and eligibility for Individual Assistance.

FEMA may be able to help you with home repairs, temporary housing, or property damage (appliances, furniture, vehicle, etc). You may also qualify for help with childcare, medical, lodging, moving, and funeral expenses.

This process can be completed electronically at:

<https://www.disasterassistance.gov>

\*To get free local internet connection, visit:

Marianna Black Library: 33 Fryemont St. Bryson City, NC 28713

It's okay if you don't have all the details for your application now. After you create an account, you can save your progress and come back to finish it later.

You can also Apply/Check your status by phone **1-800-621-3362** once cellular service is restored.

Please take a picture of this flyer and share as needed.

*Oct. 2 2024*

Subject : Ela Campground

Fri 9-27-24 1:06pm

I was at the campground at this time to see the Damage first hand of hurricane Helen. Upon arriving, the banks of the Tuckasegee River had just crested the banks. During this time I received notice that the Dam for the river was at a critical level and the water would continue to rise. This brought the water level at Ela Park to more then 36'-45' in. of flowing water.

Sections – A,B,C and D were under water at this time. The water was as noted very silty with dirt and very fast moving and full of debris ( tree's, lumber, ect.) At the highest point the water was notably high enough to enter most of the trailers at the sites. The individual site power distribution pedestals were totally covered. This continued for more then 24 hours. At which time, that the water receded and I was able assess the damage I requested that Duke Energy cut power to the park for obvious reasons.

I will, best of my knowledge list each of the sections.

Section A :

In this section both water well received damage the new controller at the new well was ruined, the expansion tank floated and silted water entered the well. The second well received the same both wells will need replacement. All site power was under water for at least 24 Hrs. Sub panels received water damage including the basement of the store were there is still standing water.

Sections B,C,D:

I will include these three sections because the result is the same for each. All site power has been compromised. The three sections took the brunt of the damage. The site power was underwater for the same amount of time dirt and sediment has entered most if not all of the sites. At this time I must recommend to side on safety, Power should not be turned on until a site to site inspection and replacement is implemented.

According to: NFPA-70 312.2, 404.4, 404.4, 551.78 551.71 of the National Electrical Code  
None of the listed items carry a Nema 6 or 6P rating for full submersion in water. Let alone sediment and corrosion of each item. All suppliers of the items do not warranty there items if they have been immersed in water for any length of time.

In reference to:

NEMA.ORG-ELECTRICALWATER DAMAGE.

EFCL.ORG The Electrical Safty Foundation International.

Local and State Building Inspectors that I contacted the recommendations are the same.

1. All Breakers, Pedestals, receptacles pumps, Controllers and Panels are to be replaced.

Summery. Life safety is my biggest concern at this time due to the amount of sediment and water damage, Corrosion will happen, failure will happen to some point it is just a matter of time.

Thank You.

