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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 2/18/09
 SPONSOR Nava LAST UPDATED 3/7/09 HB _____
 SHORT TITLE Continue Outdoor Classroom Program SB 274/aSEC
 ANALYST Aguilar

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY09	FY10		
	\$150.0	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Duplicates an appropriation in HB-3

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Public Education Department (PED)

Office of Educational Accountability (OEA)

Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of SEC Amendment

The Senate Education Committee amendment to Senate Bill 274 changes the appropriation from the Public Education Department to the State Parks Division of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department.

Synopsis of Original Bill

Senate Bill 274 appropriates \$150 thousand from the general fund to the Public Education Department for the purpose of continuing the outdoor classroom program.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$150 thousand contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2010 shall revert to the general fund.

According to the February 2008 revenue estimate, FY10 recurring revenue will only support a base expenditure level that is \$575 million less than the FY09 appropriations before the 2009 solvency reductions. All appropriations outside of the general appropriation act will be viewed in this declining revenue context.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

This appropriation is made to PED although most of the money is transferred to the State Parks Division of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department. The State Parks Division notes that the process of transferring funds between departments has significantly complicated the financial arrangement and created unnecessary inefficiencies in program administration and delayed expenditure of some funds earlier in the fiscal year cycle. As such, it appears that this appropriation should be from the State Parks Operating Fund to the division to carry out the provisions of the Outdoor Classroom program as a complementary program to the parks interpretive education outreach program.

As background, in 2005, the Legislature passed SJM 24, *The New Mexico Outdoor Education Initiative: Improve Education and State Parks Relationship*, requesting the PED and State Parks Division to prepare a study outlining opportunities for increased partnerships between them. The result is a partnership between the Division and PED to use the unique resources provided by the state's parks for improved and expanded outdoor education programs. The report produced through this partnership, "Making New Mexico Schools Work Outdoors," cites recent research indicating outdoor, interactive education can increase student test scores, reduce discipline problems, build citizenry skills and resource stewardship ethics, and increase teacher job satisfaction. The Outdoor Classroom Program has four components: teacher training institutes, hands-on teacher resources, transportation funding, and service learning projects.

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