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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Altamirano DATE TYPED 02/07/04 HB _____

SHORT TITLE Socorro Salt Cedar Eradication SB 212

ANALYST Williams

APPROPRIATION

Appropriation Contained		Estimated Additional Impact		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY04	FY05	FY04	FY05		
	\$1,250.0			Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Relates to House Bill 53, Senate Bill 230, Senate Bill 322

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Commission on Higher Education (CHE)
 Department of Transportation (DOT) Environmental Section
 Environment Department (ED)
 Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD)
 Department of Agriculture (NMDA)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 212 appropriates \$1.25 million from the general fund to the board of regents at New Mexico State University for the purpose of treating salt cedar with herbicide from a helicopter. The herbicide treatment would be applied to approximately 25,000 acres between United States highway 60 and the United States/Mexico border by the Socorro soil and water conservation district.

Significant Issues

NMDA notes the Socorro soil and water conservation district would need to coordinate with other districts, including Sierra and La Union, to address the geographic area specified in the bill. Further, EMNRD notes private landowners in these areas would need to sign agreements with the appropriate jurisdictional entity to authorize spraying of private lands.

House Bill 53 and Senate Bill 230 provide additional requirements and accountability measures excluded from this bill. These provisions include requiring soil and water conservation districts to develop management and native vegetation restoration plans, conduct hearings for public input, provide prior public notice, monitoring and evaluation of spraying and its effects on wildlife, water quality, vegetation and soil health, and comply with applicable federal laws and threatened or endangered species recovery plans. These bills also include program evaluation, water conservation and expenditure reporting by NMDA.

EMNRD notes the role of salt cedar as a non-native species, and further expresses concerns regarding its vulnerability to wildfire. Further, fire increases salt cedar revegetation, but damages native riparian species. EMNRD notes "it may be possible to improve stream flows by removing these species." Environment Department notes "if not properly implemented, phreatophyte removal could induce bank destabilization that in turn would increase the risk of erosion leading to water quality impacts, sedimentation and diminished capacity of state reservoirs." Environment Department notes the importance of effective revegetation and associated funding, and expresses concerns regarding spraying of herbicide into a surface water course.

EMNRD notes issues regarding last year's appropriation, specifically herbicide impacts to non-target vegetation and drought impacting native vegetation recovery. EMNRD notes the bill is consistent with the Forestry Division's performance initiatives to restore riparian ecosystems.

Environment Department notes its lead role in the salt cedar task force.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$1.25 million 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 would revert to the general fund.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

NMDA would administer the program via the soil and water conservation districts; NMDA expresses concerns regarding the administrative cost of administering the funds, coordinating with stakeholders and ensuring legislative intent.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

On page 1, line 11, "irradication" should be "eradication"
On page 1, line 16 before dollars, insert "thousand"

ALTERNATIVES

NMDA notes Socorro soil and water conservation district could receive funding via House Bill 53 or Senate Bill 230.

AW/lg