

SENATE MEMORIAL 3

57TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2025

INTRODUCED BY

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This document may incorporate amendments proposed by a committee, but not yet adopted, as well as amendments that have been adopted during the current legislative session. The document is a tool to show amendments in context and cannot be used for the purpose of adding amendments to legislation.

A MEMORIAL

RECOGNIZING THE WATERSHED HEALTH BENEFITS OF NORTH AMERICAN BEAVER POPULATIONS; REQUESTING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A STATEWIDE BEAVER MANAGEMENT PLAN.

WHEREAS, New Mexico has an arid climate that is typified by long periods of limited precipitation interspersed by infrequent heavy rainfalls or sudden snowmelts that are difficult for soil to absorb, leading to harmful runoff; and

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WHEREAS, the scarcity of water has made the considered use and conservation of water resources a foundational element in both New Mexico's culture and its economy; and

WHEREAS, for centuries, New Mexico's communities have based their livelihoods and many cultural traditions on irrigated agriculture; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico's rugged landscapes, containing diverse populations of wildlife, have attracted generations of hunters and nature enthusiasts and are among the key attractions for the state's tourism industry; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico is experiencing a multiyear drought that is creating exceptional strains on farmers and the state's wildlife resources; and

WHEREAS, maintaining, or restoring, upper watershed health is an important element in assisting New Mexico's communities, industries and wildlife to meet water scarcity challenges; and

WHEREAS, watershed health and restoration efforts typically require coordination among private businesses and organizations, as well as local, state, tribal and federal agencies; and

WHEREAS, numerous state agencies participate in ongoing watershed restoration efforts; and

WHEREAS, the dams, ponds and associated wetlands created by the North American beaver are known to increase ground water percolation, which raises local ground water tables and

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storage; and

WHEREAS, beaver dams and ponds and their associated wetlands attenuate erosion, instream silt loading and other harmful effects associated with heavy rainfalls and sudden snowmelts; and

WHEREAS, beaver ponds and their associated wetlands act as contaminant sinks and filters, enhancing downstream water quality; and

WHEREAS, during extended periods of drought, beaver ponds and their associated wetlands greatly enhance the resiliency of riparian zones, including riverine plant communities and fish and wildlife populations; and

WHEREAS, the department of game and fish has developed guidance for individual landowners regarding how to relocate beaver families to their land and how to mitigate or avoid problems created by beavers already on their land; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico would benefit from a strategic plan for statewide beaver management designed to capture the full watershed benefits of beaver populations and minimize conflicts with other land uses, such as agriculture and the development of transportation infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, the state of Utah adopted a statewide beaver management plan developed in a process that involved a wide range of public and private landowners, users and managers;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE

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OF NEW MEXICO that the department of game and fish, the forestry division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department SRC→, the New Mexico department of agriculture, the department of environment←SRC and the state land office be requested to develop recommendations jointly SCONC→, in consultation with representatives from soil and water conservation districts, acequia associations, farmers and ranchers,←SCONC on how New Mexico may proceed to develop a statewide beaver management plan. The recommendations should include which agency should take the lead role for development, which SCONC→other←SCONC stakeholder groups should be included in the development and a time line and budget; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department of game and fish, the forestry division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department SRC→, the New Mexico department of agriculture, the department of environment←SRC and the state land office be requested to present their recommendations jointly to the appropriate interim committee or committees by October 1, 2025; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the director of the department of game and fish, the secretary of energy, minerals and natural resources, the SRC→director of the New Mexico department of agriculture, the secretary of environment, the←SRC commissioner of public lands and the co-chairs of the New Mexico legislative council

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