

**March 26, 2025**  
**Senate Natural Resources & Energy**  
**H.319**

Good morning Chair Watson and Committee members. For the record, I am Rob Evans, I manage the Rivers Program in the ANR Dept of Environmental Conservation. Thank you for the invitation to speak about H.319 and the proposed date extensions for our work implementing the Flood Safety Act. I have some brief introductory comments and then I am happy to answer questions.

To recap, the Flood Safety Act requires important work by the Rivers Program with the goal of making Vermont more resilient to flooding. The Act requires mapping, education/outreach, multiple rulemaking efforts, and study committee work, along with multiple legislative reports.

During the 2024 Legislative Session, in both this committee and House Environment, we expressed concerns with the timeframes to accomplish the work. Specifically, we articulated that we would very likely need 5 or 6 years to get all the work done as opposed to the 3.5 years provided in the law. Needing more time was due primarily to the following:

- Time lag associated with hiring/training new staff and getting consultants on board. We indicated that this could take 18 months before work in earnest could begin.
  - 5 new positions were provided to help get the work done. Recruitment efforts are underway to fill those positions in addition to 3 existing vacancies we had. We are on track to have most of the positions filled in the next month or two and then we shift to training.
- Once we complete the hiring we will shift to getting contracts developed and executed to bring on consultants to support the work.
- We also described last year the huge volume of flood recovery work from the 2023 floods. Flood recovery technical assistance to support mitigation project

development funded through Vermont Emergency Management goes on for years after a big disaster.

- Lastly, in related fashion, we expressed concern that any additional flood disasters would set us back further. We had 3 more significant floods during the summer of 2024. Over a 14 month period we received a total 6 federal flood declarations.

Bottom line, we need more time. Questions?