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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 1/22/19
 SPONSOR Padilla LAST UPDATED 1/24/19 HB _____
 SHORT TITLE High School Water Management Project SB 33/aSEC
 ANALYST Chilton

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY20	FY21		
\$400.0	None	Nonrecurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD)
 Youth Conservation Corps (YCC)

Responses Not Received From

Public Education Department (PED)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of SEC Amendment

The Senate Education Committee amendment makes it clear that it is the Public Education Department that will “provide the funding for the development of a suitable curriculum.”

Synopsis of Original Bill

Senate Bill 33 makes a one-time appropriation of \$400 thousand to fund a two-year pilot project wherein the Public Education Department would establish a high school curriculum on water management and conservation, noting the importance of water to this state. It envisions a one-credit semester-long course on these subjects that would be made available to high schools throughout the state. Evaluation of the pilot program would be mandated.

The bill would allocate up to 4 percent of the total (i.e., \$16 thousand) for professional development for those educators who would be selected to teach the course and for department costs. The remainder of the appropriation, or \$384 thousand would be used “for curriculum development and operational expenses, including teacher salaries.”

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The Public Education Department has not yet commented as to the adequacy of the appropriation for the planned scope of work.

The appropriation of \$400 thousand contained in this bill is a nonrecurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of Fiscal Year 2021 shall revert to the general fund, as this pilot program would be authorized to occur over two years.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Water is a constantly evolving problem for a largely desert state like New Mexico. UNM Emeritus Law Professor Emlen Hall has written two books on the state's two largest river systems, the Pecos River (High and Dry) and the Rio Grande (Reigning in the Rio Grande), documenting the history of and importance of water management in this state, facts only exacerbated by climate change.

According to the Office of the State Engineer, as expressed in its 2018 Draft State Water Plan, The state of New Mexico is actively planning for its water future. While the state as a whole has adequate supply to meet its current demands, in the future the demand for water may outpace the supply. The state is preparing to address these future water management challenges that result from changing demographic, climatic, and economic conditions.

Purposes of the state water plan, which could also be used as purposes for a course on water conservation and water management

- ♣ Promoting stewardship of the state's water resources
- ♣ Protecting and maintaining water rights and their priority status
- ♣ Protecting the diverse customs, culture, environment and economic stability of the state
- ♣ Protecting both the water supply and water quality
- ♣ Promoting cooperative strategies, based on concern for meeting the basic needs of all New Mexicans
- ♣ Providing a basis for prioritizing infrastructure investment
- ♣ Providing statewide continuity of policy and management relative to our water resources

The Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) indicates that “Two years may not be enough time to establish a water management and conservation program that will provide significant outcomes for participants. In addition, establishing a true evaluation of a program a pilot program in just two years is problematic. A more equitable evaluation may result if the pilot program is allowed to go beyond two years. However, more funds would have to be allocated.”

ALTERNATIVES

As noted by YCC, “Institutions of higher education often offer a water management and conservation course. High schools in the community (of the institution) could develop an agreement with the institution that will allow a student to attend the course. Additional language

could be added to Senate Bill 33 that would allow high school students to attend the course for credit with the understanding that the course cost will be paid out of the appropriations stipulated in this bill. The department could easily add a section to the application that would allow for a partnership of this kind.”

LAC/al/sb