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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR: Aragon DATE TYPED: 02/25/01 HB _____
 SHORT TITLE: Bosque Fire Prevention SB 401
 ANALYST: Padilla

APPROPRIATION

Appropriation Contained		Estimated Additional Impact		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY01	FY02	FY01	FY02		
	\$ 100.0			Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files
 Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD)
 Department of Finance and Administration (DFA)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 401 appropriates \$100.0 from the general fund to DFA’s Local Government Division for expenditures for fire prevention activities in the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District.

Significant Issues

The bill provides for the removal of excess fuels from the middle Rio Grande bosque as a means of preventing wild fires. Removal of debris and non-native plants is widely viewed as the most effective way to prevent devastating fires in the bosque. Controlled burns do not work because fire is harmful to the native cottonwoods but not to the non-native salt cedar and Russian olive trees.

In the spring of 2000, two fires burned nearly 800 acres of bosque at Isleta Pueblo and farther south in Valencia county.

In 1999, the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District began clearing debris from two bosque sites in Valencia county by contracting with EMNRD’s Inmate Work Camp program. The Inmate Work Camp, part of the Forestry Division, is funded at around \$500.0 annually and works in areas throughout the state.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

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The appropriation of \$100.0 contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2002 shall revert to the general fund.

EMNRD notes that this bill could bring potential benefits and cost-savings to the state because the costs of wildfire suppression might be reduced.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

It appears this appropriation would provide funds for the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District to continue to contract with Inmate Work Camps of EMNRD's Forestry Division. If this is the case, the appropriation should be made directly to EMNRD rather than DFA.

DFA believes the appropriation should be directed to EMNRD.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

If the appropriation in this bill is used to contract with the Inmate Work Camps, EMNRD's Forestry Division should be able to report improved outcomes related to forest restoration.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

The Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District extends from Cochiti Dam in the north to Elephant Butte lake in the south.

EMNRD believes that this bill reflects the fire problems that state agencies are facing along riverside habitats. Changes in river hydrography, invasion by non-native species and the development of subdivisions adjacent to drainage canals are causing increased concern among fire managers. Extreme fire behavior associated with salt cedar stands becomes a threat to nearby homes, structures and firefighters.

LP/ar