

HOUSE AGRICULTURE AND WATER RESOURCES COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR  
HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL 13

45TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2002

A JOINT MEMORIAL

COMMENDING THE NEW MEXICO BLACK-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG WORKING  
GROUP FOR USING A COMMON-GROUND APPROACH TO DEVELOP A  
CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN; REQUESTING THAT A  
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDING OPTIONS  
FOR A 2003 SPECIES SURVEY, CONSERVATION MEASURES AND WORKING  
GROUP STAFF.

WHEREAS, the New Mexico black-tailed prairie dog working  
group is striving to find common ground in resolving a  
contentious issue in the spirit of Senate Joint Memorial 27 of  
the forty-second legislature, first session, which was written  
by wild friends students; and

WHEREAS, while progress continues to be made toward  
greater environmental and economic prosperity, conflicts  
continue to arise involving black-tailed prairie dog

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1 management, and resolving those conflicts, including  
2 recognizing management needs on private lands, is critical to  
3 the viability and successful management of the species; and

4 WHEREAS, it is important for the youth of our state to  
5 understand ecosystems and to recognize their own impact on  
6 efforts to find solutions to environmental and human issues;  
7 and

8 WHEREAS, the New Mexico black-tailed prairie dog working  
9 group brings together people and organizations with very  
10 different viewpoints, including Animal Protection of New  
11 Mexico, incorporated, the Animas foundation, the bureau of  
12 land management, the national park service, the national  
13 wildlife federation, the natural resources conservation  
14 service, the New Mexico cattle growers' association, New  
15 Mexico state university, the New Mexico farm and livestock  
16 bureau, the department of game and fish, the New Mexico  
17 department of agriculture, the New Mexico natural heritage  
18 program, people for native ecosystems, the Turner endangered  
19 species fund, the United States air force, the United States  
20 army, the United States fish and wildlife service, the United  
21 States forest service and citizens of New Mexico, to reach  
22 agreement in dealing with prairie dog issues; and

23 WHEREAS, the small, but integral, furry little ground  
24 squirrel, *Cynomys ludovicianus*, commonly known as the black-  
25 tailed prairie dog, is crucial in providing habitat features

1 that help support many associated species in grassland  
2 ecosystems; and

3 WHEREAS, populations of black-tailed prairie dogs may be  
4 declining, and further study is needed to determine  
5 conservation and management; and

6 WHEREAS, as a result of a petition, the United States  
7 fish and wildlife service found that listing the black-tailed  
8 prairie dog as a threatened or an endangered species under the  
9 Endangered Species Act of 1973 was warranted but precluded;  
10 and

11 WHEREAS, in certain grassland ecosystems, black-tailed  
12 prairie dogs aid in the growth of a vast array of plants and  
13 wildlife as their digging actions enhance soil structure,  
14 water filtration and forb growth; and

15 WHEREAS, black-tailed prairie dogs create habitat for  
16 other species and contribute to the environment for an  
17 abundance of life in grassland ecosystems; and

18 WHEREAS, the disappearance of black-tailed prairie dogs  
19 could lead to the downfall of grassland ecosystems in eleven  
20 western states and may have adverse consequences for other  
21 ecosystems as well; and

22 WHEREAS, these complex and highly social animals, with  
23 their well-known burrows and towns, have contributed greatly  
24 to the history and vision of the west. For example, the  
25 famous explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark sent a

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1 prairie dog to President Jefferson because they were so  
2 impressed with the little creatures; and

3 WHEREAS, the plethora of plant and animal life belonging  
4 to western ecosystems directly contributes to the  
5 attractiveness and distinctive qualities that attract visitors  
6 to the west; and

7 WHEREAS, nongame animals such as the black-tailed prairie  
8 dog deserve to be valued because they are important living  
9 creatures that enhance the environment in which they live for  
10 all New Mexicans; and

11 WHEREAS, many of the problems believed to be caused by  
12 black-tailed and other prairie dog species are being  
13 reevaluated by scientists, and some studies have shown that  
14 prairie dogs may be critical to maintaining a balanced cycle  
15 of life in certain grasslands; and

16 WHEREAS, knowing the state of black-tailed prairie dog  
17 populations is necessary to making crucial decisions about  
18 those populations and to making informed decisions about  
19 listing them as a federal threatened or endangered species;  
20 and

21 WHEREAS, surveys of black-tailed prairie dog populations  
22 are planned every three years until 2010, and funding is  
23 needed for such a survey in 2003; and

24 WHEREAS, a black-tailed prairie dog working group  
25 coordinator would help coordinate many different groups spread

1 over a wide geographic area as they work together to resolve  
2 issues that affect each group in different ways; and

3 WHEREAS, the establishment of a preserve for a population  
4 of black-tailed prairie dogs set aside from usual human  
5 activities would provide valuable information and educational  
6 opportunities and could provide a home to prairie dogs whose  
7 burrows are being destroyed by new homes, roads and other  
8 developments; and

9 WHEREAS, the legislature encourages federal and state  
10 agencies in New Mexico to consider establishing such a  
11 preserve and providing incentives for landowners who willingly  
12 create private black-tailed prairie dog preserves; and

13 WHEREAS, the legislature wishes to preserve a beautiful,  
14 healthy and diverse world for New Mexico's children and to  
15 prevent the extinction of the myriad species that may depend  
16 on the black-tailed prairie dog for their own existence; and

17 WHEREAS, if the New Mexico black-tailed prairie dog  
18 working group is successful, it can be used as a model for  
19 investigating problems faced by other nongame animals in New  
20 Mexico;

21 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE  
22 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the New Mexico black-tailed prairie  
23 dog working group be commended for using a common-ground  
24 approach to develop a conservation and management plan to help  
25 solve this challenging environmental problem; and

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1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the appropriate legislative  
2 committee be requested to study and make recommendations as to  
3 whether a black-tailed prairie dog working group coordinator  
4 position should be created, which agency would include the  
5 position and how to fund the position; and

6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the black-tailed prairie dog,  
7 a valuable part of the west, be studied and protected where  
8 possible for the benefit of New Mexico children who are our  
9 future; and

10 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the appropriate legislative  
11 committee be requested to study and make recommendations as to  
12 whether preserves and incentive programs should be created to  
13 set aside populations of black-tailed prairie dogs and other  
14 nongame animals for study and educational purposes and to  
15 provide more publicity about the importance of nongame  
16 animals; and

17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that state agencies be encouraged  
18 to view New Mexico's black-tailed prairie dogs as wildlife  
19 that contribute to the uniqueness, health and diversity of  
20 many ecosystems in the west; and

21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the appropriate legislative  
22 committee be requested to recommend funding options for a  
23 fiscal year 2003 species survey of the black-tailed prairie  
24 dog; and

25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be

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1 transmitted to members of the black-tailed prairie dog working  
2 group and members of the New Mexico congressional delegation.

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