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AB-30 Atmospheric rivers: research: reservoir operations. (2023-2024)

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Assembly Bill No. 30

CHAPTER 134

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.

[Approved by Governor September 01, 2023. Filed with Secretary of State September 01, 2023.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 30, Ward. Atmospheric rivers: research: reservoir operations.

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 utilize relevant information 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 and other storms.

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 and Forecast Improvement Program: Enabling Climate Adaptation Through Forecast-Informed Reservoir Operations and Hazard Resiliency (AR/FIRO)

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 Section 347 of the Water Code is repealed.

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 utilize all relevant information produced pursuant to paragraph (1) 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 and other storms. 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.

(3) Information produced pursuant to paragraph (1) shall be available to relevant federal, state, and local agencies.