



Disaster Recovery, Rebuilding, and Resilience Conference

September 23 – 25, 2026

**Renaissance Asheville Downtown Hotel
Asheville, North Carolina**

Wednesday, September 23

3:00 – 5:00 pm Community Service Event

This conference isn't just about learning and networking—it's an opportunity to contribute meaningfully to a resilient community that continues to rebuild after Hurricane Helene. Join us for a volunteer project with [RiverLink](#) and wear your yard work clothes! Round-trip transportation from the hotel will be provided. Departing from the hotel lobby at 2:30 pm.

5:00 – 7:00 pm Registration *Top of the Plaza*

6:00 – 7:00 pm Welcome Reception *Top of the Plaza*

Welcome to the conference! Come connect with the other attendees before all the talking starts.

Dinner on your own

Thursday, September 24

7:30 – 8:30 am **Breakfast and Registration** *Top of the Plaza*

8:30 – 8:45 am **Opening Remarks** *Windsor Ballroom*

Conference Co-Chairs:

Dean Michael Mead, Carr, Riggs & Ingram, SMFS Chair

Brian Marshall, S&P Global Ratings, SMFS Education Chair

8:45 – 9:15 am **Keynote** *Windsor Ballroom*

Announcement coming soon!

9:15 – 10:30 am **Session 1** *Windsor Ballroom*

Investing in Resilience: Rebuilding WNC Communities

As communities across the South face increasingly frequent and costly disasters, the path from immediate recovery to long-term resilience has never been more critical. Set against the backdrop of Asheville, this panel explores how smaller or rural municipalities can recover from disaster and rebuild smarter, safer, and more equitably. This session offers practical insights for public finance professionals navigating the complex intersection of disaster recovery, capital planning, and long-term resilience, grounded in the lived experience of a region where landscape, community, and preparedness are deeply intertwined.

Moderator: **Tony McEwen**, American Flood Coalition Carolinas

Speakers: **Rod Honeycutt**, County Manager, Madison County, NC; **Alex Phares**, Director of Disaster Resilience, Fahe; **Carol Pritchett**, Mayor, Town of Lake Lure, NC

10:30 – 10:45 am **Networking Break** *Windsor Foyer*

10:45 am – 12:00 pm **Session 2** *Windsor Ballroom*

Stronger Communities, Stronger Markets: Resilience and Insurance in Action

As disasters become increasingly costly and damaging, states and local governments must grapple with the implications of rising insurance premiums for households and the vitality of their economies. This panel seeks to understand how disaster hardening and resilient building affect premiums, insurance availability, and coverage levels, as well as new products like parametric insurance; the tools and strategies different states are using to improve resiliency and support municipalities in resiliency efforts; how municipal debt issuers have sought to reduce risk through investments in adaptation and resilience and thoughtful planning and policymaking; and what that means for their ability to recover quickly and build back better after a disaster.

Moderator: **Patricia Healy**, Senior Vice President, Director of Fixed Income Research, Cumberland Advisors

Speakers: **Guillermo Franco**, Managing Director & Global Head of Cat Risk Research, Guy Carpenter (invited); **Sara Kane**, Sustainability and Resilience Manager, Sarasota County, FL; **Muhammad Nawaz**, Associate Professor, University of North Carolina at Asheville

12:00 – 1:00 pm **Lunch and Fireside Chat** *Top of the Plaza*

Speaker: **Brock Long**, former Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency

Interviewer: **Brian Marshall**, Associate Director, S&P Global Ratings

1:00 – 2:30 pm **Session 3** *Windsor Ballroom*

The Future of FEMA

Conversations continue regarding federal and state roles and funding of disaster planning and recovery, including the role of Federal Emergency Management Agency and federal government support for state and local governments ahead of and in the wake of a disaster. This panel explores the opportunities and risks associated with potential changes to FEMA and its programs, including the community assistance program and National Flood Insurance Program, and what those changes may mean for state and local governments. It also covers how municipal debt issuers are preparing for a potential pullback in federal support for disaster recovery and planning for a future in which they bear greater risk.

Moderator: **Sarah Sullivant**, Managing Director, Sector Lead, S&P Global Ratings

Speakers: **Danielle Aymond**, Of Counsel, Baker Donelson; **Jeanne Milliken Bonds**, Senior Executive and Director of Municipal Programs & Strategy & NLC University, National League of Cities (invited); **W. Scott Powell**, Director of Finance, Metropolitan Sewerage District of Buncombe County, NC

2:30 – 2:45 pm **Networking Break** *Windsor Foyer*

2:45 – 4:00 pm **Session 4** *Windsor Ballroom*

From Recovery to Long-Term Planning: Water in the Rapidly Growing South

This panel explores how natural disasters disrupt water operations and how utilities need to plan given rapid economic growth across the South. The panel also explores how utilities manage energy response, service continuity, rate stability, and rebuilding costs while navigating federal aid, insurance, and evolving climate-driven risks. The panel then shifts to a long-term view of physical risks related to water and how communities are planning for future resilience.

Moderator: **Alex Louie**, Director, S&P Global Ratings

Speakers: **David Melton**, Water and Wastewater Director, City of Rock Hill, SC (invited); **Emily Renda**, Senior Analyst, Charles Schwab; **Shay Ralls Roalson**, Director, Austin Water

4:00 – 5:00 pm **Plain-Language Q&A** *Windsor Ballroom*

What's This Thing Called "Public Finance"?

If you are not working in the world of municipal bonds, you may not be familiar with some of the terminology the conference speakers are using. Join us for a brief overview of public finance and its importance to governments and their financial and economic health, followed by an open question-and-answer session.

Speakers: **Adebola Kushimo**, Associate Managing Director, Moody's Investors Service; **Dean Michael Mead**, Partner, Government & Public Sector Sub-Line Leader, Carr, Riggs & Ingram, LLC

4:15 – 6:15 pm **Local Bus Tour** *Departs from the hotel lobby*

It's time to get out of the hotel and meet more of the people and businesses whose recovery and rebuilding efforts since Helene we've been hearing about.

Dinner on your own

Friday, September 25

7:30 – 8:30 am **Breakfast** *Top of the Plaza*

8:30 – 9:45 am **Session 5** *Windsor Ballroom*

Before, During, After: Natural Disasters, Credit Risk, and Portfolio Decisions

This session offers a practical, end-to-end framework for how municipal analysts assess, communicate, and position credit risk related to natural disasters:

- Before: Identifying exposure, valuing climate risk, and setting portfolio expectations
- During: Monitoring real-time developments and communicating uncertainty
- After: Reassessing credit fundamentals, recovery paths, and longer term resiliency.

The panel also explores how analysts translate disaster and climate risk into investment recommendations—including yield compensation and buy, hold, or sell decisions—and how mitigation and resiliency efforts factor into portfolio positioning.

Moderator: **James Dearborn**, former Director of Municipal Research, DWS

Speakers: **Lauren Patterson**, Manager, Research & Product Development, Intercontinental Exchange – Climate; **Pat Squeglia**, Municipal Research Analyst, Nuveen; **Lisa Washburn**, Managing Director, Chief Credit Officer, Municipal Market Analytics

10:00 – 10:45 pm **Fireside Chat** *Top of the Plaza*

Speaker: **Naomi Kowles**, Investigative Reporter, WBTV

Interviewer: **Barbara VanScoy**, President, Alpha Impact Advisors

10:45 am – 12:00 pm **Session 6** *Top of the Plaza*

Attendee Scrum

The scrum is an SMFS and NFMA tradition: an opportunity to exchange views and continue the discussion from the conference and beyond.

Moderator: ***Sarah Sullivant***, Managing Director, Sector Lead, S&P Global Ratings

Conclusion and Thank You

THANK YOU TO OUR CONFERENCE SPONSORS