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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 2/20/19

SPONSOR Sanchez LAST UPDATED _____ HB 484

SHORT TITLE Northeast NM Groundwater Study SB _____

ANALYST Hawker

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation					Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23		
	\$350.0				Recurring	General Fund

Parenthesis () indicate expenditure decreases

Duplicates SB 255

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Commissioner of Public Lands (SLO)
Office of the State Engineer (OSE)

Other Response Received

New Mexico Association of Counties

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 484 appropriates \$350 thousand from the general fund to New Mexico State University (NMSU) for expenditure in FY20 and FY21 for the department of animal and range sciences to study the quantity and quality of groundwater resources in Colfax, Harding, Mora, and Union counties to determine appropriate land use in rural agriculture areas of these counties.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$350 thousand contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund.

Higher education institutions in New Mexico do not revert unexpended funding back to the

state's general fund.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

HB484 funds the development and maintenance of groundwater data sets for Union, Colfax, Harding, and Mora counties. The data sets will focus on determining fluctuations in the quantity and quality of groundwater resources throughout the region. They will build ongoing collaborative work between NMSU's Animal and Range Science Department and geologists working in the four-county area. This work is related to conservation-oriented agricultural practices that use linked data sets that include rangeland health, animal health, watershed health, and groundwater resources.

Preliminary data from Union and Mora counties suggest there is very little groundwater recharge entering the groundwater system. If recharge throughout the region is limited, there could be long-term impacts on the sustainability of groundwater-dependent agricultural operations.

Groundwater recharge is the process where water moves downward from surface water to groundwater. Recharge is the primary method through which water enters an aquifer.

Data on fluctuations in the quantity and quality of groundwater can assist agricultural businesses and rural communities in making informed decisions. Additionally, the data will provide information required for private landowners to work with federal agencies, such as U. S. Natural Resources Conservation Service to implement conservation practices that promote resilient production systems.

If groundwater monitoring activities were to occur on state trust lands, SLO staff will need to coordinate with NMSU.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

NMSU Animal and Range Science Department has received a \$1.2 million grant from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to support agricultural producers and land managers in making proactive groundwater management decisions that promote social, economic, and environmental resilience. This funded research will be conducted in Union County, New Mexico and outside of New Mexico in Cimarron County, Oklahoma and Las Animas, Colorado. The grant period is 2018-2021.

NMSU states HB484 will complement this federally funded research, expanding the work in Union County and adding Colfax, Harding, and Mora.

OSE states there is more than one aquifer in Colfax, Harding, and Mora, and Union counties. These aquifers are not necessarily well-connected and may not lend themselves to a single large-scale study. OSE wishes to be involved in the approval of the scope of work so as to avoid potential duplication of effort.

VKH/gb/sb