

HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL 3

49TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2009

INTRODUCED BY

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A JOINT MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE WATER CABINET DEPARTMENTS TO CONDUCT AN ENVIRONMENTAL FLOW ASSESSMENT TO ENHANCE ECOSYSTEM FUNCTION, FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT AND IMPROVED MANAGEMENT OF RESERVOIRS, WITH THE COLLABORATION OF RELEVANT SCIENTISTS AND STAKEHOLDERS, FEDERAL AGENCIES AND WATER USERS.

WHEREAS, New Mexico's rivers are a keystone of the state's environmental infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, the flow of water in New Mexico's rivers is directly tied to economic prosperity, water supply, agricultural production, cultural diversity, community viability and the health of people and ecosystems; and

WHEREAS, seasonal high-flow events reduce frequency of bosque fires by sweeping combustible debris from river floodplains and continually wetted channels provide flood

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1 mitigation by storing and attenuating high flows; and

2 WHEREAS, natural infiltration from river flows recharges  
3 aquifers, thereby enhancing water security during drought  
4 cycles; and

5 WHEREAS, the advance of invasive aquatic and riparian  
6 species and the decline of native species, due in part to  
7 altered hydrology, have come to characterize New Mexico's river  
8 basins; and

9 WHEREAS, further indicators of declining ecosystem health  
10 are manifest in each of the state's river systems, in the form  
11 of federally listed threatened and endangered species, whose  
12 conservation and recovery require costly, long-term programs;  
13 and

14 WHEREAS, state management actions to maintain or enhance  
15 the hydrography of the state's river systems to prevent future  
16 environmental losses or listings of native species will keep  
17 control of these issues in state agencies; and

18 WHEREAS, New Mexico lacks any system for environmental  
19 flow considerations in its water management practices; and

20 WHEREAS, predicted changes in climate coupled with  
21 continuing increases in human needs for water can only magnify  
22 the stress on the healthy functioning of river systems and may  
23 potentially result in future water supply shortages,  
24 interregional and interstate conflicts and serious economic and  
25 ecological distress;

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1           NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE  
2 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the policy of the state of New Mexico  
3 be to bring the maintenance of adequate environmental flows  
4 into the water management practices on its river systems; and

5           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in furtherance of this policy,  
6 the legislature request all the state departments represented  
7 in the water cabinet to work cooperatively in preparation of an  
8 environmental flow assessment to evaluate and prioritize areas  
9 in need of improved flow management, identifying stream  
10 segments where flow management might result in significant  
11 ecological benefits, including preservation of fish and  
12 wildlife habitat and environmental quality and areas where  
13 benefits can be realized through improved reservoir management;  
14 and

15           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the evaluation shall identify  
16 suitable alternative methods for determining environmental flow  
17 needs in New Mexico and be conducted in collaboration with  
18 relevant specialists, federal agencies and water users; and

19           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
20 transmitted to all cabinet secretaries whose departments are  
21 represented on the water cabinet and to the interstate stream  
22 commission.