



Vermont Council

March 12, 2024

Senate Committee on Appropriations
Vermont State House
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Chair Kitchel and Members of the Committee,

The undersigned organizations, together as members of the Vermont Water Caucus, write in support of the appropriations needed to implement S.213, 'the Flood Safety Act.' This is a critical bill to reduce future flood risk and build resilience, and is a direct, solutions-oriented, data-supported response to the flooding that has devastated so many Vermont communities.

The Flood Safety Act will mitigate damages from future flooding events.

We know you are weighing all new spending and that there are many competing goods. We believe that these dollars are a sound investment that will make Vermont communities more flood resilient and ultimately reduce the significant, taxpayer-funded costs of future flood-related disaster recovery.

The bill will also reduce the impacts on communities through wetland restoration, regulating development in high-hazard river corridors, and updating jurisdiction and enforcement tools for dam safety. But, in order to be properly and promptly implemented, several programs within the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) will need increased staffing levels.

The current version of the bill includes 16 FTEs, based on a revised request by the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR). However, we do not believe that the short-term work created by this bill will require this expanded number of FTEs for FY25.

As you all are well aware, staff positions across almost all state agencies remain unfilled and this is having a profound impact on state programs and services. At DEC, this means that there is a shortage of people needed to promptly implement any new flood resilience and dam safety programs. The Scott Administration's continued policy of attrition means it will take longer for Vermont communities to recover from and prepare for flooding.

As flooding events become more frequent and more severe, occurring every few months instead of every few years, the need for immediate action is now, and funding the Flood Safety Act will be essential to improving our collective flood safety.

Sincerely,

Lori Fisher, Executive Director
Lake Champlain Committee

Kathy Urffer, River Steward
Connecticut River Conservancy

David Deen, President
Connecticut River Valley Chapter of VT Trout Unlimited

Elena Mihaly, Vice President and Director
Conservation Law Foundation Vermont

Lauren Oates, Director of External Affairs
The Nature Conservancy in Vermont

Lauren Hierl, Executive Director
Vermont Conservation Voters

Jared Carpenter, Acting Chair
Vermont Council of Trout Unlimited

Jon Groveman, Water and Policy Program Director
Vermont Natural Resources Council

cc: Sen. Christopher Bray, Chair, Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Energy
Sen. Anne Watson, Vice Chair
Sen. Becca White, Clerk
Sen. Mark MacDonald
Sen. Dick McCormack