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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT



SPONSOR: Fuller DATE TYPED: 01/23/02 HB 104

SHORT TITLE: Noxious Weeds Along Highways SB _____

ANALYST: Valdes

APPROPRIATION

Appropriation Contained		Estimated Additional Impact		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY02	FY03	FY02	FY03		
	\$200.0			Non-Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

State Highway and Transportation Department (SHTD)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 104 appropriates \$200.0 from the general fund to the State Highway and Transportation Department for the purpose of noxious weed management on highway rights of way. This funding would supplement limited resources in the maintenance budget for vegetation management.

Significant Issues

Significant problems can develop in highway rights of way with the spread of noxious weeds. A vehicle tire can pick up as many as 2,000 seeds and spread them as it travels down the highway. One noxious weed, Leafy Spurge has spread across Montana causing major problems. This weed is now appearing on northern New Mexico highways. Without immediate attention, it will soon spread to other parts of the state.

The department has limited resources for vegetation management and must primarily mow highway rights of way for safety and maintenance purposes before funding can be allocated to noxious weed management. Herbicides have been used efficiency and cost effectiveness for weed management. However, many chemically sensitive and environmental groups are demanding alternative means of weed management. This appropriation would also allow the department to use experimental

vegetation management techniques to satisfy the concerns of herbicide opponents and determine if these alternate methods could be used effectively in the future for noxious weed management.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$200.0 contained in this bill is a non-recurring expense to the general fund intended to supplement existing State Road Fund revenues for highway maintenance purposes. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2003 shall revert to the general fund. The department is experiencing budget constraints due to flat road fund revenues preventing it from allocating sufficient resources for noxious weed management. Without this general fund appropriation the department will be expected to use existing road fund resources for this purpose.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

Expenditure of this appropriation for noxious weed management would not impact existing administrative operations.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Another noxious weed, Camelthorne is detrimental to highway management. As this noxious weed spreads, it threatens the condition of highway pavement by spreading and growing through the asphalt surface. This weed must also be controlled before it spreads.

If the department can address the noxious weed problem immediately, the cost will be lower in addition to having a higher success rate while infestations are small. Based on a study by the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, Special Publication SP-01-08, on an average, a noxious weed infestation will increase by 24 % each year. Therefore, current resources invested for this purpose will benefit the state. Noxious weed infestation will also impact other public and private lands if not adequately managed by the department.

MV/ar