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SENATE MEMORIAL 1

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

INTRODUCED BY

Jeff Steinborn

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