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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Stell DATE TYPED 2/6/04 HB 327/aHCPAC

SHORT TITLE Weather Modification Projects SB _____

ANALYST Gilbert

APPROPRIATION

Appropriation Contained		Estimated Additional Impact		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY04	FY05	FY04	FY05		
	\$300.0			Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From
Office of the State Engineer (OSE)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of HCPAC Amendment

The House Consumer and Public Affairs Committee amendment to House Bill 327 appropriates an additional \$100 thousand from the general fund to the Interstate Stream Commission to staff and administer the weather control act and support weather modification activities in and that benefit New Mexico.

Synopsis of Original Bill

House Bill 327 appropriates \$200 thousand to the Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) to conduct weather modification projects in New Mexico.

Synopsis of Bill

Last year, HB 78 transferred administration of the weather modification program from New Mexico Tech to ISC. However, no resources were provided to administer the program.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$200.0 contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2005 shall revert to the general fund. According to the Office of the State Engineer (OSE), another \$100.0 may be needed to fully fund and adequately staff state support agencies.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

Without funding for dedicated staff, the OSE believes that it may be impossible to insure that the appropriation in HB 327 is expended on the most beneficial projects. Funding for administrative costs is therefore crucial to ISC's ability to effectively manage this program.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Because of a resurgence of weather modification research and cloud seeding operations throughout the western United States, motivated by increasing water demands and drought, the ISC expects a marked increase in programs under the New Mexico Weather Control Act. Weather modification is identified in the state water plan and most regional water plans as a desired source of new water supply and action item.

On January 22 and 23, 2004, a subgroup of the Jemez y Sangre Regional Water Planning group of northern New Mexico conducted a Cloud Seeding Workshop in Santa Fe. Nationally prominent scientists, meteorologists, cloud seeding operators and consultants actively involved in weather modification research and operations throughout the western United States gave presentations at the workshop. Santa Fe business interests co-sponsored the workshop and it was attended by a broad range of regional public officials and residents.

The ISC expects a number of requests for weather modification projects in the near future. Eastern New Mexico users have participated in cloud-seeding programs since 1997 and will request ISC assistance and funding again this year. Cloud seeding programs are currently underway that will benefit the San Juan Basin in northern New Mexico. The Jemez y Sangre region will request and other north-central New Mexico regions are expected to request both winter and summer cloud seeding programs. Southwest New Mexico, one of the most drought-stricken regions in the state, plans to begin weather modification efforts. Additional areas of the state identified as providing excellent opportunities for cloud-seeding activities include the south-central and south-eastern mountain ranges.

Since 1997, ISC responsibilities included only oversight of a single pilot cloud-seeding program in eastern New Mexico. To provide a budget supporting the duties, responsibilities and additional HB 78 workload identified above, the ISC has requested a New Program Initiative. The budget for this elementary support totals approximately \$100,000 per year.

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