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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 2-6-06

SPONSOR Griego LAST UPDATED _____ HB _____

SHORT TITLE TAOS COUNTY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN SB 571

ANALYST Hadwiger

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY06	FY07		
	\$45.0	Non-Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Department of Finance and Administration (DFA)

Department of Game and Fish (DGF)

Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 571 appropriates \$45 thousand from the general fund to the Local Government Division (LGD) of the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) in FY07 for develop the Taos County community wildfire protection plan (CWPP).

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$45 thousand contained in this bill is a non-recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY07 would revert to the general fund.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

DFA explained that this bill seeks to address the "perfect storm" of tall grasses born by last year's abundant moisture serving as enormous amounts of fuel for fires likely until the monsoon season in 2006. The state's Fire Planning Task Force has identified over 200 communities in New Mex-

ico, including 13 in Taos County, that have a wildlands urban interface in need of fire suppression treatment to better cope with wildfires. SB581 could help provide Taos County the needed resources to address the potentially catastrophic 2006 fire season.

EMNRD added that the area identified in SB571 is included in the New Mexico Fire Plan as one of the state's communities most at risk from wildland fire. The Forestry Division currently provides technical support as well as state and federal grant funds to a variety of entities for fire protection and fuels reduction projects to improve public safety in this area. The Forestry Division also oversees the expenditure of state emergency funds for wildfire suppression, often in Taos County. If this bill is successful, the appropriation would be used to prepare a CWPP designed to address community protection needs regarding mitigating the risk from catastrophic wildfire.

EMNRD noted that the applicable local government (i.e., counties or cities), the local fire department(s), and the state entity responsible for forest management (Forestry Division of EMNRD) are the three entities that are required to mutually agree to the final contents of a CWPP. The *minimum requirements* for a CWPP are:

- (1) Collaboration:** A CWPP must be collaboratively developed by local and state government representatives, in consultation with federal agencies and other interested parties.
- (2) Prioritized Fuel Reduction:** A CWPP must identify and prioritize areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommend the types and methods of treatment that will protect one or more at-risk communities and essential infrastructure.
- (3) Treatment of Structural Ignitability:** A CWPP must recommend measures that homeowners and communities can take to reduce the ignitability of structures throughout the area addressed by the plan.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

EMNRD noted that this project would benefit the Forestry Division's objective of protecting communities from wildland fire. Additionally, the safety and effectiveness of responding fire-fighting resources would be enhanced.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

DFG suggested that wildlife and wildlife habitat needs should be considered in any type of environmental planning. Personnel in LGD/ DFA may not have this expertise, as well as expertise in other related fields, and may need to ask for assistance from personnel in other state agencies such as DFG, State Forestry, and the Department of Environment.

ALTERNATIVES

DFA suggested that, given the urgency of the fire season that will start in March, not May, it may be beneficial to make the appropriation for FY06 and FY07 and to insert an emergency clause

DH/yr