



## **Humanitarian Aid and Rescue Project**

### **Operation Cottonmouth**

**Location: North Carolina**

### **Impact Report**

**Operational Date: 11/2017**

## **Operational Summary**

Hurricane Florence made landfall as a Category 1 hurricane on the morning of September 14, 2018, over Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina, a few miles east of Wilmington and near the South Carolina border. The hurricane struck with 90-mph winds and a devastating storm surge, causing widespread destruction along the coastline.

Despite its Category 1 status, Florence's impact was far-reaching due to its slow-moving nature. The hurricane lingered over the region, dumping record-breaking rainfall that led to catastrophic flooding across both North and South Carolina. Some areas received over 30 inches of rain, overwhelming rivers and streams and resulting in extensive inland flooding.

The heavy rainfall and subsequent flooding caused widespread damage to homes, businesses, and infrastructure. Thousands of residents were displaced, and many communities were left without power for extended periods. The storm surge compounded the flooding, inundating coastal areas and causing significant erosion.

Emergency services and humanitarian organizations, including HARP, mobilized quickly to provide aid and support. They conducted search and rescue operations, helped evacuate residents from flooded areas, and provided essential supplies such as food, water, and medical aid. The response efforts were complicated by the extensive flooding, which made many areas inaccessible and required the use of boats and helicopters for rescues.

In the aftermath of the hurricane, recovery efforts continued for months as communities worked to rebuild and restore normalcy. The impact of Hurricane Florence highlighted the importance of preparedness and the challenges posed by slow-moving storms, which can cause severe flooding even when their wind speeds are not at their peak intensity.

HARP deployed to North Carolina on September 17th, three days after Hurricane Florence made landfall. Upon arrival, they immediately coordinated with the local Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and Fire Rescue teams to assess the most urgent needs. The region was in chaos, with many communities isolated by floodwaters teeming with water moccasins, alligators, and wolf spiders, making rescues particularly hazardous.

HARP launched multiple boat rescue operations to evacuate residents trapped in their homes. The team navigated treacherous waters to reach those in need, ensuring they were safely transported to evacuation centers. In addition to surface rescues, HARP's divers conducted underwater assessments of submerged bridges and overpasses to check for structural damage caused by the flooding.

Over their 12-day mission, HARP successfully rescued more than 45 people, providing critical relief and ensuring their safety. The diving team evaluated over 10 bridges and overpasses, helping to inform local authorities about the safety and integrity of these critical structures.

The operation highlighted HARP's versatility and expertise in responding to natural disasters. Their swift action and ability to adapt to dangerous and unpredictable conditions were crucial in mitigating the immediate impacts of Hurricane Florence. The team's efforts not only saved lives but also contributed valuable information for the ongoing recovery and rebuilding efforts in the affected communities.

## **Future Missions and How You Can Help**

You can make a significant contribution to the Humanitarian Aid and Rescue Project (HARP) and support their future operations by making a generous donation today at [www.HarpRescue.org](http://www.HarpRescue.org). Your donation will play a crucial role in enabling HARP to continue its life-saving work in providing aid and assistance to those in need. Your support will directly impact the lives of individuals affected by conflict, natural disasters, and other challenging circumstances. Visit the website now to make a meaningful difference and join HARP in its mission to bring hope, relief, and a brighter future to those who need it most

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