



VERMONT LEGISLATIVE
Joint Fiscal Office

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Fiscal Note

February 26, 2026

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H.778 – An act relating to dam safety

As recommended by the House Committee on Environment, Draft 4.1¹

Bill Summary

This bill would require the Division of Emergency Management (VEM), in coordination with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), to conduct a pilot project to develop a set of emergency operations plans (EOPs) for two State-owned dams that have been classified as high-hazard potential. VEM would be required to submit a report on or before July 1, 2028 based on the results of this pilot. The report would include, among other things, recommendations for how EOPs should be completed for other dams and potential funding sources to support this work.

H.778 establishes a pilot project to develop emergency operations plans for two State-owned dams with high-hazard potential.

Fiscal Impact

Section 3, as recommended, appropriates \$375,000 from the General Fund in fiscal year 2027 to fund the pilot project required by the bill; \$250,000 to VEM and \$125,000 to DEC.

Background and Details

The following sections have a fiscal impact.

Section 2: Emergency Operations Planning Pilot Project; Report

Section 2 would require VEM, in coordination with DEC, to conduct a pilot project to develop a set of 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.

A report with the results of the pilot project, including the two EOPs and other stipulated documentation, would be required to be submitted by VEM to the House Committee on Environment and the Senate Committee on Natural Resources on or before July 1, 2028.

¹ The Joint Fiscal Office (JFO) is a nonpartisan legislative office dedicated to producing unbiased fiscal analysis – this fiscal note is meant to provide information for legislative consideration, not to provide policy recommendations.

As part of this report, VEM shall, based on the result of the pilot project, make recommendations on how EOPs should be completed for all State or federal dams in Vermont that are high-hazard potential, on potential funding sources that VEM or individual municipalities could access to fund the completion of EOPs, and on other items. These recommendations could have future fiscal implications.

The work resulting from this pilot project could obviously have other, broader fiscal implications to the extent to which risk from future catastrophes is mitigated from the implementation of these plans.

Section 3: Appropriations

Section 3, as recommended, would make two General Fund appropriations in fiscal year 2027:

- \$250,000 to VEM for the emergency operations plan pilot project required under Section 2.
- \$125,000 to DEC for the Department's assistance in completing the emergency operations plan pilot project required under Section 2.

ⁱ *The full fiscal note history is available on the fiscal tab of the bill page on the General Assembly website and can be pulled up through a bill number search on the JFO page.*