

**Staff Report**

**Subject:** Approval of a Pre-Application to the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) for Hurricane Helene Resilience Funding (HRF)

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**Department:** Engineering

**Meeting Date:** December 16, 2025

**Item Description:** Consideration to approve a GEFA Hurricane Helene Resilience Funding (HRF) pre-application for a project to be selected based on eligibility and county needs.

**Summary Recommendation:** Staff recommends approval of a Pre-Application to the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) for Hurricane Helene Resilience Funding (HRF)

**Executive Summary/Background:**

The Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) has released the Hurricane Helene Resilience Funding (HRF) program, which provides federal disaster-related financing through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF), Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF), and Decentralized Wastewater (DWW) programs. The purpose of HRF is to address impacts of Hurricane Helene and to improve the resilience of drinking water, wastewater, and decentralized wastewater systems statewide. Pre-applications are due December 31, 2025.

Eligible projects must either have suffered damage from Hurricane Helene or demonstrate vulnerability, loss of mission-critical function, or risk of disruption during future events. GEFA offers 30% principal forgiveness for eligible CWSRF and DWSRF projects, and 100% principal forgiveness for planning projects and decentralized wastewater projects. There is currently no maximum loan size for CWSRF/DWSRF projects; DWW projects are capped at \$2,000,000.

The County is evaluating potential eligible projects that may include, but are not limited to:

- Wastewater facility hardening or backup power
- Drinking water system flood protection or redundancy improvements
- Replacement of equipment damaged during Helene
- Planning efforts expected to result in a future capital project
- Septic consolidation or decentralized wastewater resilience improvements

Once a project is selected, staff will prepare the required pre-application documentation, including a project description, scope, cost estimate, maps, and justification consistent with GEFA HRF guidance. Georgia Power has requested that the County execute these easements to permit vegetation management necessary to maintain clearance around their distribution lines and associated equipment.

**Alternatives for Commission to Consider:**

1. Approve submission of the GEFA HRF pre-application.
2. Do not approve submission of the pre-application.
3. Provide alternative directions to staff.

**Recommended Alternative:** 1

**Other Alternatives:** 2, 3

**Department Review:** Engineering

**Funding Source: 30% principal forgiveness** for eligible CWSRF/DWSRF capital projects, **100% principal forgiveness** for planning projects up to \$200,000, **Up to 100% forgiveness** for eligible decentralized wastewater projects (maximum \$2,000,000)