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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Steinborn _____ **ORIGINAL DATE** 2-22-07
LAST UPDATED _____ **HB** HJM 49 _____
SHORT TITLE Completion of Rio Grande Trail _____ **SB** _____
ANALYST Woods _____

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY07	FY08		
NFI	NFI		

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Duplicates SJM 44; relates to HB 445 and SB 486

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Response Received From

Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD)
Office of the State Engineer (OSE)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Joint Memorial 49 resolves that the proposed Rio Grande Trail be a project of statewide and national significance that should be completed as soon as possible; that the State Parks Division of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department be the lead agency for completion of the trail; that the legislature endeavor to provide sustained funding for the project; that the State Parks Division endeavor to develop and stimulate private sector, nongovernmental participation and support for the project that supplements public funds; and the Department of Transportation be requested to partner with the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department in the project to provide funding from the federal transportation enhancement program to help complete the Rio Grande Trail. The memorial further resolved that the New Mexico congressional delegation be requested to support completion of the trail by encouraging participation of affected federal agencies in the project and by seeking appropriate federal funding support from diverse sources. There is no appropriation attached to this legislation.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

EMNRD notes that the State Parks Division has already received \$3 million in Phase 1 funding for the Rio Grande Trail (RGT) and that SJM 44 encourages further state, federal, and private-sector funding and support of the project.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

As background, EMNRD indicates the RGT is a concept for a multi-use trail (hiking, biking and equestrian use) along as much of the river corridor as appropriate and feasible. Completing a multi-use trail along the Rio Grande would give New Mexico one of the longest and most dramatic multi-use trails in the United States. A multi-use trail along the Rio Grande has the potential to replicate successful long-distance trails in other states, such as the Arizona Trail.

At over 1,800 miles, the Rio Grande is the second longest river system in the country. Some 500 miles of the Rio Grande form the heart of New Mexico—the primary drainage feature and the state’s most valuable natural and cultural resource. The Rio Grande is a precious lifeline that connects nature, history, culture and communities across millennia.

The 2004 New Mexico Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) identified trails as the number one recreation priority for the public. Trails are an important component of tourism, economic development, community revitalization, conservation, and health/fitness strategies. Long-distance trails across the country are proving increasingly popular and are becoming destinations in and of themselves. For example, Missouri’s 238-mile Katy Trail is estimated to attract over 300,000 visitors each year, and is credited with reviving and sustaining over 100 businesses along the former railroad line. A study by the National Park Service indicates that the state of Florida saw an annual \$1.5 million economic gain resulting from three multi-use trails in that state.

The RGT dovetails with other important related Rio Grande issues, such as bosque restoration, flood control, access for recreation and fire protection, and public education about the river/riparian system. The river and its bosque attract and sustain a wide variety of recreation—from hunting and fishing to river rafting to hiking, biking, and horseback riding. Providing trail-based recreational access to such an important resource will increase awareness and assist with efforts to protect and manage the river system.

The New Mexico State Parks Division (SPD) aims eventually to designate the RGT as a state trail under the New Mexico State Trails System Act (NMSA 1978, 16-3-1 to 16-3-9), and also to seek designation as a National Recreation Trail under a U.S. Dept. of Interior program.

The RGT is a long-term project and a statement of support from the Legislature will be beneficial. Since the RGT will traverse diverse federal lands, and benefit the entire nation, the federal government should also play a strong and supportive role in the RGT partnership, so SJM 44’s request to the NM congressional delegation will also be beneficial.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

EMNRD suggests that passage of HJM 49, to the extent it supports the RGT project, will have positive impacts on two State Parks Division performance measures—visitation and revenue—as

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numerous state parks are located along the RGT route. SJM 44 will also help SPD meet another internal goal: completion of 100 miles of new trail by 2010.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

EMNRD notes that HJM 49 duplicates SJM 44. It also relates to HB 445 and SB 486, which would make it easier for irrigation and conservancy districts to participate in trails projects, including the RGT.

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL

EMNRD opines that the Rio Grande Trail project, "...will not benefit from a formal statement of support from the New Mexico Legislature."

BFW/csd