

HOUSE BILL NO. 830

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A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT CREATING A LOCAL EMERGENCY QUICK RESPONSE PROGRAM; PROVIDING FOR GRANTS TO PROPERTY OWNERS FOR DAMAGE DUE TO CATASTROPHIC NATURAL EVENTS; PROVIDING THAT A CONSERVATION DISTRICT MAY ENTER INTO A COST-SHARE AGREEMENT WITH A PROPERTY OWNER AND DISTRIBUTE FUNDS; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

NEW SECTION. Section 1. Local emergency quick response account. (1) There is a local emergency quick response account in the state special revenue fund established in 17-2-102. All funds received pursuant to [section 3] must be deposited in the account and distributed pursuant to [section 2].

(2) Money deposited in the account is appropriated to the department of natural resources and conservation and may only be used for immediate aid to property owners who reside outside the boundaries of an incorporated city or town and who have experienced property damage or loss due to catastrophic natural events, including but not limited to:

(a) removal of fallen or uprooted trees to create a safety zone at a homesite or to provide access to private roads used to access private property;

(b) removal of timber or other natural materials that may cause a future fire risk;

(c) immediate acquisition of feed for livestock due to the destruction of grazing or other feed resources;

(d) minor fencing to provide immediate security of livestock if fences are damaged to the extent to allow for livestock loss; and

(e) other purposes considered necessary and appropriate by a conservation district board.

(3) (a) For each fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025, ~~\$1 million~~ ~~\$500,000~~ is allocated to be spent from the account each quarter of the fiscal year.

(b) Any unspent funds in a quarter must be made available in the subsequent quarter.

NEW SECTION. Section 2. Local emergency quick response funding program -- conservation district distribution process -- allowable amounts. (1) If a board of county commissioners has passed an emergency resolution as provided in 10-3-402, a citizen may apply for emergency quick response funding on a cost-share basis pursuant to subsection (5).

(2) A conservation district established in Title 76, chapter 15, shall accept applications and administer the local emergency quick response funding program for emergencies occurring within the boundaries of the conservation district.

(3) An application for funding must be received within 60 days of the passage of the emergency resolution required in subsection (1) and must include:

(a) the date when the property damage occurred, which must occur during the date range included in the emergency resolution;

(b) an itemized list of damages for which the property owner seeks funding;

(c) a list of the total anticipated costs;

(d) identification of the entity or entities who will complete the required work; and

(e) any information that demonstrates that the property damage occurred during the period of the emergency resolution.

(4) A property owner may only submit one application requesting up to \$10,000 during the time of emergency and may not be awarded funding from the account provided in [section 1] more than once in a 5-year time period.

(5) If the conservation district board finds that an application submitted pursuant to this section meets the requirements of [section 1] and this section and sufficient funds are available in the account, the conservation district may enter into a cost-share agreement with the property owner.

(6) Before funds may be distributed from the local emergency quick response account provided for in [section 1], the property owner shall enter into a cost-share agreement with the ~~board of county~~

1 ~~commissioners conservation district~~. The cost-share agreement must specify:

2 (a) the amount of funding to be paid from the local emergency quick response account, which may
3 not be more than 75% of the total costs; and

4 (b) the amount of funding to be paid by the property owner.

5 (7) (a) Funds from the local government emergency quick response account may not be awarded
6 directly to a landowner or the landowner's immediate family.

7 (b) The amount of funding to be paid from the emergency quick response account to the property
8 owner must be distributed after the conservation district receives receipt of work completed with an itemized list
9 of costs.

10 (8) The conservation district may retain up to 7% of the total amount awarded to a landowner for
11 the administration of the program.

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13 NEW SECTION. Section 3. Appropriation. (1) There is appropriated ~~\$8~~ \$4 million from the general
14 fund to the department of natural resources and conservation for the biennium beginning July 1, 2025, for the
15 purposes of [sections 1 and 2].

16 (2) The appropriation must be deposited in the account provided for in [section 1].

17 (3) Money from the appropriation that is not spent during the biennium must revert to the general
18 fund.

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20 NEW SECTION. Section 4. Effective date. [This act] is effective July 1, 2025.

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