
FISCAL TOPICS

Fiscal Services Division

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Des Moines, Iowa 50319

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Levee Improvement Program and Levee Improvement Fund

During the 2021 Legislative Session, the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEMD) received a one-time appropriation of \$400,000 from the General Fund in [HF 861](#) (FY 2022 Justice System Appropriations Act) for the completion of a study on the governance and funding of the State's levee districts. The funding was initially required to revert to the General Fund at the close of FY 2022.

However, during the 2022 Legislative Session, [HF 2317](#) (Levee Study Extension Act) extended the reversion date to the close of FY 2023 to allow the use of funds until the expected release date of the report on the study on January 1, 2023. Approximately \$266,000 carried forward into FY 2023. The report was completed and presented to the House Appropriations Committee on January 25, 2023. The full report can be found [here](#).

The intent of the study was to build on existing information to develop a more complete picture of levees and levee management in Iowa. The study identified areas where the governance and funding of levee districts as specified in the Iowa Code could be improved at the State and local level. In addition, recommendations were provided in the report regarding the type and scope of necessary or desired improvements and the implementation of such improvements.

Management recommendations from the study included:

- Encourage existing levee districts to consolidate at the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) system level.
- Encourage a watershed approach to levee management.
- Establish a State levee safety program.
- Develop a comprehensive strategic plan for flood risk reduction along Iowa's waterways.
- Encourage the use of councils of government to complete administrative requirements.

Funding recommendations from the study included:

- Modify Iowa Code section [468.127](#) to raise minimum levee assessments.
- Consider expanding taxing authority to a watershed scale.
- Implement a statewide levee assessment.
- Require levee districts to establish a cash reserve fund.
- Consider the State's funding contribution role.

Recent Legislation

During the 2023 Legislative Session, [HF 711](#) (Levee Safety and Improvements Act) created the Office of Levee Safety within the HSEMD, the Levee Improvement Program, and the Levee Improvement Fund.

The Office of Levee Safety is required to conduct a statewide analysis of the condition of the State's levees and identify each levee requiring repair or reconstruction, using a scale adopted by the Office that

More Information

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assigns a number based on the levee's level of critical need. The Office of Levee Safety is required to assist communities benefiting from a levee, including levee districts, and to evaluate methods to reduce and manage risks associated with a hazardous event caused by a levee's inadequate design, structural performance, or operational control.

In addition, the Office is required to work with the Flood Mitigation Board and the Iowa Geological Survey to achieve the purpose of the Levee Improvement Program. The Levee Improvement Program will administer and fund the repair or reconstruction of levees requiring immediate capital expenditure to reduce and manage a hazardous event.

Funding

House File 711 required the deposit of \$5.0 million in State wagering tax receipts into the Levee Improvement Fund each year from FY 2024 through FY 2028. Moneys in the Fund are appropriated to the HSEMD for the exclusive purpose of supporting the Office of Levee Safety and the Flood Mitigation Board.

Annual Report

The HSEMD is required to prepare and submit a Statewide Levee Assessment Report to the Governor and General Assembly by January 5 of each year.

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