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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 02/22/13

SPONSOR Griego LAST UPDATED _____ HB _____

SHORT TITLE NM Highlands Univ. Forest and Watershed Institute SB 585

ANALYST Hartzler-Toon/Roberts

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY13	FY14		
	\$2,000.0	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Duplicates Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act, New Mexico Highlands University, Forest and Watershed Program

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Higher Education Department (HED)
New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU)

No Responses Received From

Energy, Minerals & Natural Resources Department (EMNRD)
Youth Conservation Corps (YCC)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 585 appropriates \$2 million from the general fund to New Mexico Highlands University for the university's forest and watershed program to create a conservation corps to restore watersheds throughout the state.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$2 million dollars contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year shall revert to the general fund.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The HED notes that NMHU requested general fund support for FY14. The HED recommended no increase in funding for this project. The department indicates that this request is a research and public service project (RPSP) “highest priority program” to the institution. House Bill 2 includes a \$310.5 thousand dollars general fund appropriation for this program. This amount is a \$150 thousand dollar, or a 48 percent increase, over the FY13 level.

The HED further notes that The New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute (NMFWRI) is one of three institutes formed by the federal Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act (2004). The NMFWRI supports several programs, including the Collaborative Forest Restoration Program which has funded 166 projects in 20 counties across New Mexico. These projects have restored over 30,000 acres and created over 700 jobs.

NMHU reports:

The NMFWRI is actively involved in public service, economic development, academics, and research in the areas of watershed restoration and wildfire mitigation. The NMFWRI provides outreach to stakeholders in the forest and watershed restoration community; prescribes and monitors restoration and fuel reduction treatments; develops restoration-based economies; synthesizes and develops applied science in forest restoration; works with and hires undergraduate and graduate students; convenes, facilitates, and manages alliances aimed at mitigating catastrophic wildfire and post-fire flooding among diverse stakeholders; and provides academic support in geographic information systems (GIS) and forestry to students at NMHU. In addition, the NMFWRI represents the GIS capacity at NMHU and much of northern New Mexico, as well as capacity in restoration-based economic development, silviculture and forest operations.

Among its many responsibilities, the NMFWRI provides training for employment in forest restoration, including in restoration monitoring; safe felling and transport of restoration thinnings, timber marking, GIS, and forest inventory. Communities participating in past training include Alamo Navajo, Ramah Navajo, and several Northern Pueblo communities. Also, the NMFWRI ties its training to specific public agency and private sector workforce needs. The Institute often collaborates with federal agencies, state organizations, institutions, and communities to make sure that training is relevant.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

The board of regents of NMHU will be responsible for administering the New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

SB585 is related to SB251 (2012), HB218 (2009), HB51 (2009), SB271 (2006), SB57 (2006).

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

The 2010-2011 NMFWRI Annual Report states that 40 percent (\$150,000) of the budget is supported by federal funding, 40 percent (not specified) by state funding, and 20 percent (not

specified) by contracting for restoration work.

The Southwest Ecological Restoration Institute's five year evaluation report states that NMFWRRI received \$345,000 (federal funding), and \$243,000 (state funding) for 2009.

THT:MIR/blm