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AB-30 Atmospheric Rivers: Research, Mitigation, and Climate Forecasting Program. (2023-2024)

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CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2023–2024 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

NO. 30

Introduced by Assembly Member Ward

December 05, 2022

An act to amend the heading of Article 8 (commencing with Section 347) of Chapter 2.5 of Division 1 of, and to repeal and add Section 347 of, the Water Code, relating to atmospheric rivers.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 30, as introduced, Ward. Atmospheric Rivers: Research, Mitigation, and Climate Forecasting Program.

Existing law establishes the Atmospheric Rivers: Research, Mitigation, and Climate Forecasting Program in the Department of Water Resources. Existing law requires the department, upon an appropriation for purposes of the program, to research climate forecasting and the causes and impacts that climate change has on atmospheric rivers, to operate reservoirs in a manner that improves flood protection, and to reoperate flood control and water storage facilities to capture water generated by atmospheric rivers.

This bill would rename that program the Atmospheric Rivers Research and Forecast Improvement Program: Enabling Climate Adaptation Through Forecast-Informed Reservoir Operations and Hazard Resiliency (AR/FIRO) Program. The bill would require the department to research, develop, and implement new observations, prediction models, novel forecasting methods, and tailored decision support systems to improve predictions of atmospheric rivers and their impacts on water supply, flooding, post-wildfire debris flows, and environmental conditions. The bill would also require the department to take all actions within its existing authority to operate reservoirs in a manner that improves flood protection in the state and to reoperate flood control and water storage facilities to capture water generated by atmospheric rivers.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) Atmospheric rivers provide California with up to one-half its annual water supply and account for more than 90 percent of the state's flood damages.

(b) Research suggests that as the climate continues to warm, California will grow increasingly dependent on atmospheric rivers for its water supply.

(c) Advances in the understanding and forecasting of atmospheric rivers underpins and extends the viability of forecast-informed reservoir operations, thereby enabling greater water supply reliability and flood protection across the state.

(d) Furthermore, research on atmospheric rivers can be used to refine climate projections of extreme weather and water events and changes in Sierra snow.

(e) Forecast-informed reservoir operations is a critical climate resilience strategy.

SEC. 2. The heading of Article 8 (commencing with Section 347) of Chapter 2.5 of Division 1 of the Water Code is amended to read:

Article 8. Atmospheric Rivers: Research, Mitigation, Rivers Research and Forecast Improvement Program: Enabling Climate Forecasting Adaptation Through Forecast-Informed Reservoir Operations and Hazard Resiliency (AR/FIRO)

SEC. 3. Section 347 of the Water Code is repealed.

~~347.(a)The Atmospheric Rivers: Research, Mitigation, and Climate Forecasting Program is hereby established in the Department of Water Resources.~~

~~(b)Upon appropriation of special fund moneys, including, but not limited to, private funds, for these purposes, the department shall conduct research relating to climate forecasting and the causes and impacts that climate change has on atmospheric rivers, and shall take all actions within its existing authority to operate reservoirs in a manner that improves flood protection in the state and to reoperate flood control and water storage facilities to capture water generated by atmospheric rivers, thereby increasing water supply, hydropower availability, and the reliability of water resources in the state.~~

SEC. 4. Section 347 is added to the Water Code, to read:

347. (a) The Atmospheric Rivers Research and Forecast Improvement Program: Enabling Climate Adaptation Through Forecast-Informed Reservoir Operations and Hazard Resiliency (AR/FIRO) Program is hereby established in the Department of Water Resources.

(b) (1) The department shall research, develop, and implement new observations, prediction models, novel forecasting methods, and tailored decision support systems to improve predictions of atmospheric rivers and their impacts on water supply, flooding, post-wildfire debris flows, and environmental conditions.

(2) The department shall take all actions within its existing authority to operate reservoirs in a manner that improves flood protection in the state and to reoperate flood control and water storage facilities to capture water generated by atmospheric rivers. The goals of integrating forecast-informed reservoir operations into department operations shall be to increase water supply, hydropower availability, and water supply reliability. The department may use research generated by this program to refine climate projections of extreme weather and water events and changes in Sierra snow.