

Date of Hearing: May 10, 2023

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Chris Holden, Chair

AB 277 (Rodriguez) – As Amended April 7, 2023

Policy Committee:	Emergency Management	Vote:	7 - 0
	Water, Parks and Wildlife		15 - 0

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: No Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill establishes the State-Federal Flood Operations Center (FOC) within the Department of Water Resources (DWR) in statute.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Establishes the FOC administered by DWR to function as the focal point for gathering, analyzing, and disseminating flood and water information to stakeholders, including coordination of statewide emergency responses.
- 2) Requires, by June 1, 2025, the FOC and the Office of Emergency Services (OES), in consultation with cooperating agencies, to submit a report to the Legislature that outlines necessary technological advancements for agile forecasting, including gaps in data, to improve flood response. Cooperating agencies are federal, state, and local agencies that engage in water and emergency management, including the United States Bureau of Reclamation, State Water Project, Central Valley Flood Protection Board, OES, and Department of Insurance.
- 3) Authorizes, upon appropriation, OES to expend federal emergency preparedness and hazard mitigation funds to fill any technological, operational, or preparedness gap identified in the report.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) Ongoing General Fund (GF) costs of approximately \$6 million to DWR to codify the FOC, as such funding would no longer be available to DWR to use for another purpose. Additionally, DWR notes one-time GF costs of approximately \$1.3 million per week in years when the FOC is activated for flood conditions. This year, DWR anticipates the FOC will be active through July, for a total of 24 weeks in 2023, at a cost of approximately \$32 million.
- 2) Minor and absorbable costs to OES to lead the report with the FOC, and to cooperating agencies to consult on the report with FOC and OES.
- 3) Cost pressures to redirect federal funds already specified for existing uses to the purposes specified by this bill, resulting in GF cost pressures to backfill the redirected amount.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author, “this bill will improve California’s forecasting capabilities and provide state and local emergency management with the information they need to prepare for these extreme atmospheric river incidents.” The author notes this bill stems from a joint oversight hearing of the Committees on Emergency Management, Water, Parks and Wildlife, and Utilities and Energy to evaluate California’s preparedness for extreme atmospheric river incidents. This bill is supported by Sonoma Water.
- 4) **Codifying the FOC.** The FOC is responsible for coordinating local, state, and federal flood operations year-round. The FOC is housed within DWR’s Division of Flood Management and is the facility from which DWR centrally coordinates emergency response statewide. When activated during a major weather event, the FOC operates 24 hours a day in coordination with the National Weather Service to monitor changing conditions, coordinate flood flight efforts with local and federal partners, and keep the public informed. DWR also coordinates closely with OES when emergency operation centers are activated during a flood or other emergency. This bill formally establishes the existing FOC in statute and requires the FOC to submit a report to the Legislature outlining necessary technological advancements for agile forecasting. This bill also authorizes, upon appropriation, OES to expend Federal Emergency Management Agency Preparedness Grant and federal Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funds to fill any technological, operational, or preparedness gap identified in the report.

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