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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Stewart DATE TYPED 1/29/04 HB HJM 21

SHORT TITLE Federal Wildlife Crossing Study SB _____

ANALYST Wilson

APPROPRIATION

Appropriation Contained		Estimated Additional Impact		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY04	FY05	FY04	FY05		
			See Narrative		

Relates to 2003 Regular Session's HJM3

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Game and Fish Department (GFD)

Department of Transportation (DOT)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Joint Memorial 21 asks the New Mexico Congressional Delegation to request a federal appropriation for feasibility studies for four identified priority wildlife crossings to reduce wild-life-vehicle collisions. The sites are on Interstate 40 in Tijeras Canyon, Interstate 25 over Raton pass, United States Highway 70 through San Augustine Pass and State Highway 90 through the Burro Mountains.

HJM21 also requests GFD and DOT to complete a memorandum of understanding for cooperation on long-term projects to reduce vehicle-wildlife collisions by December 31, 2004.

The GFD and DOT are asked to report their progress to the Interim Water and Natural Resources Committee.

Significant Issues

The first session of the forty-sixth legislature passed House Joint Memorial 3, requesting that state and federal officials take action to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions on state roads. As a

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result of HJM 3, state and federal highway and wildlife experts met in June 2003 and identified four highway segments that are priority areas for reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions to make New Mexico's roads safer for people and wildlife. In addition, GFD and DOT have initiated development of a memorandum of understanding to facilitate cooperation in the long-term planning of road projects to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions.

Reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions will increase driver, passenger and wildlife safety, which may consequently lessen insurance costs.

State and federal highway and wildlife experts should continue to study the identified priority areas to determine the most effective methods for reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions.

The technology for linking habitats and facilitating animal crossings, including constructing overpasses, underpasses and fences, is being successfully used by other states and by many European countries.

New Mexico is home to numerous roads that run through wildlife habitats. The state should design safe passageways, including enlarged underpasses and landscaped overpasses, for wildlife on the roads.

Creating wildlife crossings in the four identified priority areas is an essential step in linking wildlife habitats that are currently fragmented by roads.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

DOT notes that HJM 21 does not direct them to allocate funds for any specific measures to prevent vehicle-wildlife collisions. The only mention of funding is the request to the New Mexico congressional delegation to request the appropriation of federal funds for feasibility studies for the four identified wildlife crossings. Ultimately, if measures are implemented at the four crossings, the cost of those measures, for construction and maintenance, will impact the DOT budget.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

The completion of the memorandum of understanding between GFD and DOT and the additional work during planning and project development will require additional work from both staffs. If one or more of the four crossings are ultimately constructed, then additional staff time will be required during construction and maintenance. It is unlikely that additional FTEs will be necessary.

RELATIONSHIP

HJM21 is a continuation of the 2003 Regular Session's HJM3.

DW/yr:lg