TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

The Committee on Environment to which was referred House Bill No. 778 entitled "An act relating to dam safety" respectfully reports that it has considered the same and recommends that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. 20 V.S.A. § 10 is amended to read:

§ 10. REQUEST TO GOVERNOR BY MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES

The all-hazards event provisions of this chapter shall not be brought into action unless the municipal director of emergency management, a member of the legislative body of the municipality, the city or town manager, or the mayor of a city that is within the area affected by an all-hazards event shall declare an emergency and request the Governor to find that a state of emergency exists and the Governor so finds, or unless the Governor declares a state of emergency under section 9 of this title. <u>This section shall not be construed to prevent the Governor or the Director of Emergency Management without municipal approval from requiring the evacuation of an area subject to inundation from a dam failure when there is a dam failure or an imminent risk of failure.</u>

Sec. 2. STATE OF VERMONT EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLANNING PILOT PROJECT; REPORT

(a)(1) The Division of Emergency Management, in coordination with the Department of Environmental Conservation, shall conduct a pilot project under which the Division shall develop a set of emergency operations plans (EOPs) for two State-owned dams that have been classified as high-hazard potential. One of the dams shall have a population at risk of 1,000 or more persons and the other shall have a population at risk of 100 or more but fewer than 1,000 persons.

(2) The set of EOPs for each dam shall include an EOP for each municipality in the inundation zone of the dam.

(b)(1) In preparing the EOPs required under subsection (a) of this section and in order to ensure the sufficiency of the EOPs to protect public lives and property, the Division shall coordinate with and collect input from those entities traditionally involved in regional and municipal emergency management, including municipal officials; emergency responders; regional planning commissions; State and regional search and rescue partners, including swiftwater rescue providers; and other relevant interested parties located in the regional area that would be inundated if the dam were to fail. The Division also shall coordinate with any owner or operator of a hydroelectric generation facility located at a State-owned dam.

(2) The Division of Emergency Management may hire a contractor, including a regional planning commission, to complete the requirements of this section, including one or both of the EOPs required under subsection (a) of this section.

(c) Each EOP required to be completed under subsection (a) of this section shall:

(1) be coordinated with each dam's emergency action plan and shall utilize each dam's emergency action plan inundation maps;

(2) identify planned evacuations and evacuation routes based on possible inundation scenarios, including how to evacuate vulnerable populations such as medically vulnerable individuals who need access to electricity or specialized medical equipment;

(3) identify where individuals shall evacuate to, such as a shelter, higher ground, or reunification location;

(4) engage facilities that house vulnerable populations, such as schools, shelters for the unhoused, and senior living communities, in the plan development;

(5) plan for the use of mutual aid and State resources, and coordinate such use between municipalities downstream of the dam;

(6) address how to implement the use of pre-event communication and early warning systems to alert persons in the inundation areas, including the use of the VT-Alert system; and

(7) include any additional provisions deemed useful by the Division in developing the EOP or for inclusion in the EOP.

(d) On or before July 1, 2028, the Division of Emergency Management shall submit to the House Committee on Environment and the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy the results of the pilot project required under subsection (a) of this section, including:

(1) copies of the EOPs for the two dams;

(2) a summary of the process of developing the EOPs, including whether the Division completed the EOPs with Division staff, contracted with regional planning commissions, or hired other contractors to complete the EOPs;

(3) a summary of how the Division or the Division contractor coordinated with municipal officials; State and regional search and rescue entities, including swiftwater rescue partners; owners or operators of hydroelectric facilities at a dam; and emergency responders representing municipalities in the area of potential inundation from each dam;

(4) the cost of the EOPs completed under the pilot project;

(5) a summary of early warning and communications systems municipalities may use to communicate recommendations or requests for evacuation, including the best use of the State's VT-Alert System; and

(6) a scope, timeline, and budget for the Division to develop an EOP template or templates and a training on EOP development for municipalities.

(e) As part of the report required under subsection (d) of this section, the Division of Emergency Management shall, based on the results of the pilot project EOPs:

(1) recommend how EOPs should be completed for all State or federal dams in Vermont that are high-hazard potential dams and that have a population at risk of 100 or more persons, including:

(A) whether and how to prioritize completion of the EOPs for all high-hazard dams with a population at risk of 100 or more persons;

(B) whether the Division of Emergency Management can complete or contract for completion of the EOPs for all State or federal dams with a population at risk of 100 or more persons by 2035;

(C) whether the Division of Emergency Management can complete an EOP for a federal dam or whether the Division may only assist those local entities authorized to complete an EOP under federal law; and

(D) what it would cost for the Division of Emergency Management to complete the EOPs for dams with a population at risk of 100 or more persons or what it would cost for the Division to contract with a qualified consultant to complete the EOPs;

(2) recommend how EOPs should be completed for high-hazard dams with a population at risk of fewer than 100 persons;

(3) recommend potential funding sources that the Division or individual municipalities could access to complete or contract for the completion of EOPs;

(4) recommend how to best educate municipalities, regional planning commissions, and emergency service providers about the need for and importance of EOPs for dams;

(5) recommend whether and how an EOP should identify structures that persons would reasonably be expected to occupy and how to geotag these structures for purposes of inclusion in the VT-Alert system; and

(6) recommend how often the Division, regional planning commissions, or municipalities should conduct practice emergency response for the EOPs required under subsection (a) of this section and ultimately for all EOPs prepared for dams in the State.

Sec. 3. APPROPRIATIONS

(a) In addition to other funds appropriated to the Department of Public Safety for the Division of Emergency Management in fiscal year 2027, $250,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department for completion by the Division of Emergency Management of the emergency operations plan pilot project required under Sec. 2 of this act.

(b) In addition to other funds appropriated to the Department of Environmental Conservation in fiscal year 2027, $125,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Environmental Conservation for the Department's assistance in completing the emergency operations plan pilot project required under Sec. 2 of this act.

Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

(Committee vote: _____)

_____

Representative _____

FOR THE COMMITTEE