

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2787

As Reported by House Committee On:
Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness

Title: An act relating to Green river emergency flooding preparedness and response.

Brief Description: Addressing Green river emergency flooding preparedness and response.

Sponsors: Representatives Hurst, Roach, Simpson, Miloscia, Orwall, Sullivan, Hasegawa, Hudgins, Upthegrove, White, Chase and Nelson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness: 1/26/10 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Capital funds are appropriated to the Washington Military Department to fund levy repair and flood hazard prevention, mitigation, and response projects for the Green River Valley area.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Hurst, Chair; O'Brien, Vice Chair; Pearson, Ranking Minority Member; Klippert, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Goodman, Kirby and Ross.

Staff: Yvonne Walker (786-7841).

Background:

The Howard Hanson Dam (Dam) is located near the headwaters of the Green River in King County. Originally called Eagle Gorge Dam, the Dam helps maintain water storage and reduces the risk of flooding in the Green River Valley and floodplain areas. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) which manages the Dam has discovered structural weaknesses such as accelerated leakage through the right abutment of the Dam. As a result of this finding, the USACE has determined the Dam is unable to hold as much water in heavy rains

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during the winter months. This situation creates a possibility of flooding in the areas of Renton, Tukwila, Auburn, and Kent.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

A total of \$25 million is appropriated from the State Building Construction Account to the Washington Military Department (Military Department) for the 2010-11 biennium. The Military Department must work in cooperation with the Flood Division of the Department of Ecology, the King County Flood Control District, and any other respective governments on flood hazard mitigation and response projects for the Green River Valley area.

The Military Department is responsible for administering the Green River Flood assistance funds. The Military Department, in consultation with the Green River Subcabinet, must establish procedures for the administration of the funds. A total of up to \$5 million of the total appropriated funds must be used for the following: (1) relocation costs (including, but not limited to, land acquisition) of public facilities and infrastructure; (2) relocation costs of citizens and businesses that are displaced by Green River flooding conditions; and (3) prevention, emergency response, mitigation, preparation, coordination, and recovery costs. A maximum of the remaining \$20 million must be used for costs directed at levy repair and strengthening. Projects that are funded must include, but are not limited to, projects that will promote public education on disaster preparedness.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Several technical amendments and clarifications are made that:

- require the Military Department to work in consultation with the Green River Subcabinet (instead of the Emergency Management Council and the Washington State Emergency Management Association) to establish procedures for the administration of the river flood assistance funds;
 - provide that \$5 million of the funds appropriated are to be used for relocation costs of public facilities, citizens, and businesses that are displaced by flooding, as well as for prevention, emergency response, mitigation, preparation, coordination, and recovery costs; and
 - provide that the remaining \$20 million must be used for levy repair.
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Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) There have been 12 federally declared disasters in King County alone since 1990. Although the bill mainly talks about flooding, the potential flooding in the Green River Valley (valley) would be due to a man-made event. There is a structural failure on the hillside of where the Dam was built. The Dam, was built over 40 years ago, in the narrowest part of the Green River where there is a landslide. This was done at the time to help develop the valley region.

When the abutment to the Dam started to leak, the USACE realized that they could not fill the Dam full of water. If the Dam was filled then there will be failure of the Dam and the entire valley would be destroyed killing thousands of people. Our state's economy is dependent upon the businesses in the valley. In excess of 50 percent of Washington's economy depends on commerce that moves through the valley. There are 65 trains that traverse the valley per day. It has been said that 40 percent of business that are flooded out and destroyed never come back to the same area.

The affected cities have project lists that describe the priority of tasks that need to be done right away. It is imperative that the Dam levees be repaired. It would be nice for the money to go through the flood districts, but the goal is to get the money on the ground and get things going as fast as possible. The USACE and King County have a list of project recommendations based upon the severity of damage, consequence of failure, urgency, how quickly the project can be done, and what partnerships the USACE has with the cities. The USACE is recommending that it can take approximately five years to repair the Dam. This bill is critical to the entire state.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Hurst, prime sponsor; Carolyn Robertson, City of Auburn; Mark Isaacson, King County; and Tim Laporte, City of Kent.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.