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## FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 02/04/09

SPONSOR Sanchez, M. LAST UPDATED \_\_\_\_\_ HB \_\_\_\_\_

SHORT TITLE UNM Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program SB 396

ANALYST Haug

### APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

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

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

#### Responses Received From

Higher Education Department (HED)

Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD)

#### No Responses Received From

University of New Mexico (UNM)

### SUMMARY

#### Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 396 appropriates \$150.0 from the general fund to the Board of Regents of the University of New Mexico for an assistant research professor in the Biology Department of UNM to serve as the science director program and for a staff biologist to serve as the field coordinator respectively of the Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring program.

### FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$150.0 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.

### SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The HED states that this request was not submitted by NMSU to the HED for review and is not included in the Department's funding recommendation for FY10. The HED does not support any

efforts to provide non-formula funding for requested programs and projects that the formula will fund.

The LFC Appropriation Recommendations, Volume II, pages 364-365 states:

The committee has concerns about the growth of research and public service projects within the higher education budget, as well as the alignment of these projects with state goals and strategic plans. The committee also continues to have significant concerns about accountability and performance outcomes for these projects.

The committee recommendation reduces funding included in the HED request by varying levels from FY09 funding amounts for research projects, public service projects and P-20 pipeline projects focusing on students.

With respect to special projects, higher education institutions advanced 114 proposals for new projects and expansions at a total general fund cost of \$54 million during the HED budget request process in fall 2008.

According to the December 2008 revenue estimate, FY10 recurring revenue will only support a base expenditure level that is \$293 million, or 2.6 percent, less than the FY09 appropriation. All appropriations outside of the general appropriation act will be viewed in this declining revenue context.

The Executive Budget in Brief notes that over the years more than 300 RPSPs have been created, accounting for a large portion of institution budgets. The current RPSPs were reviewed while considering the relevance of the project to the core mission of the institution, the community benefit and the outcomes associated with each project. (Budget in Brief and Policy Highlights, P 9-10.)

The HED states that the positions specified in SB 396 already exist and are housed at UNM, though the positions are in jeopardy because of reduced federal funding. As the key BEMP science and research positions, they are best suited to remain part of the UNM Biology Department. These positions require expertise in ecological research in general, and the bosque ecosystem in particular. The UNM positions maintain BEMP's data quality control and assurance programs. This includes overseeing the standards necessary for BEMP data and findings to be useful to state and other natural resource managers.

The EMNRD states:

Since 1997, BEMP has been collecting, storing, analyzing and publishing data about the bosque in the Middle Rio Grande between San Juan Pueblo and Socorro. This data has been shown to improve success rates significantly in restoration projects; many that the EMNRD Forestry Division, Inmate Work Camp has assisted with implementing. Additionally, data collection includes annual fuels measurements conducted specifically to inform EMNRD Forestry Division staff and fire departments on fuel conditions that influence fire behavior and fire management strategies.

Of 13 BEMP sites located within the Rio Grande Valley State Park, directly related to EMNRD is the monitoring of a BEMP site within the Rio Grande Nature Center State Park (RGNC), which is managed by State Parks. The RGNC BEMP site is monitored

monthly by Bandelier Elementary, and this data is fed to UNM, which provides reports to RGNC, such as the Middle Rio Grande Ecosystem bosque Biological Management Plan. RGNC and other agencies use this valuable data to make land management decisions within the bosque and to provide up-to-date interpretive and educational programming.

GH/svb