



April 29, 2011

The Honorable David R. Boutin, Chairman
Senate Capital Budget Committee
State House, Room 100
Concord, NH 03301

Re: HB 25-FN-A, making appropriations for capital improvements. Funding disaster relief and hazard mitigation in response to the May 2006 Suncook River avulsion.

Dear Chairman Boutin:

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the request made by the Senate Capital Budget Committee at a hearing on April 25, 2011 to provide additional information regarding the funding of disaster relief and hazard mitigation projects in the Suncook River Watershed, as provided in HB 25-FN-A as amended by the House of Representatives. As Chris Pope, the State Director of Emergency Management testified to your Committee on April 25, the Department of Environmental Services (DES) and Department of Safety (DOS) respectfully request that HB 25-FN-A be further amended by reallocating to DOS the \$2,000,000 to provide disaster relief and hazard mitigation in response to the May 2006 Suncook River avulsion. This request is fully supported by Governor Lynch. The purpose of this letter, including attachments, is to provide details on the projects anticipated to be funded with this \$2,000,000 capital budget appropriation.

By way of background, the avulsion of the Suncook River in 2006 has significantly increased erosion of the banks and bed of the river in the vicinity and upstream of the avulsion, as well as sedimentation downstream. However, the ability to control these natural processes is limited, as demonstrated by failed attempts on rivers in New Hampshire, as well as around the world. For this reason, we have focused our response to the Suncook avulsion on achieving two overarching goals: (1) protecting vital infrastructure; and (2) reducing the risk of loss of life or property damage from future floods.

HB 25-FN-A as amended by the House includes the DES and DOS priority of \$2,000,000 titled "Property Acquisition in the Suncook River Fluvial Erosion Hazard Zone." Although this request was originally written to encompass only property acquisition, further developments over the past few months (described below) demonstrate a need for this request to support a variety of life safety, property conservation, and hazard mitigation projects in the Suncook River Watershed in the communities of Allenstown, Pembroke, Chichester, Epsom and Pittsfield. In fact, proposed uses include not only the voluntary acquisition of flood prone homes near the river, but also the protection of critical infrastructure such as bridges and publicly-owned wells. *Expenditures from this capital item can match up to \$6,000,000 in federal grants which will pay the majority of the overall project costs.*

At the Governor’s request, DOS and DES and representatives of the communities of Allenstown, Pembroke, Chichester, Epsom and Pittsfield have been working together over the past several months to identify additional short term projects or solutions that may positively impact the personal safety, property, and environment of those who live in the floodplain of the Suncook River. This group has developed a list of 26 projects that meet the established goals. Many of these projects have been completed and many others are underway. Some projects will require capital spending, including the substantive projects identified and described below which are anticipated to qualify for federal grant funds provided that a non-federal match is available. The attached project list provides the currently estimated costs for these projects. Cost estimates are expected to be revised as these projects are further developed. In addition, other vital mitigation projects may be identified. Cost estimates for each of these projects are provided in the table on page 4 of this letter.

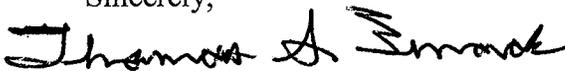
Project	Description
Home Acquisitions by the Towns of Allenstown, Chichester, Epsom and Pembroke	This is a voluntary property acquisition program based on a partnership among the federal government, state government, the municipality and the homeowner. If a property owner within the flood zone wishes to participate because of past or potential future flooding events, the municipality purchases their home. Structures are then demolished, hazardous materials removed, and the land is then maintained as public open space that may be inundated without risk in future flood events. The cost is based upon an estimated average of \$175,000 per property. The actual price will vary based upon value. These costs do not include demolition and other associated acquisition costs.
Removal of demolition materials and hazardous materials from the flood zone	This item will cover the equipment, personnel and disposal costs of removing demolition and hazardous materials within the flood zone, including removals associated with the property acquisitions.
Epsom Village Water District: Round Pond Well House Relocation	The Epsom Village Water District is situated within the Suncook River floodplain. Pre-and post avulsion, the well was frequently shut down during floods due to the well being overtopped by flood waters. This item will relocate the well house by moving it out of the flood zone and flood-proof the well casing.
Remove high-risk woody material along Suncook River	The Suncook River Fluvial Erosion Hazard (FEH) assessment, being performed by DES separate from this capital budget request, entails a field assessment of the river’s entire length to evaluate channel conditions and identify at-risk properties as the river adjusts to the avulsion. Additionally, as part of the FEH, the large woody debris material on the river will be evaluated to determine risk of impact to human infrastructure. This item covers the contracting costs, including heavy equipment and labor, to remove the high-risk material.

Town of Allenstown: Install Suncook River stream gage	To improve emergency flood response, the Town of Allenstown needs real-time river level data. There is a 4-5 hour differential from the existing stream gage in Chichester. A stream gage will be installed in Allenstown to provide that community with real-time Suncook River levels.
Town of Epsom: Dry Hydrant Installation	Before the avulsion the Town of Epsom had functional locations for water withdrawals from the Suncook River for fire suppression purposes. After the avulsion and resulting drop of water levels, these locations became non-functional. This mitigation project anticipates installation of 2 new hydrants to ensure fire suppression capabilities are restored.

This approach makes investments that will lessen the human and financial impacts of future flooding events. It is supported by local officials in these communities, and it leverages federal grants designed just for this purpose. By completing mitigation projects such as those described in this letter, we ultimately reduce future costs to the state. We request the funds to be reallocated to DOS to increase administrative efficiencies; if awarded, DOS will be administering the federal grants that will supplement this capital item.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this information. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Christopher Pope, (Director of Homeland Security, DOS) at 545-5842, or Rene Pelletier (Assistant Director of the DES Water Division) at 271-2951.

Sincerely,



Thomas S. Burack
DES Commissioner



John J. Barthelmes
DOS Commissioner

Enclosures
TSB/pmc

cc: Governor John H. Lynch

James I. Richardson, Special Assistant for Policy, Governor's Office

Boards of Selectmen (Chichester, Epsom, Allenstown, Pembroke and Pittsfield)

Senator Jack Barnes

Representative J. Brandon Giuda

Representative Dan McGuire

Representative Jon Richardson

Representative John McDonnell

John J. Barthelmes, Commissioner, Department of Safety

Christopher M. Pope, Director, HSEM, Department of Safety

Senator Sylvia Larsen

Representative G. Brian Seaworth

Representative Tony Soltani

Representative Carol McGuire

Department of Environmental Services and Department of Safety
 FY 12/13 Capital Budget Request
 Suncook River Hazard Mitigation Budget Detail Estimates

Project	# of Units	Estimated Price Each	Estimated Total Price	Federal Share (75%)	Non Federal Share (25%)
Home Acquisitions by Towns of Allenstown, Chichester, Epsom, and Pembroke	41	\$175,000	\$7,175,000	\$5,381,250	\$1,793,750
Removal of demolition materials and hazardous materials from the flood zone	1	\$350,000	\$350,000	\$262,500	\$87,500
Epsom Village Water District: Round Pond Well House Relocation	1	\$325,000	\$325,000	\$243,750	\$81,250
Remove high-risk woody material along Suncook River	1	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$75,000	\$25,000
Town of Allenstown: Install Suncook River stream gage	1	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$18,750	\$6,250
Town of Epsom: Dry Hydrant Installation	2	\$12,500	\$25,000	\$18,750	\$6,250
Total			\$8,000,000	\$6,000,000	\$2,000,000