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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT



SPONSOR: Cisneros DATE TYPED: 01/29/02 HB _____

SHORT TITLE: Abandoned Mines SB SJM45

ANALYST: Trujillo

APPROPRIATION

Appropriation Contained		Estimated Additional Impact		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY02	FY03	FY02	FY03		
	NFI				

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From:

Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD)

Environment Department (ED)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Joint Memorial 45 requests the New Mexico Legislative Council to direct the appropriate committee to review the issue of abandoned mines and the hazard they pose to public safety.

Significant Issues

According to ED, the memorial is concerned with deaths associated with abandoned mine accidents and the risks posed to emergency personnel who attempt to rescue people lost or trapped in abandoned mines.

EMNRD reports across the country and in New Mexico abandoned mines are a safety hazard, and people are killed on a regular basis. It is estimated that there are about 20,000 abandoned mine openings in our state, and almost all of them are old metals mines. The Abandoned Mine Land Bureau in the Mining and Minerals Division of EMNRD (AML) is mandated to address safety hazards at abandoned mine sites in New Mexico. These efforts are funded through a tax on coal production

that is collected, managed and distributed to the states by the federal Department of the Interior. New Mexico receives approximately \$1.5 million each year for this program. The AML program is not involved in emergency response to accidents, it only safeguards known safety hazards. By statute, the first priority for these expenditures is abandoned coal mine sites, therefore metals mines are not top priority. At most coal mines hazards have now been addressed, AML is now addressing metals mines as well as the remaining coal sites. The sheer number of sites, however, means it will be decades before all hazards can be addressed, assuming funding continues. Currently, the tax on coal production is scheduled to expire in 2004.

Effective coordination of emergency response can provide the greatest chances of saving lives when responding to an accident. As a number of state and federal agencies may become involved in rescue efforts depending on circumstances, understanding which agencies have jurisdiction and will provide the necessary resources in the most timely manner is necessary.

RELATIONSHIP

The memorial relates to HJM 23, which directs the ED to evaluate the extent of the remediation needed in Cibola and McKinley counties to address proper cleanup of abandoned mines located in those counties.

LAT/njw