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HOUSE MEMORIAL 34

**56TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2024**

INTRODUCED BY

Kristina Ortez

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A WORKING GROUP TO EXPLORE THE  
EXPANDED USE OF CITIZEN SCIENCE BY STATE AGENCIES.

WHEREAS, New Mexico is rich in natural resources and  
wildlife and features outstanding natural areas; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico is filled with persons who take great  
pride in the beauty of the state and all that the state's  
environment has to offer; and

WHEREAS, wild friends, an award-winning civics education  
program at the university of New Mexico school of law, has  
become involved in helping to advance citizen science  
initiatives for the New Mexico state government; and

WHEREAS, the mission of wild friends is to provide a  
statewide, experiential education program that integrates  
civics and wildlife law to help students in grades four through

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1 twelve understand the democratic process, develop good  
2 citizenship skills and contribute to wildlife conservation by  
3 involving the students in public policy projects of their  
4 choosing; and

5 WHEREAS, several state agencies have identified the need  
6 for assistance with research and data collection due to a lack  
7 of personnel and have expressed enthusiasm about using citizen  
8 scientists to meet these needs and better engage the public;  
9 and

10 WHEREAS, citizen science, in which members of the public  
11 volunteer to help conduct scientific research, could help fill  
12 the gap between state agency needs for personnel and available  
13 personnel. As one student said, "Citizen science is an  
14 important way to support professional researchers and also  
15 educate community members about problems that affect us."; and

16 WHEREAS, citizen science can contribute to New Mexico's  
17 economic development, environmental health and community  
18 engagement. As one student said, "Citizen science projects  
19 could provide more outdoor recreation opportunities in New  
20 Mexico.". Other students said that citizen science projects  
21 could "encourage citizens to go out in nature", "promote active  
22 participation in the community" and "raise our happiness"; and

23 WHEREAS, citizen science projects can engage youth,  
24 connect youth with their communities and expand educational  
25 opportunities. As one student said, "Citizen science gives me

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1 the opportunity to be involved in science in a simple and  
2 productive way.". Other students said that citizen science can  
3 "create future opportunities when we grow up", "inspire young  
4 people toward a career that focuses on New Mexico lands and its  
5 inhabitants" and "encourage youth to be involved in STEM  
6 [science, technology, engineering and mathematics] and  
7 conservation efforts" by "bringing out [a] love for nature";  
8 and

9 WHEREAS, citizen science projects have been particularly  
10 beneficial in monitoring bird populations, water quality and  
11 plant species proliferation and will continue to be helpful in  
12 the future; and

13 WHEREAS, New Mexico is home to more than five hundred  
14 fifty species of birds, and the need to protect them is great,  
15 yet many species are in decline. As one wild friends student  
16 said, "Birds form a distinctive part of New Mexico's unique  
17 heritage.". Another student said, "Birds are amazing animals  
18 with unique behaviors, and citizen science allows me to learn  
19 more about them."; and

20 WHEREAS, a citizen science pilot project about birds could  
21 help state agencies identify what the challenges and  
22 opportunities are for future projects while providing much-  
23 needed data on bird populations and engaging the public. As  
24 one student said, "It would help New Mexican citizens become  
25 invested and aware about our diverse bird populations and

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1 concern for their future.", while another student said that the  
2 pilot project could "help state agencies conduct studies of  
3 bird populations by providing valuable data on a large scale  
4 that may not otherwise be gathered"; and

5 WHEREAS, several state agencies and other organizations  
6 have expressed interest in convening a working group to  
7 implement a bird pilot project and discuss how to best move  
8 citizen science forward in New Mexico because, as one student  
9 said, "Learning about and caring for the environment is not a  
10 one-person job, and state agencies can't do it by themselves.";

11 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF  
12 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the state parks  
13 division of the energy, minerals and natural resources  
14 department, the department of environment, the state land  
15 office, the department of game and fish and other interested  
16 state departments and agencies be requested to participate in a  
17 working group convened and managed by the wild friends program  
18 to develop and recommend actions to establish and expand the  
19 use of citizen science using the best available science and  
20 data collection practices, including a pilot project for the  
21 use of the wild friends program and for use as a template for  
22 state government agencies; and

23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group be requested  
24 to submit a report to the appropriate interim legislative  
25 committee by October 31, 2024 that details the working group's

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1 recommendations, including infrastructure, funding needs and  
2 strategies to advance the use of citizen science; and

3 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
4 transmitted to the state parks division of the energy, minerals  
5 and natural resources department, the department of  
6 environment, the state land office, the department of game and  
7 fish, natural heritage New Mexico and the wild friends program  
8 at the university of New Mexico school of law.