

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

- **From: Gwen White, Executive Director**
- **Re: NC Lions Visually Impaired Person's Fishing Tournament Cancelled due to Hurricane Helene**
- **Date: Oct. 1, 2024**

**Outer Banks, NC** – The North Carolina Lions Visually Impaired Person's Fishing Tournament regrets to announce the cancellation of the 2024 event, originally scheduled for Oct. 21-23, due to the devastating impact of Hurricane Helene in North Carolina.

The decision was made by the Board of Directors at its meeting on Sept. 30, with an overwhelming sentiment that funds typically used for the tournament would be better directed to disaster relief efforts.

Hurricane Helene has caused severe flooding and widespread damage across the state, affecting many participants and volunteers who normally attend the three-day event. More than 340 blind and visually impaired individuals were registered to participate in this year's tournament, along with more than 300 volunteers.

Dubbed as the world's largest fishing tournament for the blind and visually impaired, this would have been the 41<sup>st</sup> year of the event, which is held on the North Carolina's Outer Banks. The first tournament was held in 1976. The tournament has been cancelled only twice before, both times due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Board President Bob Walton emphasized the difficulty of this decision, noting the significant impact on the whole state as well as our local community. "Our hearts go out to all those affected by Hurricane Helene," Walton said. "While it is disappointing to cancel this beloved event, we believe it is our responsibility to prioritize the immediate needs of our community and state during this challenging time."

Hurricane Helene has severely disrupted food distribution in Western North Carolina, where most of the food used by the tournament to feed participants and volunteers is donated. The storm's flooding and damage have impacted key infrastructure and facilities, including the Ingles warehouse and trucks in Black Mountain and Milkco in Asheville, both of which were heavily damaged by floodwaters. Ingles and Milkco are major contributors of food to the tournament. "Our tournament is really a statewide event. The storm has created significant challenges in delivering essential food supplies to the Outer Banks, exacerbating the effort of event organizers to hold the tournament," said Gwen White, executive director.

Walton said that refunds will be provided to participants and volunteers. However, they have the option to reserve a place at the 2025 event or to donate their registration fee to the tournament and the VIP Board will donate in total to the North Carolina Lions Foundation for a Hurricane Helene Relief Fund. It will be totally donated, no administration fees deducted.

“The North Carolina Lions are committed to supporting disaster relief efforts and will help to mobilize resources to assist those in need,” Walton said.

“We have already found out that some of the volunteers who were coming here to help us, have lost their homes,” White said. “We are still trying to find our visually impaired participants to determine their needs,” she said.

”For more information on the North Carolina Lions Visually Impaired Person’s Fishing Tournament, please visit the website at [www.ncvipfishing.org](http://www.ncvipfishing.org) or to make donations to a 501c3 organization, that will deliver your gifts, please call White at 252-202-2329.”

#end#

#### Social media release Mike will distribute

Due to the devastating impact of Hurricane Helene in North Carolina, the 2024 North Carolina Lions Visually Impaired Fishing Tournament has been cancelled. The Board of Directors made this difficult decision at its meeting on Sept. 30, with an overwhelming sentiment that funds typically used for the tournament would be better directed to disaster relief efforts.

Executive Director Gwen White shared that many participants and volunteers who normally attend the three-day event in October have been affected by the hurricane. Our thoughts are with everyone impacted, and we are committed to supporting our community during this challenging time.

Stay safe, and thank you for your understanding and support.