

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1011

June 30, 2026

The Honorable Pat Swanson
Administrator
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Risk Management Agency
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Administrator Swanson:

I write urgently on behalf of Georgians still suffering from the devastating impacts of Hurricane Helene. In September 2024, Hurricane Helene caused devastation to rural Georgia, including \$5.5 billion in agricultural and timber losses.¹ That is why I worked with congressional colleagues to pass disaster funding for Georgia farmers less than 90 days after Hurricane Helene devastated Georgia. However, some Georgia farmers have yet to be made whole. Despite experiencing crop and production damages due to Hurricane Helene, producers that purchased Hurricane Insurance Protection - Wind Index (HIP-WI) coverage in Screven, Effingham, Chatham, Bryan, Evans, Liberty, Long, McIntosh, Wayne, Glynn, and Camden counties did not receive indemnity payments.² I urge you to take all possible actions within your authorities to ensure that growers who purchased HIP-WI crop insurance policies from the Federal Crop Insurance Program receive the maximum support possible from USDA.

As you know, HIP-WI indemnity payments are made if the National Hurricane Center (NHC) determines that a county, or a county adjacent to it, was impacted by sustained hurricane-force winds, which are defined as those greater than or equal to 64 knots (kt), or 74 miles per hour (mph). According to a report published by the NHC in February 2026, "wind gusts in the 70-79 knots (kt) range were measured by weather stations in Towns, Chatham, and Echols counties."³ The exclusion of Chatham County as a triggered county under the Risk Management Agency's (RMA) HIP-WI indemnity map, despite experiencing winds of more than 70 kt (or 80.6 mph), necessitates a review of all subsequent data published by the NHC to ensure that HIP-WI trigger determinations were made accurately.

The Federal Crop Insurance Corporation's handbook on HIP-WI, states that RMA may "add counties that were not included in the initial county release based on release of updated NOAA wind extent data."⁴

¹ <https://extension.uga.edu/topic-areas/timely-topics/helene-report.html>

² <https://www.rma.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2024-10/2024%20Hurricane%20Helene%20-%20NHC.pdf>

³ https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/data/tcr/AL092024_Helene.pdf

⁴ <https://www.rma.usda.gov/sites/default/files/topics/2024-24360-Hurricane-Insurance-Protection---Wind-Index-Handbook.pdf>

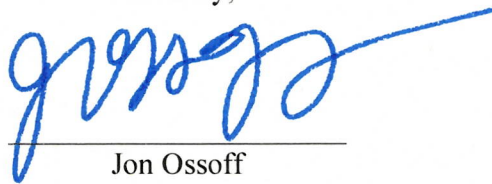
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Therefore, I ask for your commitment that RMA will re-evaluate the available data produced by the NHC during and since Hurricane Helene to reconsider the HIP-WI eligibility determinations for Screven, Effingham, Chatham, Bryan, Evans, Liberty, Long, McIntosh, Wayne, Glynn, and Camden counties. Ensuring that our farmers receive the support they planned for and invested in is the very least USDA can do.

I look forward to your response by July 31, 2026.

Sincerely,



Jon Ossoff
U.S. Senator