

As ASA President, I wanted to make a statement about these mountains where I live and where our conference was in the spring. It's taken me a while because I'm still in shock from seeing the devastation. I also am feeling survivor's guilt as Sylva wasn't hit as hard as other places like Boone, Asheville, Mars Hill, Chimney Rock, or Spruce Pine. We had some flooding, but nothing near that bad, as we were in the eye of the storm. We were fortunate, but I still feel for those who continue to suffer loss from the storm.

This morning when I woke up, I heard a moaning that sounded like it was coming from the hills around my house. I knew it was a truck going by hitting it's breaks on the highway, but I also knew that it was the weeping of our communities. I've read stories about a seven-year-old child found dead, an elderly couple found hugging each other after a tree had fallen on top of them, and so, so many others yet still to come. There is also the tremendous loss of communities, the entire town around Chimney Rock swept away. Water running through the streets of Boone and Mars Hill. The entire Rivers Arts District in Asheville submerged in the French Broad. The loss of community leaves us all in despair.

While I know it's true that the devastation is unspeakable, I know it's also true that communities are coming together to help each other. The other day I helped unload planes that contained supplies and food to take to community centers and shelters across WNC. We would unload the planes into vehicles that would then take them to the places of need. I went on a run to a community center and this woman told me that she was so happy to receive the supplies that she "could just hug my neck." They had over 100 people show up yesterday to help at the airport. There are students that are doing runs to Asheville today. Massive chinook helicopters continue to show up with FEMA boxes and those are much appreciated dispelling much of the misinformation spread after the disaster. The most help, however, comes from those who are from this area. The boxes of pampers for children from Walmart, the brooms from Sav-Mor, the paper products from Food Lion, everyone here is doing their part to help our community. From extractive industry disasters to natural ones, our communities continue to show up for one another. We are indeed #appalachianstrong.

Now that we're a few days in, we already see the media coverage of the event waning. Now is the hard part of continuing help and aid to those who need it. These areas will not be fixed this week, month, or possibly in the next year. We're in it for the long haul. Below are resources that can guide you for gifts of money and/or supplies. Please contribute what you can. If you're here, volunteer; if you're away and are financially able please donate to one of these organizations. This ain't our first rodeo nor our last. Let's keep leaning on each other and sending love and help from one holler to the next. Sending lots of love and healing from up here on Possum Ridge to all y'all.

<https://www.appalachianstudies.org/huri>

Most Sincerely,  
Travis A. Rountree

