

1 H.679

2 Introduced by Representatives Waszazak of Barre City and Galfetti of Barre

3 Town

4 Referred to Committee on

5 Date:

6 Subject: Internal security and public safety; highways; conservation and  
7 development; all-hazards; emergency response; floods

8 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to require the  
9 Division of Emergency Management to provide financial assistance to flood-  
10 impacted communities, establish a Voluntary Buyout Program and  
11 Homeowner Assistance Program for flood-prone or flood-impacted properties,  
12 and provide technical and grant application assistance to municipalities  
13 through two new liaison positions added to the Division. This bill also  
14 proposes to authorize the Agency of Transportation to use the Municipal  
15 Mitigation Assistance Program to assist rural and flood-prone municipalities  
16 with infrastructure upgrades and require the Agency to provide technical and  
17 design assistance for certain infrastructure projects. This bill also requires the  
18 Agency of Natural Resources to establish programs to implement and improve  
19 stream flow and river corridor naturalization projects.

20 An act relating to emergency management in flood-prone municipalities

1 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

2 Sec. 1. 20 V.S.A. § 3b is added to read:

3 § 3b. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR IMPACTED MUNICIPALITIES

4 (a) A municipality that has been impacted by an all-hazard flooding event

5 shall be eligible for financial assistance from the Division of Emergency

6 Management to cover expenses incurred due to the all-hazard while awaiting

7 reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, including:

8 (1) emergency response costs;

9 (2) temporary housing and shelter services; and

10 (3) local infrastructure repairs that are necessary to maintain public  
11 safety.

12 (b) A municipality that has been impacted by an all-hazard flooding event  
13 shall be eligible for State funding to cover all of the local match requirements  
14 required by federal law or the Federal Emergency Management Agency for  
15 flood recovery and assistance.

16 Sec. 2. 20 V.S.A. § 52 is added to read:

17 § 52. FLOOD-PRONE PROPERTIES; ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

18 (a) Voluntary Buyout Program. The Division of Emergency Management  
19 and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development shall establish  
20 and maintain the Voluntary Buyout Program for flood-prone properties. The  
21 Program shall allow a municipality, at the request of the owner of a flood-

1 prone property, to apply for funding to cover the purchase price of the  
2 property. The purchase price shall be the full fair market value of the flood-  
3 prone property.

14 Sec. 3. 19 V.S.A. § 306 is amended to read:

15       § 306. APPROPRIATION; STATE AID FOR TOWN HIGHWAYS

16 \* \* \*

17 (i) Municipal Mitigation Assistance Program.

18           (1) The Agency shall administer the Municipal Mitigation Assistance  
19           Program. Through the Program, the Agency shall:

1                   (A) provide assistance and grants to municipalities for environmental  
2 mitigation projects related to stormwater and highways and for the  
3 establishment and operation of stormwater utilities; and

5 (i) upgrade infrastructure, including improvements to town

6 highways, bridges, and culverts, to increase the capacity of town highway  
7 infrastructure to handle high-volume water flow; and

10                   (2) Municipalities shall match grants with local funds sufficient to cover  
11                   20 percent of the project costs, except that the Agency may issue grants for the  
12                   establishment or operation of stormwater utilities without requiring a local  
13                   match.

14                   (3) From the operating expenses appropriated for the Program, the  
15                   Agency is authorized to pay costs billed to the Agency by municipal  
16                   stormwater utilities.

17 \* \* \*

18 Sec. 4. 19 V.S.A. § 320 is added to read:

19       § 320 AGENCY SUPPORT FOR CERTAIN TOWN HIGHWAY

20 PROJECTS

1        (a) Design of stormwater management systems. The Agency shall provide  
2        technical assistance to municipalities for the design of upgrades for stormwater  
3        management systems affecting town highways, including the design of larger  
4        culverts, reinforced ditches, drainage systems, and any other stormwater  
5        management system that is capable of managing increased water flow due to  
6        severe weather events.

7        (b) Technical assistance for specialized improvements. The Agency shall  
8        provide technical assistance to municipalities for specialized flood resiliency  
9        projects, including the alteration of bridges in flood-prone areas and the  
10       removal of dams that pose a significant risk to surrounding communities.

11       (c) Technical assistance for town highway improvements. The Agency  
12       shall offer technical assistance to municipalities for:

13            (1) roadwork and infrastructure adaptations for severe weather events;  
14            and

15            (2) identifying and applying for federal, State, and regional grants to  
16        support local infrastructure projects.

17        (d) Asset Management System. The Agency shall create and maintain the  
18        Asset Management System to track:

19            (1) availability of equipment that may be used to respond to an all-  
20        hazard flood event, including vehicles, water pumps, and sandbags;

1                   (2) equipment operators and personnel who are trained for disaster  
2                   management and response; and

3                   (3) locations of critical resources for efficient deployment of those  
4                   resources during an emergency.

5                   (e) Provision of flood response fleet vehicles. The Agency shall procure  
6                   and maintain a fleet of heavy machinery, including vactor trucks, necessary to  
7                   assist municipalities with debris removal from flood-impacted areas and the  
8                   maintenance of stormwater and flood mitigation systems to prevent future  
9                   damage. The fleet of heavy machinery shall be stored and maintained  
10                   regionally throughout the State.

11                   Sec. 5. 10 V.S.A. § 1007 is added to read:

12                   § 1007. AGENCY DUTIES; FLOOD RESILIENCY AND STREAM FLOW  
13                   PROJECTS

14                   The Agency of Natural Resources shall establish a program to implement  
15                   and improve stream flow projects in response to flood risks, including:

16                   (1) the clearing debris from surface waters to prevent the blockage of  
17                   waterways, flood plains, or other flood resiliency systems;  
18                   (2) the restoration of degraded flood-retention systems and reservoirs to  
19                   their original specifications;

- 1        (3) the alteration of rivers or river beds to mitigate flood risk; and
- 2        (4) the permitting of alternative, cost-effective flood mitigation solutions
- 3        to allow for expedited project implementation.

4 Sec. 6. 10 V.S.A. § 1429 is added to read:

5       § 1429. AGENCY DUTIES; FLOOD RESILIENCY AND RIVER

## 6 CORRIDOR NATURALIZATION PROJECTS

7       The Agency of Natural Resources shall establish a program to designate  
8       areas at risk of severe flooding and create floodways within portions of those  
9       designated areas to mitigate the damage caused by severe flooding. Through  
10      the program, the Agency shall also support riverbank naturalization projects to  
11      enhance ecological resilience, reduce erosion, and improve flood mitigation  
12      within designated areas.

## 13 Sec. 7. DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT; POSITIONS;

14 APPROPRIATION

15                   (a) The following positions are created in the Division of Emergency  
16                   Management:

17                   (1) one full-time, exempt Municipal Grant Liaison; and

18                   (2) one full-time, exempt Flood Mitigation Technician.

19                   (b) The Municipal Grant Liaison shall be dedicated to grant research, grant  
20                   applications support, coordination between municipal corporations and the  
21                   Federal Emergency Management Agency, and direct assistance to municipal

1 corporations for the acquisition of grants and other funding sources for flood  
2 relief and recovery efforts. The Flood Mitigation Technician shall be  
3 dedicated to providing or supporting engineering analyses for flood mitigation  
4 projects, oversight of municipal flood remediation and recovery projects, and  
5 managing technical assistance to municipal corporations for flood recovery.

6 Sec. 8. APPROPRIATIONS

7 In fiscal year 2027, the following sums are appropriated to the Department  
8 of Public Safety from the General Fund:

9       (1) \$225,000.00 to support the two positions created in Sec. 7 of this act;  
10      and  
11       (2) \$5,000,000.00 to be used by Vermont Emergency Management for  
12      general flood recovery projects in Essex County and Orleans County, including  
13      support for municipal recovery, infrastructure, or assistance of individuals.

14 Sec. 9. EFFECTIVE DATE

15 This act shall take effect on passage.