

Section of 194 Affected by Mudslide Reopens

Written by Submitted

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Wednesday, the N.C. Department of Transportation has reopened a section of N.C. 194 near Newland that was damaged by a mudslide on July 16 more than a month earlier than originally scheduled. The highway has a major economic impact to the area. “The timing is perfect as we are getting more and more visitors coming to the area from outside the region,” said Avery County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Susan Freeman. “We’re grateful to NCDOT for getting this road open early, as this will provide relief for local businesses that use this road to transport goods.”

Christmas tree growers use the repaired N.C. 194 as one of their main truck delivery routes. Their peak delivery season begins the first week of November. According to the N.C. Christmas Tree Association, Avery County harvests 12 percent of all North Carolina Christmas trees, and the state is the second largest producer of Christmas trees (7.5 million) behind Oregon (9 million).

“This is a major relief for all of our growers,” said NCCTA Executive Director Jennifer Greene. “The detour would have added tremendous financial strain during these difficult economic times, but we are very impressed and grateful to the hard work by NCDOT to open this road early. This takes a lot of stress off our growers. “

NCDOT crews built a temporary road and worked 24/7 to repair the damaged slope and rebuild the 200-foot damaged section of road. The work included clearing debris, rerouting underground springs, and installing a new guardrail.

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“I am proud of the hard work of our crews and collaboration to get the job done.,” said NCDOT Avery County Maintenance Engineer Jerry Combs, who directed the project. “Opening the road early will allow visitors to enjoy the beautiful fall foliage and Christmas tree delivery trucks to travel their normal delivery routes.”