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SENATE MEMORIAL 41

50TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2011

INTRODUCED BY

Vernon D. Asbill

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING CONGRESS TO REAUTHORIZE THE WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2007, SECTION 5056, AND TO APPROPRIATE SUFFICIENT FUNDS TO ADDRESS SALINITY PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PECOS RIVER.

WHEREAS, the Amistad international reservoir, situated on the Texas-Mexico border near Del Rio, supplies water to numerous area communities for municipal, industrial and agricultural purposes; yet, with a salt content near the upper limit of the Texas standard for drinking water, the reservoir may become an unusable resource for all; and

WHEREAS, two of its main tributaries, the Rio Grande and the Pecos river, are heavily saturated with salt due to the composition of the surrounding land, which was once part of a great inland sea; when dry land emerged, salt from the sea was

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1 trapped in the soil and in underground aquifers; in particular,
2 the Pecos river, originating in New Mexico, is one of the most
3 saline waterways in North America and accounts for thirty
4 percent of the salt loading of the Amistad international
5 reservoir; and

6 WHEREAS, the upper limit of Texas drinking water standards
7 for minerals, including salt, is one thousand milligrams per
8 liter; when that limit is exceeded, municipalities that rely on
9 water released into the Rio Grande from the Amistad
10 international reservoir will have to devise costly treatment
11 methods to meet state standards; moreover, the elevated levels
12 of salt may force farmers to discontinue the growth of certain
13 crops; while fresh water inflow from runoff could help
14 alleviate the salinity, the potential for such runoff is
15 limited; and

16 WHEREAS, the Amistad international reservoir is shared by
17 both the United States and Mexico, in accordance with the terms
18 of a 1944 treaty; for that reason and because the reservoir's
19 holdings derive from multiple states, it is incumbent on the
20 federal government to take the lead in addressing this urgent
21 problem; and

22 WHEREAS, congress began that process by enacting Section
23 729 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986 and by
24 developing a program in Section 5056 of the Water Resources
25 Development Act of 2007 that directs the secretary of the army

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1 to rehabilitate and enhance fish and wildlife habitats and to
2 implement long-term monitoring, data collection and analysis,
3 applied research and adaptive management within the Rio Grande
4 basin; and

5 WHEREAS, past studies must be evaluated to determine a
6 strategy for moving forward; in addition, it is imperative that
7 funding and continuing authority for Section 5056 of the Water
8 Resources Development Act of 2007, which is set to expire in
9 2011, be reenacted so that efforts to solve the salt problem in
10 the reservoir can continue;

11 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE
12 OF NEW MEXICO that the United States congress be requested to
13 reauthorize Section 5056 of the Water Resources Development Act
14 of 2007 and to appropriate sufficient funds to carry out work
15 related to that legislation; and

16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
17 transmitted to the president of the United States, the speaker
18 of the house of representatives and the president of the senate
19 of the United States congress and the members of the New Mexico
20 Congressional delegation.