SENATE MEMORIAL 4

51ST LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2014

INTRODUCED BY

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A MEMORIAL

RECOGNIZING THE WATERSHED HEALTH BENEFITS OF NORTH AMERICAN BEAVER POPULATIONS; REQUESTING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A STATEWIDE BEAVER MANAGEMENT PLAN.

WHEREAS, New Mexico has an arid climate that is typified by long periods of limited precipitation interspersed by infrequent heavy rainfalls or sudden snowmelts that are difficult for soil to absorb, leading to harmful runoff; and

WHEREAS, the scarcity of water has made the considered use and conservation of water resources a foundational element in both New Mexico's culture and its economy; and

WHEREAS, for centuries, New Mexican communities have based their livelihoods and many cultural traditions on irrigated agriculture; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico's rugged landscapes, containing...
diverse populations of wildlife, have attracted generations of
hunters and nature enthusiasts and are among the key
attractions for the state's tourism industry; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico is experiencing a multiyear drought
that is creating exceptional strains on farmers and the state's
wildlife resources; and

WHEREAS, maintaining, or restoring, upper watershed health
is an important element in assisting New Mexico's communities,
industries and wildlife to meet water scarcity challenges; and

WHEREAS, watershed health and restoration efforts
typically require coordination among private businesses and
organizations, as well as local, state, tribal and federal
agencies; and

WHEREAS, numerous state agencies participate in ongoing
watershed restoration efforts; and

WHEREAS, the dams, ponds and associated wetlands created
by the North American beaver are known to increase groundwater
percolation, which raises local groundwater tables and storage;
and

WHEREAS, beaver dams and ponds and their associated
wetlands attenuate erosion, instream silt loading and other
harmful effects associated with heavy rainfalls and sudden
snowmelts; and

WHEREAS, beaver ponds and their associated wetlands act as
contaminant sinks and filters, enhancing downstream water
quality; and

WHEREAS, during extended periods of drought, beaver ponds
and their associated wetlands greatly enhance the resiliency of
riparian zones, including riverine plant communities and fish
and wildlife populations; and

WHEREAS, the department of game and fish has developed
guidance for individual landowners regarding how to relocate
beaver families to their land and how to mitigate or avoid
problems created by beavers already on their land; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico would benefit from a strategic plan
for statewide beaver management designed to capture the full
watershed benefits of beaver populations and minimize conflicts
with other land uses, such as agriculture and the development
of transportation infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, the state of Utah recently adopted a statewide
beaver management plan developed in a process that involved a
wide range of public and private landowners, users and
managers;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE
OF NEW MEXICO that the department of game and fish, the
forestry division of the energy, minerals and natural resources
department and the state land office be requested to develop
recommendations jointly on how New Mexico may proceed to
develop a statewide beaver management plan. The
recommendations should include which agency should take the
lead role for development, which stakeholder groups should be included in the development and a timeline and budget; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department of game and fish, the forestry division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department and the state land office be requested to present their recommendations jointly to the appropriate interim committee or committees by September 1, 2014; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the director of the department of game and fish, the secretary of energy, minerals and natural resources, the commissioner of public lands and the co-chairs of the New Mexico legislative council.

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