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**AGENCY BILL ANALYSIS  
2026 REGULAR SESSION**

**WITHIN 24 HOURS OF BILL POSTING, EMAIL ANALYSIS TO:**

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*{Include the bill no. in the email subject line, e.g., HB2, and only attach one bill analysis and related documentation per email message}*

**SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION**

*{Indicate if analysis is on an original bill, amendment, substitute or a correction of a previous bill}*

*Click all that apply:*

**Original**  **Amendment**   
**Correction**  **Substitute**

**Date Prepared:** 2026-01-23  
**Bill No:** SB83

**Sponsor:** Campos, Pete  
ACCELERATING RESILIENCE INNOVATIONS DRYLANDS

**Agency Name and Code:** NMHED  
**Number:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Person Writing:** Gallegos, Brittany

**Short Title:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**SECTION II: FISCAL IMPACT**

**APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)**

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY26	FY27		
N/A	\$1,937	Nonrecurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

**REVENUE (dollars in thousands)**

Estimated Revenue	Recurring	Fund

<b>FY26</b>	<b>FY27</b>	<b>FY28</b>	<b>or Nonrecurring</b>	<b>Affected</b>
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

**ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)**

	<b>FY26</b>	<b>FY27</b>	<b>FY28</b>	<b>3 Year Total Cost</b>	<b>Recurring or Nonrecurring</b>	<b>Fund Affected</b>
<b>Total</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Duplicates/Conflicts with/Companion to/Relates to:

Duplicates/Relates to Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act:

**SECTION III: NARRATIVE**

**BILL SUMMARY**

Senate Bill 83 (SB83) appropriates one million nine hundred thirty-seven thousand dollars (\$1,937,000) from the General Fund to the University of New Mexico (UNM) Board of Regents for expenditure in FY27 to support the establishment of UNM’s Accelerating Resilience Innovations in Drylands (ARID) Institute, in cooperation with UNM’s Natural Heritage New Mexico. The appropriation is intended to support statewide ecological monitoring of New Mexico’s air, land, and water. Any unexpended balance remaining at the end of FY27 shall revert to the General Fund.

The New Mexico Higher Education Department’s (NMHED’s) analysis of this bill focuses on the higher education implications of the proposed legislation. Additional insight may be obtained from other agencies’ analyses.

**FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

SB83 contains an appropriation of one million nine hundred thirty-seven thousand dollars (\$1,937,000) from the General Fund to UNM’s Board of Regents for expenditure in FY27. Any unexpended balance remaining at the end of FY27 shall revert to the General Fund.

UNM submitted this funding request in the amount of one million nine hundred thirty-seven thousand dollars (\$1,937,000) to NMHED for possible incorporation into the NMHED higher education funding recommendation. NMHED submitted its higher education funding recommendation to the New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration (NMDFA) and the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) on November 1 as is required by statute (9-25-9 NMSA 1978). UNM’s Research and Public Service Project (RPSP) request was not approved by NMHED.

## SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The appropriation in SB83 would support statewide ecological monitoring of New Mexico's air, land, and water, including development of an advanced statewide ecological monitoring network using modeling and artificial intelligence to assess ecosystem vulnerabilities, including fire risk, and to support resilience strategies. The bill also supports related programming to strengthen K-12 science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) collaboration and enhance tribal engagement with UNM research.

SB83 does not define "tribal engagement with research at the University of New Mexico," making the scope of this activity unclear, and it does not define "artificial intelligence" or specify how it would be used in the ecological monitoring network, leaving implementation details unspecified.

UNM submitted an FY27 RPSP request to NMHED titled "Accelerating Resilience Innovations in Drylands (ARID) Institute" in the amount of one million nine hundred thirty-seven thousand dollars (\$1,937,000) - the same amount as SB83's appropriation. This was a new RPSP request to establish the institute rather than to expand an existing program. No new RPSP requests were approved for FY27.

UNM submitted the following project description and executive summary to NMHED as part of its FY27 RPSP request:

"New Mexico is facing increasing pressure from changing hydrology, precipitation, temperature, and particulate matter in the air, which threatens future economic development and community vitality. The UNM ARID Institute will develop new or expand existing datasets that align with state and local governmental priorities to support informed decision-making, while inspiring and training the next generation of scientists in New Mexico. Elements of this project are:

(1) Air quality in South Valley, Albuquerque: Continue working with the City of Albuquerque Environmental Health Department and Office of Sustainability (Alice Main) to synthesize an existing air quality dataset and link to community health impacts and communicate impacts and health interventions to the local community.

(2) Ground water and bosque health in the Middle Rio Grande: Continue the Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program's (BEMP) data collection at 25 long-term monitoring sites with K-12 and UNM students, provide STEM education and field experience to approximately 3,000 K-12 students at 30-50 schools in the basin, install a new monitoring site at the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI), and develop educational programming for SIPI students with the support of SIPI faculty Thomas De Pree and Dennis Dye. BEMP data are used by federal, state, and local agencies (including US Bureau of Reclamation, US Army Corps of Engineers, NM Department of Transportation, Valencia Soil and Water Conservation District, NM Office of the State Engineer, City of Albuquerque, Albuquerque Metropolitan Arroyo Flood Control Authority, Albuquerque-Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority, Pueblo of Santa Ana, Pueblo of Isleta) to inform management decisions. BEMP has long-established relationships with schools and teachers throughout the Middle Rio Grande.

(3) Methane gas emissions in the San Juan Basin: conduct methane monitoring surveys to identify abandoned wells leaking methane and develop a better understanding of the contribution of methane emissions from uncapped wells, partnering with New Mexico start up Earth & Planetary Insights, and inform the Governor's Digital Climate Enforcement Working Group on the findings to inform implications for meeting the state's climate goals. ARID has been involved in the Working Group and have been in communication with Travis Kellerman from the Governor's Office on the need for these data to inform greenhouse gas monitoring and mitigation efforts in order to meet state greenhouse gas reduction goals and standards for oil and gas markets in international markets.

(4) Statewide carbon monitoring of both disturbed and undisturbed forests and rangelands: expand continuous high-resolution monitoring of carbon sequestration and emissions in post-fire rangelands and forests impacted by the bark beetle, and inform the New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department (NMEMNRD) of findings to inform adaptive management of the state's natural lands to help meet climate goals. Jacob Pederson from NM Forestry has indicated a need for these data, which ties into its priority watersheds designations and 30x30 Initiative.

ARID will format these datasets and develop geospatial layers from these data to enhance existing tools to inform decision-making by New Mexico agencies, communities, and businesses in planning for ecological, economic, and social resilience in the state by filling in data gaps and documenting trends related to achieving state goals around climate resilience, water security, greenhouse gas emissions, natural lands, and community health. Concurrently, ARID will build capacity to ensure research, data collection, and data visualization are responsive to Tribal priorities and needs with the formation of a Tribal Research Advisory Council, building off existing relationships to engage with all the federally recognized Tribes in New Mexico, and working with existing ARID programs (e.g., BEMP, Natural Heritage) to increase support for Tribal needs.

By linking datasets to existing tools being used to address community and economic impacts, this RPSF will inform state and local resilience planning; support the state's clean energy transition; and provide a robust tool for agencies, businesses, and communities to advance their own resilience initiatives. This project supports all five of UNM's 2040 goals: advance New Mexico, student experience and educational innovation, inclusive excellence, sustainability, and one university."

UNM also provided the following budget narrative describing how the requested funds would be used:

"To serve the state population and government agencies and respond to management, Tribal, business, and community needs, we are requesting one million nine hundred thirty-seven thousand dollars (\$1,937,000). The cost breakdown per item is summarized below:

(1) To analyze air quality data and develop messaging around health risks and interventions in South Valley Albuquerque will cost one hundred eleven thousand dollars (\$111,000) (support 1 graduate student, 1 undergraduate, 2 staff).

(2) To quantify methane leaks from abandoned oil and gas wells will cost four hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$450,000) (support 3 graduate students, 2 undergraduate students, 1 postdoc, and 1 staff; contracting with the NM start-up company Earth & Planetary Insights).

(3) To quantify the impact of wildfire and bark beetle outbreaks on carbon stored in rangeland and forested ecosystems will cost three hundred sixty-six thousand dollars (\$366,000) (support 1 graduate student, 2 undergraduate students, 1 postdoc, 2 staff).

(4) To maintain BEMP water and bosque health data collection along the Rio Grande, and add a new site and student programming to SIPI will cost four hundred thousand dollars (\$400,000) (support 3 interns, 3.5 staff, and 1 community workshop).

(5) Tribal Research Co-Production and Information Dissemination will cost one hundred thirty thousand dollars (\$130,000) (support 1 graduate student, 1 staff, and participant support for Tribal community members).

(6) To develop and incorporate new datasets and geospatial layers into decision-support tools and hold data science workshops and trainings for communities and agencies is three hundred sixty-eight thousand dollars (\$368,000) (support 1 undergraduate, 6 staff, 1 stakeholder workshop, and 3 data science

workshops/trainings).

(7) Two staff will support the overall project and ensure milestones, metrics, and deliverables are met: part time ARID Sr Program Manager and full-time Program Manager at one hundred twelve thousand dollars (\$112,000)."

#### PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

N/A

#### ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

SB83 would require administrative coordination by UNM to implement the proposed ARID Institute activities, including hiring and supervision of project staff and student employees, management of contracts, and coordination with multiple external partners.

Based on UNM's RPSP project description and budget narrative submitted to NMHED, implementation would involve collaboration with state and local agencies, K-12 schools, and tribal partners, as well as contracting with a private entity for methane monitoring. UNM would also be responsible for developing and maintaining datasets and geospatial decision-support tools, facilitating trainings and workshops, and tracking project deliverables and outcomes to ensure funds are expended within FY27.

#### 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

If SB83 is not enacted, the UNM Board of Regents would not receive an appropriation of one million nine hundred thirty-seven thousand dollars (\$1,937,000) from the General Fund in FY27.

#### AMENDMENTS

N/A