

LFC Requester:

Francis Norton

AGENCY BILL ANALYSIS - 2026 REGULAR SESSION

WITHIN 24 HOURS OF BILL POSTING, UPLOAD ANALYSIS TO

AgencyAnalysis.nmlegis.gov and email to billanalysis@dfa.nm.gov*(Analysis must be uploaded as a PDF)***SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION***{Indicate if analysis is on an original bill, amendment, substitute or a correction of a previous bill}*

Date Prepared: Feb 4, 2026

Check all that apply:

Bill Number: H 271

Original Correction Amendment Substitute

Sponsor: Rep. Nathan Small

Short Title: Appropriation to ONRT for Land Purchases and Matching Funds

Agency Name and Code

Office of Natural Resources Trustee (668)

Number:

Person Writing

Maggie Hart Stebbins, Trustee

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Email Maggie.hartstebbins@onrt.nm.gov**SECTION II: FISCAL IMPACT****APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)**

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY27	FY28		
\$100,000.0	\$0.0	nonrecurring	GF

REVENUE (dollars in thousands)

Estimated Revenue			Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY27	FY28	FY29		
\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	N/A	N/A

(Parenthesis () indicate revenue decreases)

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY27	FY28	FY29	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
Total	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	N/A	N/A

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Duplicates/Conflicts with/Companion to/Relates to: N/A

Duplicates/Relates to Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act: N/A

SECTION III: NARRATIVE

BILL SUMMARY

House Bill 271 appropriates one hundred million dollars to the Office of the Natural Resources Trustee (ONRT) for the purchase of land or interests in land for the creation, expansion or restoration of public land. Up to thirty million dollars of that appropriation may be used for state matching funds for political subdivisions of the state that have been approved for federal assistance funding due to a natural disaster. The funds must be expended before the end of fiscal year 2029.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS: HB271 appropriates \$100,000,000 to ONRT to acquire land that will preserve and protect the state's natural resources such as wildlife, wildlife habitat, and water. Working with existing ONRT staff, other state agencies, and non-governmental entities, ONRT would identify, evaluate, select, and acquire properties that would be transferred to a public entity. ONRT has an established, transparent process for incorporating public input, soliciting project ideas, establishing criteria for prioritizing purchases, and transferring ownership to an appropriate state or public entity for ongoing operations.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES: ONRT's mission under federal and state law is to hold polluters accountable for injuries to the state's natural resources caused by releases of hazardous substances. When ONRT successfully litigates or settles a natural resource damage claim, the funds are used to restore the injured resource(s) to its pre-spill condition or to acquire the equivalent of the injured resource.

ONRT has used settlement funds from natural resource damage settlements for past acquisitions of property. Examples include the purchase of the River Ranch Wildlife Management Area in Grant and Luna counties and the purchase of Double E Wildlife Management Area – both of which were purchased with funds from a settlement with the Freeport-McMoRan (FMI) mining company (formerly Phelps Dodge Corporation) and transferred to the New Mexico Wildlife Department. The FMI settlement also provided additional land for City of Rocks State Park.

A settlement with Chevron Mining for injuries at the Questa Mine resulted in the conveyance of 225 acres of wetlands/riparian habitat to the US Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and purchased conservation easements to protect critical habitat and/or water resources in Questa.

ONRT's settlement with the United States Army for releases at Ft. Wingate Army Depot Activity provided funds to the Zuni Tribe for acquisition of habitat for the endangered Zuni Bluehead Sucker. ONRT has utilized public-private partnerships with non-governmental organizations such as the Trust for Public Land and the New Mexico Land Conservancy to identify eligible projects and manage purchase transactions.

ONRT does not have capacity to manage property so all purchased properties would be transferred to an appropriate state or other public entity.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS: ONRT utilizes a transparent, nimble, and data-driven solicitation and selection process for identifying and funding natural resource protection and restoration projects, and property acquisitions. That process allows for public input, integration of local priorities, and partnerships with multiple, diverse local entities. For example, over the past

four years, ONRT has funded 16 projects in San Juan County with \$13 million from Gold King Mine Settlements. We have nine partners including county and municipal governments, state agencies, tribal governments, and soil and water conservation districts.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS: ONRT has existing staff and technical capacity to implement the provisions of HB 271.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP: N/A

TECHNICAL ISSUES: N/A

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES: N/A

ALTERNATIVES: N/A

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL:

AMENDMENTS