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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 2-26-07

SPONSOR Cote LAST UPDATED _____ HB HM 39

SHORT TITLE Complete Continental Divide Scenic Trail SB _____

ANALYST Woods

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY07	FY08		
NFI	NFI		

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Response Received From

Energy, Minerals and Natural Department (EMNRD)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Memorial 39 supports completion of the Continental Divide Trail (CDT) through New Mexico. The Memorial requests that the state of New Mexico assist the affected local, state, federal, tribal and private entities in the completion of the New Mexico segment of the CDT, that the State Parks Division (SPD) lead this effort with the support of the State Land Office (SLO), and that the Legislature and New Mexico congressional delegation should support funding for this effort.

There is no appropriation attached to this legislation.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

EMNRD indicates that the department's State Parks Division (SPD) currently administers the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) that distributes federal funds through grants for trails projects throughout New Mexico. SPD has previously awarded RTP funds to CDT-related projects and will continue to consider grant applications for CDT projects. Other fiscal impacts would depend on the degree to which SPD decides to devote personnel and funds to the CDT effort.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

EMNRD advises that the Continental Divide Trail was designated in 1978 under the authority of the National Trails System Act. The CDT is envisioned as a trail stretching across the western U.S. from Canada to Mexico for over three thousand one hundred miles along the continental divide. Approximately six hundred fifty miles of the CDT route exist in New Mexico, mostly across federal land. Less than 50 percent of the CDT through New Mexico has been completed, however—one of the lowest completion percentages of all the states through which the CDT passes. EMNRD additionally notes that:

1. The 2004 New Mexico Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) identified trails as the number 1 recreation priority for the public. Trails are an important component of tourism, economic development, community revitalization, conservation, and health/fitness strategies. Long-distance trails across the country are proving increasingly popular and are becoming destinations in and of themselves. For example, Missouri's 238-mile Katy Trail is estimated to attract over 300,000 visitors each year, and is credited with reviving and sustaining over 100 businesses along the former railroad line. A study by the National Park Service indicates that the state of Florida saw an annual \$1.5 million economic gain resulting from three multi-use trails in that state.

2. SPD's involvement with the CDT in New Mexico has previously been limited to awarding Recreational Trails Program funds to CDT-related projects, but SPD has recently become more active in the inter-agency efforts to complete the CDT in New Mexico. SPD will be a signatory to a new interagency memorandum of agreement in which various state, federal, and tribal entities commit to working together to support completion of the CDT in New Mexico.

EMNRD concludes that the CDT is a long-term project and a statement of support from the Legislature will be beneficial. Since the CDT mostly traverses diverse federal lands, and will benefit the entire nation, the federal government has and should continue to play a strong and supportive role in the RGT partnership, so HM 39's request to the NM congressional delegation will also be beneficial.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

EMNRD advises that SPD is involved with an interagency effort to assist with the completion of the CDT in New Mexico, and that the actions requested by this legislation would be accomplished with existing staff, including SPD's Statewide Trails Coordinator.

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL

EMNRD suggests that the Continental Divide Trail project will not benefit from a formal statement of support from the New Mexico Legislature.