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## FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Hemphill ORIGINAL DATE 1/24/22  
LAST UPDATED \_\_\_\_\_ HB \_\_\_\_\_  
SHORT TITLE Outdoor Learning Program Funding SB 32  
ANALYST Chilton

### APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY22	FY23		
	\$500.0	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

#### Responses Received From

Economic Development Department (EDD)  
Public Education Department (PED)

#### No Response Received

Department of Health (DOH)

### SUMMARY

#### Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 32, Outdoor Learning Program Funding, appropriates \$500 thousand from the general fund to the Public Education Department for the purpose of hiring an outdoor learning specialist and an outdoor learning assistant and for developing and disseminating to high school students well-designed materials to promote outdoor learning.

There is no effective date of this bill. It is assumed that the effective date is 90 days following adjournment of the Legislature with funding becoming available in Fiscal Year 2023.

### FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$500 thousand contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of 2023 shall revert to the general fund.

## SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The medical and educational literatures are replete with studies showing the importance of and benefits of outdoor activity. In one review of that literature in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* (<https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/16/6/937/htm>), the authors sum up their findings as follows:

This systematic review provides an overview on the social benefits associated with physical activity in nature. Rather than analyzing certain treatments and outcome measures, the aim was to show the effects from a qualitative point of view and present the complexity and multiple layers of benefits. A qualitative clustering was conducted that grouped the effects into the six categories of physical health, mental health and wellbeing, education and life-long learning, active citizenship, crime-reduction, and anti-social behavior as well as additional benefits.

The evidence reveals that outdoor sports are linked to achieving multiple outcomes and they help people to find and maintain a lifetime physical activity. As outdoor sports are accessible and appealing to a very broad audience, the benefits gained are also open for all kinds of stakeholders. Furthermore, as many benefits can be reached simultaneously, outdoor sports do not only benefit the practitioners in multiple ways but from a decision maker's point of view, investments in outdoor sports are seen as being very cost-effective.

PED references a summative study of some 300 previous studies, indicating the benefits of outdoor education: the study, from the University of Washington and Washington State University, concludes that “Current literature supports a positive relationship between nature contact and children’s health, especially for physical activity and mental health, both public health priorities. The evidence supports pediatricians in advocating for equitable nature contact for children in places where they live, play, and learn.”

EDD, which contains an Outdoor Recreation Division, states that “In order to avoid duplication of efforts, it would be imperative for the new staff at the outdoor learning program within PED to work closely with the Outdoor Recreation Division and its existing outdoor education programs, including the outdoor equity fund grant and paid outdoor high school internship program. There is great potential to team up and expand efforts in this space with the creation of a formal outdoor learning program within PED.”

The Outdoor Recreation Division’s (ORD) website, <https://www.nmoutside.com/our-work>, lists its motivations and its outdoor education projects to include “Access to the outdoors is a basic human right – yet it’s one that has often been denied to many of our youth. As a result, our underrepresented kids have not had the chance to experience some of the best of New Mexico: Its outside world. In 2021, its second year, the Outdoor Equity Fund awarded over \$898,000 to 57 applicants across the state, who together will bring over 22,000 youth outside. This year, it continues to support transformative outdoor experiences that foster stewardship and respect for our lands, waters, and cultural heritage. The 2022 grant cycle (the third round of Outdoor Equity Fund funding) will open winter 2021-22.” In addition ORD offers “New Mexico’s first paid outdoor industry internship pilot program. The program, sponsored by ORD, is run by Future Focused Education (FFE), an Albuquerque-based nonprofit that seeks to better connect underserved and nontraditional students to college and careers.”

## **ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS**

As noted by EDD, “PED would be tasked with creating the new outdoor learning program and hiring both an outdoor learning specialist and outdoor learning assistant. These new hires could partner with the Outdoor Recreation Division to promote and expand outdoor learning opportunities for youth.

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For its part, PED states that “The responsibilities associated with developing the professional learning activities and materials would fall on existing PED staff, as the two positions required by the bill may not be filled in time to advise, develop, or implement outdoor learning protocols or best practices. The funding for professional learning opportunities would need to be allocated and spent within the fiscal year, meaning some professional learning would need to start before the outdoor learning specialist and assistant are on boarded.”

## **TECHNICAL ISSUES**

According to PED, “the ‘Outdoor Learning Assistant’ position title [used in] the bill is not commensurate with the title of similar positions (i.e., 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center Program Coordinator, Community Schools and Extended Learning Coordinator). The sponsor may wish to amend the position title to reflect this change.”

LC/al