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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 1/23/08

SPONSOR Garcia, T. LAST UPDATED _____ HB 80

SHORT TITLE NM Highlands Forest & Watershed Institute SB _____

ANALYST Cox

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY08	FY09		
	\$450.00	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Sources of Information

LFC Files

Responses Received From

New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU)

Higher Education Department (HED)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 80 requests an appropriation of four hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$450,000) from the General Fund to the Board of Regents of New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU) for expenditure in FY 2009 to fund the New Mexico Forest and Watershed Institute.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of four hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$450,000) 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 Higher Education Department includes this project in its recommendation and states that it would not oppose the bill if funding is available.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

HED states the New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute (NMFWR) was formed in 2004 after the passage of the Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act.

This request relates to the continuance of the Institute's work at NMHU.

HED states the mission of the institute is as follows:

- provide state-of-the-art information about forest and watershed restoration to the public, federal and state agencies, tribes, and private landowners in New Mexico;
- collaborate with citizen stakeholders, academic institutions, NGOs, and professional natural resources managers to establish a consensus concerning prescriptions and monitoring protocols for use in the restoration of forests and watersheds in an ecologically, socially, and economically sound manner;
- promote ecological restoration and forest management efforts in ways that 1) will keep New Mexican homes and property safe from wildfire, 2) will lead to a more efficient recharge of New Mexican watersheds, and 3) will provide local communities with employment and educational opportunities

NMHU offers the only certified forestry program in the state and a goal of the program is to add to the number of in-state employees who work to preserve and protect New Mexico's Natural resources. The specific purpose for this appropriation is to increase the number of graduate and undergraduate students that make up the summer workforce for the institution. This would make possible the implementation of additional statewide forestry projects. In addition, NMFWR I seeks to acquire a Geographical Information System (GIS) for statewide forest mapping.

PRC/jp