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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 01/12/08

SPONSOR Lundstrom LAST UPDATED _____ HB 22

SHORT TITLE Uranium-related Health Study SB _____

ANALYST Hanika-Ortiz

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY08	FY09		
	\$200.0	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Relates to HJM 2

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Department of Health (DOH)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 22 appropriates \$200 thousand from the General Fund to DOH in FY09 and FY10 to perform a comprehensive health study of the effects of past uranium mining and milling practices on the health of residents of McKinley and Cibola counties, including members of the Navajo Nation.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$200 thousand contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the General Fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY10 shall revert to the General Fund.

The appropriation requested in the bill is considered recurring because as with any study, costs will incur to State agencies dependent upon how many Department staff members participate; how often the group meets; and, the costs incurred from implementing any recommendations made by the group.

For members of the study group that receive no other compensation, perquisite or allowance, they may be entitled to per diem and mileage as provided in the Per Diem and Mileage Act.

The appropriation requested in the bill is not part of DOH's executive budget request for FY09.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Uranium mining and milling operations were prevalent in New Mexico, especially in McKinley and Cibola counties and on Navajo lands. The radioactive and hazardous waste piles may affect the health of residents when drinking contaminated water, breathing contaminated air, or eating contaminated agricultural crops, produce and livestock.

DOH reports that mining and milling processes remove uranium and other constituents in the ore from natural deposits and convert them to a fine sand, then sludge, whereby the materials become more susceptible to erosion and dispersion into the environment. Additionally, various acid-leaching processes cause a continuous leaching of potentially hazardous substances and their increased migration into the environment; including groundwater, surface water, soil and biological organisms.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

DOH states that HB 22 relates to the Department's mission as stated in the FY09 Strategic Plan "to promote health and prevent disease and disability".

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

Relates to HJM 2, requesting a study of the feasibility of a state superfund for cleanup of uranium contaminated sites.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Of the 150 Navajo uranium miners who worked at the uranium mine in Shiprock, New Mexico until 1970, 133 died of lung cancer or various forms of fibrosis by 1980. When mining ceased in the late 1970's, mining companies walked away from the mines without sealing the tunnel openings, filling the gaping pits, sometimes hundreds of feet deep, or removing the piles of radioactive uranium ore and mine waste. Over 1,000 of these unsealed tunnels, unsealed pits and radioactive waste piles still remain on the Navajo reservation today, with a number of Navajo families living, and their livestock grazing, within a hundred feet of the mine sites.

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL

The DOH has determined from previous studies that New Mexicans have more than twice the amount of uranium in urine as compared to biomonitoring studies from populations in the rest of the United States. The continuation of these types of comprehensive health studies by DOH to identify communities at risk will have to be performed within existing Department and Tribal resources.

QUESTIONS

HB22 was introduced on behalf of the Indian Affairs Committee. To what degree will DOH be cooperating with the tribes or other state or federal agencies that have already performed similar studies or that have similar interests?

AHO/mt