

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill Number: SB 582

52nd Legislature, 1st Session, 2015

Tracking Number: .200372.1

Short Title: Rio Grande Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring System

Sponsor(s): Senator John M. Sapien

Analyst: James Ball and David Harrell

Date: February 26, 2015

Bill Summary:

SB 582 makes an appropriation for the Las Cruces Public Schools to support existing bosque ecosystem monitoring program efforts on the Rio Grande, including river and bosque water and natural resource monitoring. The monitoring program shall involve the participation of at least 3,000 kindergarten through college-age students in “conservation education and citizen science work that supports next-generation science standards and common core standards” (see “Technical Issues,” below).

The program must provide to New Mexico natural resource and research agencies:

- technical data gathering; and
- reports and analysis for natural resource and research agencies regarding best practices and effectiveness of:
 - wildlife mitigation;
 - exotic plant removal;
 - drought management; and
 - climate and other ecological drivers affecting the health of the Rio Grande and surrounding bosque.

Fiscal Impact:

\$150,000 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Public Education Department for expenditure in FY 16. Unexpended or unencumbered funds revert to the General Fund.

Substantive Issues:

According to the Higher Education Department (HED), the research and data collection in SB 582 would be implemented using next generation science standards and the common core standards that were updated in 2013 using elements supported by the National Academy of Science.

HED further states that SB 582 would support the mission of the Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program (BEMP), which is to “promote continued education, understanding and stewardship of the riparian ecosystem to scientists, teachers, students, policy makers, and the public.”

According to the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD), SB 582 supports BEMP projects at Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park (MVBSP) and other state parks along the Rio Grande. The partnership between BEMP and state parks has supported a BEMP employee at MVBSP since 2013 who provides outdoor classroom programming and BEMP activities for Las Cruces students and teachers. SB 582 would enhance the continued partnership between the Las Cruces Public Schools and BEMP, making it possible to involve more students.

Technical Issues:

The phrase “common core standards” seems to suggest the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), a set of academic standards that many states have adopted to emphasize critical thinking skills in English/language arts and mathematics for grades K-12 and to ensure that students leave high school with the necessary skills for college and/or a career. The CCSS initiative began in December 2008, when the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) formed a collaborative effort and published the document *Benchmarking for Success*. New Mexico joined the effort in 2009, when the Governor signed a memorandum of agreement with the NGA and the CCSSO.

If the “common core standards” referenced in SB 582 are different from the CCSS, the sponsor may wish to consider defining those standards referenced in the bill to avoid the possibility of confusion.

Background:

According to HED, the BEMP coordinates research efforts from student and citizen volunteers to collect long-term data on the forest ecosystem located along the Rio Grande. The data gathered are incorporated into the University of New Mexico’s bosque research efforts, which in turn are shared with other researchers and natural resource managers.

Committee Referrals:

SEC/SFC

Related Bills:

None as of February 26, 2015.