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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 1/21/08

SPONSOR Nunez LAST UPDATED _____ HB 77

SHORT TITLE NMSU Weed Management SB _____

ANALYST Haug

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

| Appropriation | | Recurring or Non-Rec | Fund Affected |
|---------------|---------|-------------------------|------------------|
| FY08 | FY09 | | |
| | \$250.0 | Recurring | General Fund |

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Higher Education Department (HED)

New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA)

Energy, Minerals & Natural Resources Department (EMNRD)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 77 appropriates \$250.0 from the general fund to the Board of Regents of New Mexico State University to support the New Mexico Department of Agriculture's coordination of cooperative weed management areas' efforts to control noxious weeds.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$250.0 contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2009 shall revert to the general fund.

The HED states that this request was submitted by NMSU to the New Mexico Higher Education Department for review, but is not included in the Department's funding recommendation for FY09.

The HED's evaluation table of FY09 Research and Public Service Projects provided to the LFC classifies this project as a "would not oppose if funding available" project. Reasons for this

classification decision are not provided. (LFC Report 07-20, Higher Education Department Review of Selected Research and Public Service Projects, January 12, 2008, Table 4, p75.)

NMDA states that Allocation of these funds would be used by cooperative weed management areas (CWMAs) as matching funds for a variety of state, federal and private grants. This funding will also be used to leverage additional funding from local, state, and federal government agencies.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

NMDA states that the detrimental economic and environmental impact of noxious weeds in New Mexico has increased significantly since the New Mexico noxious weed management act (76-7D-1 to 76-7D-6 NMSA 1978) was passed in 1998. According to federal estimates, approximately 4,000 acres of land are lost daily to noxious weed infestations in the United States. Noxious weed species have negative impacts on wildlife habitat, rangeland and cropland productivity, and overall watershed health.

According to NMDA, this legislation would provide funding that cooperative weed management areas (CWMAs) would be eligible to receive through a competitive grant process. A CWMA is a partnership of federal, state, and local government agencies, tribes, individuals, and various interested groups to manage noxious weeds in a defined area. CWMAs integrate available private, state, local, tribal and federal noxious weed management resources across governmental jurisdictional boundaries. These resources are shared among all of the CWMA partners in order to benefit the local communities which they serve. Currently there are 13 CWMAs in the state. These CWMAs cover 17 counties. Each CWMA is locally led and receives no direct funding from the state. Many of the CWMAs have been in existence for several years and have maximized all of the resources available through their partnerships and various grant sources. The need, at the local level, to implement more comprehensive noxious weed control efforts has been expressed to the New Mexico department of agriculture (NMDA).

NMDA also says that unfortunately the program needs exceed the current available resources. This legislation would give CWMAs financial resources to bolster and expand the future efforts of the CWMA partners, and control the spread of noxious weeds in New Mexico. Over the past two years the number of CWMAs has more than doubled. This funding would allow New Mexico's CWMAs to become more self-sufficient, while expanding their noxious weed information/education and management efforts statewide. This would allow NMDA's state noxious weed coordinator to focus increased energy on the coordination of existing state and federal noxious weed management resources. Such an approach will allow NMDA to maximize existing staff hours, increase the efficiency of existing noxious weed management resources, and better serve New Mexico's citizens.

The EMNRD comments that this bill will benefit the Forestry Division's efforts to restore the health of forest ecosystems. Eradicating noxious weeds may reduce the risk of wildfires in some areas because oftentimes invasive noxious weeds are more flammable than healthy native vegetation.

GH/mt