F I S C A L I M P A C T R E P O R T

SPONSOR Shendo **ORIGINAL DATE** 2/25/15 **LAST UPDATED** **HB**

SHORT TITLE ID Repository for Uranium Mining Waste **SB** 599/aSCONC

ANALYST Peterson

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY15	**FY16**		
	$150.0	Nonrecurring	General fund

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION
LFC Files

Responses Received From
Department of Higher Education (HED)
Indian Affairs Department (IAD)

Responses Not Received From
New Mexico Environment Department (NMED)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Senate Conservation Committee Amendment:

The SCONC strikes “the” and inserts “appropriated program under the” futher specifying on page 1, line 21. On page 1, line 22, after “Mexico”, the amdendment strikes “water resources program” and insert in lieu thereof, “earth and planetary resources department”. This would assign to the NM Earth and Planetary Resources Department.

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 599 appropriates $150,000 from the general fund to the board of regents at the University Of New Mexico (UNM) for expenditure in FY16. This appropriation would be used to conduct a sitting study to identify a repository for existing radioactive waste from past uranium mining activities in the Grants mineral belt. This study would be conducted by the UNM water resource program.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation in this bill is a nonrecurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY16 shall revert to the general fund.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The HED requires a formal process for reviewing earmarked budget requests for higher education institutions. HED states that no request was submitted by the board of regents at UNM.

The IAD states

> The Grants Mineral Belt in New Mexico extends along the southern margin of the San Juan Basin within Cibola, McKinley, Sandoval and Bernalillo counties as well as on Tribal lands.
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> The Grants Mineral Belt was the primary area for uranium extraction and production activities in New Mexico from the 1950's until late in the 20th century. Historical uranium mining impacts within the Shiprock Mining District and part of the Ambrosia Lake sub-district of the Grants Mining District are under the jurisdiction of the Navajo Nation and are being addressed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
>
> The EPA, working with NMED and other partners, began a sampling effort in 2009 to determine impacts to private wells in the San Mateo Basin. The conclusion of this effort resulted in a recommendation that additional work be conducted to fill any data gaps that may be identified.
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> Uranium mill tailings are primarily the sandy process waste material from a conventional uranium mill. The major transport mechanisms of tailings and possible contaminants from the pile as a result of uranium mining include wind erosion, surface water runoff, movement of ground water beneath the pile, and gaseous diffusion from the pile (radon).
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> Nuclear power plants use large quantities of water for steam production and for cooling. Some nuclear power plants remove large quantities of water from a lake or river, which could affect fish and other aquatic life. Heavy metals and salts build up in the water used in all power plant systems, including nuclear ones. These water pollutants, as well as the higher temperature of the water discharged from the power plant, can negatively affect water quality and aquatic life. Nuclear power plants sometimes discharge small amounts of tritium and other radioactive elements as allowed by their individual wastewater permits. Waste generated from uranium mining operations and rainwater runoff can contaminate groundwater and surface water resources with heavy metals and traces of radioactive uranium.
>
> The effects of uranium on the public can lead to increased cancer risk, liver damage or both. Long term chronic intakes of uranium isotopes in food, water or air can lead to internal irradiation and/or chemical toxicity.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

At HED's recommendation, SB 599 does not provide performance measures; however, if funded, UNM should develop performance measures in coordination with HED.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

The board of regents at UNM would be responsible for administering the funds for expenditures related to the sitting study.

ALTERNATIVES

The board of regents of UNM would seek other sources of funding such as federal or private grants or determine if the institution has existing funds available to help support this initiative.

SEP/je/aml/je