

April 10, 2015

HOUSE EXECUTIVE MESSAGE NO. 22

The Honorable Don L. Tripp, Speaker of the House and
Members of the House of Representatives
State Capitol Building
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Honorable Speaker Tripp and Members of the House:

Pursuant to the Constitution of the State of New Mexico, Article IV, Section 22, I hereby VETO and return HOUSE ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL 38, as amended, enacted by the Fifty-Second Legislature, First Session, 2015.

House Bill 38 proposes to establish a fund and create a forest and watershed board that would be responsible for approving which forest and watershed projects are funded by state government.

My central concern is that this legislation creates an unnecessary and potentially cumbersome layer of bureaucracy, one that would certainly slow down the process of funding critical watershed restoration and forest management projects throughout the state.

The importance of the health of New Mexico's forests and watersheds cannot be overstated. I've seen firsthand how they have been devastated by fires and floods in recent years. That is precisely why funding for forest and watershed projects should be overseen by executive agencies that are capable of quickly prioritizing our investments to meet our most critical and pressing needs.

This allows the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management to undertake watershed protection projects prior to our annual flood season to mitigate the potential impact in certain burn scars during the monsoons.

This allows the Environment Department to make necessary determinations as to which watersheds and river habitats are most in need of restoration through the successful River Stewards Program.

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This allows the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department – which also houses State Forestry – to make informed decisions as to where forest and watershed projects are most needed.

All of these decisions take into account a variety of factors, including ecological, economic, and social considerations. They look at things like land and water conditions, analyze potential risks to surrounding communities, and work to improve economic opportunities in and around communities all over the state. They are capable of quickly determining project readiness and other benchmarks that must be met before a project can be funded. Unfortunately, the requirements of House Bill 38 would limit the ability of state agencies to prioritize these factors when evaluating the needs of our most critical watersheds.

We cannot afford to put a layer of red tape around the funding of critical watershed restoration and forest management projects in New Mexico. I believe we need thoughtful, but efficient action, and do not feel this legislation would allow that to occur. For these reasons, I hereby veto House Bill 38.

Respectfully yours,

Susana Martinez
Governor

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Time: _____ a.m. p.m.

Date: _____, 2015

By _____
Secretary of State

Time: _____ a.m. p.m.

Date: _____, 2015

By _____
Chief Clerk of the House