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Justice: Building More Dams And Lakes Key To Flood Control



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In his Tuesday coronavirus briefing, Gov. Jim Justice repeated his belief that the “big fix” to flood control is building “lots of dams and lakes.”

“Those lakes would help us with energy generation and tourism,” Justice said. “But more than anything, it would truly help us with flood control.”

He said the challenge is getting past all the government permitting standing in the way.

“Until we decide to embark upon big ideas that would truly control floods, and generate energy, and do things that would perpetuate tourism, we’re standing in our own way,” Justice said.

“The problem is really simple when you’ve got government agencies after government agencies that are going to stand in the way.”

State Resiliency Officer Robert Martin is in charge of developing the new state flood mitigation plan. He said an ongoing study on creating water impoundments in the Kanawha River Basin is a part of the state’s flood mitigation strategy.

“Some of what will come out of those multi-year studies is what you can do along those that would help to mitigate flooding,” Martin said. “Sometimes that’s dams and lakes. There’s a lot that goes behind that. We have to work with multiple agencies and it takes a lot of coordination involving people who have properties that have to be purchased.”

Martin said the Kanawha River Basin study will not be part of the new state flood mitigation plan due out in the Spring of 2023. He said learning how to control waterways is what retention projects can do.

“Even as small as a retention pond on a small tributary will control the amount of water that flows through it,” Martin said. “So you don’t have large gushes of water during heavy rains – and it dries up at other times.”

there hasn't been a new West Virginia dam and lake project for more than 20 years.

However, Maka said without the dam containing Summersville Lake, the deadly flood of 2016 would have covered Charleston, all the way up to the State Capitol steps.

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