

## **Town of Biltmore Forest Storm Debris Removal – Fall 2024**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

**1. How much vegetative storm debris is there in Biltmore Forest after Tropical Storm Helene?**

The current estimate for vegetative storm debris is 340,000 cubic yards. This is the equivalent of 3 ½ football fields with debris piled 60 feet deep on each field.

**2. How much brush does the Town typically pick up on an annual basis & how does this compare to what is being picked up now?**

The Town has performed roadside brush removal for many years. We utilize a truck with a 30 cubic yard capacity. Between August 2023 and August 2024, the Town removed 11,130 cubic yards from the Town’s roadside during routine work. For comparison purposes, the Town’s debris removal contractor hauled away 13,469 cubic yards within the first four (4) days of operation.

**3. How is the Town handling vegetative storm debris (trees, etc.) after the storm?**

The Town contracted with a large debris removal company to take away all storm related debris from the Town that is within the public right of way. There are approximately 12 trucks running within the Town at any given time, seven days a week. Each of these trucks has a capacity of 80 cubic yards by pulling two, forty-yard trailers. The trucks use a mechanical “arm” to grab the vegetative material, load it into the trucks, and then transport the material to the Town’s Temporary Debris Management Site.

**4. What is a temporary debris management site?**

A temporary debris management site (TDMS) is a state permitted facility where vegetative storm debris is taken for storing and eventually disposal. As debris comes into the site, it will be chipped and then removed via tractor-trailer for shipment to a wood chip processing facility.

**5. Where is the Town’s TDMS location?**

Before a week had passed after the storm, the Town contracted with a debris removal company and debris monitoring company, and most importantly, came to an agreement with the Biltmore Company for locating the TDMS on a piece of property within the Town limits. This specific location, just south of Interstate 40 on the west side of Vanderbilt Road, was the location of a recently completed forestry management project and afforded an available site and close proximity to the Town. By not having to drive vehicles tens of miles from the Town to dispose of material, the Town is removing debris at an exceptionally quick pace relative to many places. We appreciate the Biltmore Company for allowing use of this property

**6. Who is doing the debris removal for the Town?**

The Town utilized a State of North Carolina pre-disaster contract to come to an agreement with [Southern Disaster Recovery](#) for our debris removal. Because this was a state bid contract, the Town was able to “piggyback” on this contract and reap the benefits of the State’s negotiations for pricing. A link to each of the bid documents and contract documents between SDR and the State may be found by clicking [here](#).

**7. How do you measure what debris is being removed and verify that is being disposed of properly?**

The State also has pre-disaster contracts with a debris management company. This company’s job is to place monitors with each truck to ensure that everything picked up from the roadside is compliant with federal regulations for reimbursement. The monitors take photos, measure the capacity of the trucks when they arrive at the disposal site, and ensure the trucks are empty when they leave the site. This is occurring with each truck in operation across the Town. The Town’s debris monitoring company is [DebrisTech](#).

**8. Why does the Town have to jump through these hoops? Why not just find a local contractor with available land to take all the debris?**

As a unit of local government within North Carolina, the Town must adhere to state laws regarding procurement – and this applies even during disasters. The Town is under an obligation to formally bid any construction-type project that is projected to be over \$300,000, and to informally bid anything that may be greater than \$90,000. Adherence to these state guidelines is both legally correct but also ensures the Town will be reimbursed, fully, for our debris removal process. Because the State Department of Public Safety had already formally bid these contracts, the Town was able to move forward quickly with the approved contractors.

**9. Is the Town prohibiting other tree companies or removal specialists from working in Biltmore Forest?**

No. From the outset, the Town allowed private property owners and individuals to contract with their own, desired firm for tree or debris removal from their property. The Town has not, and will not, limit the ability of someone to hire a company to clear their debris separate from what the Town is doing. However, the only debris that is allowed to be picked up by the Town’s contractor is that which is accessible from the public right of way and removed by the above-referenced debris specialists.

**10. How much will this cost?**

Because the Town utilized a pre-disaster state contract, the overall fees for removal and monitoring are less than what could be obtained *after* a storm. The rate per cubic yard is \$9.50 for removal and hauling to the disposal site. The Town has an

estimated 350,000 cubic yards of vegetative debris as of October 14, 2024, so the cost for removal and hauling – alone – is estimated to be \$3,325,000. Additional costs for transporting the wood chips to their final destination, processing of the debris on site, and management of the TDMS are estimated to be nearly \$3,000,000. The total estimate, as of October 14, 2024, was for a removal and disposal cost of \$6,325,000.

**11. Will the Town be reimbursed for these expenses?**

Yes. Because the Town is following all statutory guidelines for procurement and utilizing appropriate vendors following federal statutes, the Town will be reimbursed. In fact, the Town was the first local government to have our expedited request submitted with assistance from FEMA. The Town received nearly \$4 million on Monday, October 28, 2024 to assist with our initial costs related to debris removal.

**12. Wait a second – I heard from someone that each truck was paid \$5,000 per load for what they were removing, and that some trucks were only taking quarter loads so they could get paid more?**

This is completely false. The company gets a base rate – \$9.50/cubic yard – brought to the disposal site. A truck may not be completely full when they take it to the TDMS, but they are not getting paid for a “full truck” because the monitors are recording how much is being taken and left.

**13. Who should I talk to if I still have questions about this process? Should I ask the truck driver, or the debris monitor in the car behind them?**

No. Please do not interrupt their work as this will delay them as they help pick up from the storm. Call the Town Hall at (828) 274-0824 or the Public Works Department at (828) 274-3919. We will answer any questions you have or provide more information than you have ever wanted to know about debris removal and storm clean up.

**14. What about leaning trees or hazardous hanging limbs?**

Under FEMA guidelines, the Town *may* remove trees that are dangerous and lean over the public road or dangerous limbs that are hanging over the road. These are done on a case-by-case basis with identification from the removal specialists and authorization from the monitoring company. If approved for reimbursement and removed, these “leaners” or “hangers” will be cut at the public right-of-way line.

**15. Is there a specific route or timeline for debris pickup?**

No. With so much debris to remove and so many trucks in operation, the crews decide daily where to focus and how best to move through the day. They may pick up one side of a street and not return to the other side for a few days – but they will get there and all debris will be taken. We anticipate these Town contracted removal and monitoring companies will work in Town through December 2024, at least.

**16. What about the tree stumps? There are so many large stumps all throughout the Town.**

The contractor will bring in a specialized piece of equipment called a stump splitter toward the end of the removal process. The stumps will be split on site at the road so they can be picked up and loaded into the disposal vehicles. Currently, most of the stumps on the road edge are too large to be picked up by the disposal truck. Once stumps are split, the contractor will pick the stumps up and debris that is left behind or beside the stumps.

**17. What happens to the debris once it is taken to the TDMS?**

The debris will be chipped in a giant chipper that can process approximately 10,000 cubic yards of material each day. This chipped material is then loaded on tractor trailers and will be taken to a permitted disposal site in Maggie Valley, NC where it will be deposited and turned into compost.