

# Floyd Leaves Eastern N.C. With Long Row to Hoe

By RACHEL LEONARD  
Staff Writer

Hurricane Floyd might be gone, but for children at Pattillo Elementary School, it's not forgotten.

Floyd demolished the Tarboro

school, flooding classrooms with 6 feet of water. But the students are not the only North Carolinians still suffering. Eight months after Floyd hit the state, farms are still devastated, people remain homeless and scientists are still closely monitoring the environment for linger-

ing pollutants.

The September storm, the worst natural disaster in state history, killed 48 people and left another 10,000 without permanent housing.

While Pattillo students wait for their school and homes to be rebuilt, they still attend classes — in trailers. "We're now teaching in 32 trailers in the middle of a football field," said Pattillo Media Coordinator Angie Edgerton. "We have two bathroom trailers for the students."

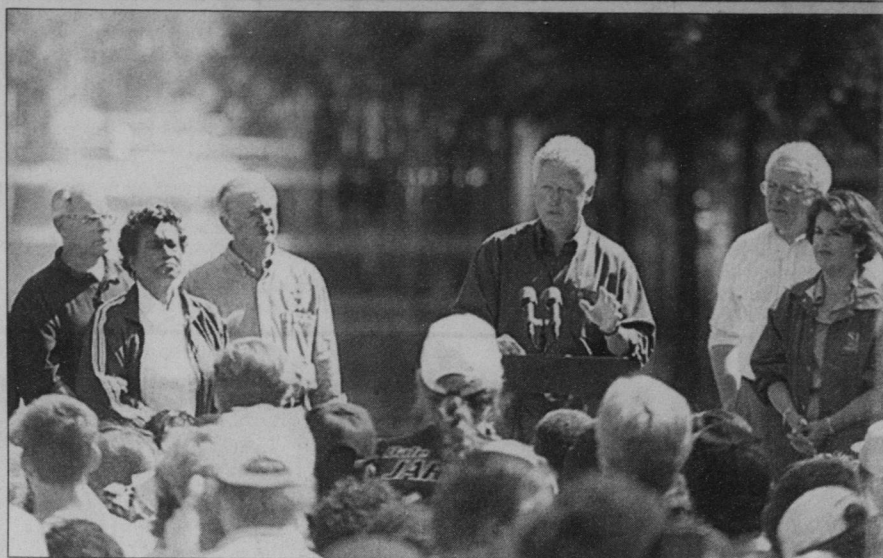
Another trailer serves as a makeshift cafeteria where students pick up their meals. "The kids eat breakfast and lunch in the rooms," Edgerton said. "On pretty days, they eat outside."

Although a permanent school building will not be completed for at least another year, Edgerton said the community had been supportive. "We have had lots and lots of donations," she said.

UNC students have also contributed to the cause. Faculty and students have made numerous trips to the tiny town of Speed to help in Floyd recovery efforts. UNC-system leaders also lent a helping hand, sponsoring the "Quarter Campaign," which raised more than \$10,000 for students at UNC schools affected by Floyd.

Despite outreach programs, however, thousands of displaced families continue to live in trailers.

Robert Carver, spokesman for Gov. Jim Hunt's Hurricane Redevelopment Center, said housing was one of Hunt's



DTH FILE PHOTO

In the wake of Hurricane Floyd, President Clinton spoke to residents and visitors in downtown Tarboro and pledged federal disaster relief funds for N.C. residents.



DTH FILE PHOTO

Barbara Ziff pulls nails from the frames of Johnny Harper's house in Speed, which was under 6 feet of water at one point.

top priorities. Carver acknowledged that many people, especially those still in trailers, want quicker action. But money is already going out to families, farmers and businesses statewide in an effort to rejuvenate areas hardest hit the flood.

In December, Congress allotted \$2.2 billion in relief aid. The state legislature distributed an additional \$836 million.

In March, Congress promised an extra \$74.7 million to be matched by \$25 million in state funds, and the U.S. Senate is now considering another \$307 million. The funds have helped recovery efforts but have also taken a major bite out of the N.C. budget. "Floyd" has certainly

caused us to tighten our belts, but you do what you have to do in an emergency," Carver said. "We'll be feeling the effects for years to come."

So might the state's environment.

Flood waters washed over animal farms, sewage treatment plants and farm crops. As the water subsided, it carried with it human and animal waste, dead animals and pesticides.

Farmers might be the first to discover any environmental damage. The planting season has only recently begun, and farmers are waiting to see if their crops fare well. "It's too early to tell how the floods have affected soil quality and

plant viability," said Peter Daniel, assistant to the president of the N.C. Farm Bureau Association.

Bur Don Reuter, public affairs director for the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources, said the heavy rain that followed Floyd actually helped offset damage by washing away harmful elements.

He said he was optimistic that the state's ecosystem would recover. "Mother Nature does have a way of cleaning itself."

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## Stakes High as UNC Funding Initiatives Head to Raleigh

By MATTHEW B. DEES  
State & National Editor

RALEIGH — For nearly a year, UNC-system officials and N.C. lawmakers have been grappling with how to address several funding initiatives that many consider crucial to the future of public higher education in the state.

Improving and expanding campus facilities, boosting faculty salaries and bolstering student financial aid top administrators' list.

These issues have been at the center of heated debates within UNC-system circles and between system leaders and legislators.

Countless committee meetings and campus tours marked attempts to find common ground.

In just days, the state will be watching to see if these reconciliation efforts pay off.

When the N.C. General Assembly convenes for its short session this Monday, it is expected to take up all these initiatives.

Much has been made of the urgent nature of these programs, and system leaders see this session as a pivotal moment for public higher education in North Carolina.

But why?

UNC-system leaders take their budget request to Raleigh every year, so what makes May 2000 any different?

Officials say there are three interwoven factors that contribute to the heightened urgency and significance of this year's funding push: state financial constraints, the UNC system's impact on the economy and the desire to fulfill the constitutional mission to educate N.C. residents.

First, the budget squeeze plaguing

state coffers makes fiscal prudence essential. This has forced system leaders to work even harder to convince lawmakers to dip into the state's shallow pockets.

But many legislators concede they must temper their desire for fiscal conservatism with the knowledge that the system's needs are crucial and demand immediate action.

"Part of the reason we're having to do this is the General Assembly has not funded repairs and renovations the way it should have," said Sen. Kay Hagan, D-Guilford.

"We sort of put ourselves in this mess." A legislative committee said Wednesday it would recommend that at least \$3 billion be allocated to improve facilities on the state's university and community college campuses.

This hefty support, to be funded through bonds, indicates lawmakers'

recognition of the crucial role higher education plays in fostering growth in the state.

"There is an element of urgency, and as investors we will make money by spending money," State Treasurer Harlan Boyles told the capital needs committee Wednesday. "Either we pay more now, or we pay more later."

"I look upon the mission of this select committee as being an investment in the future of our people."

Phil Kirk, president of N.C. Citizens for Business and Industry, said that if the legislature did not fund higher education, it would drive away industries

looking to set up camp in the Old North State.

UNC-system President Molly Broad said this was an important selling point with the General Assembly.

"The evidence is absolutely overwhelming that the single most important factor that has led to prosperity in this country is the level knowledge in our work force," she said. "I believe we are in a period where education is the defining domestic policy in the entire nation, and it is no different in this state."

But as much as the economy benefits, Broad said it was important not to lose sight of the UNC-system's overarching

goal. "What is central to our mission is providing access," Broad said.

"We have a mission to serve the people of the state."

She said making sure each campus could accommodate the growing number of students seeking a college education and ensuring that tuition increases were accompanied by financial aid was fundamental to this mission.

"Otherwise, these tuition increases will disenfranchise students," she said.

"It's just that simple."

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