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SENATE MEMORIAL 4

51ST LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2014

INTRODUCED BY

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A MEMORIAL

RECOGNIZING THE WATERSHED HEALTH BENEFITS OF NORTH AMERICAN
BEAVER POPULATIONS; REQUESTING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A STATEWIDE
BEAVER MANAGEMENT PLAN.

WHEREAS, New Mexico has an arid climate that is typified
by long periods of limited precipitation interspersed by
infrequent heavy rainfalls or sudden snowmelts that are
difficult for soil to absorb, leading to harmful runoff; and

WHEREAS, the scarcity of water has made the considered use
and conservation of water resources a foundational element in
both New Mexico's culture and its economy; and

WHEREAS, for centuries, New Mexican communities have based
their livelihoods and many cultural traditions on irrigated
agriculture; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico's rugged landscapes, containing

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1 diverse populations of wildlife, have attracted generations of
2 hunters and nature enthusiasts and are among the key
3 attractions for the state's tourism industry; and

4 WHEREAS, New Mexico is experiencing a multiyear drought
5 that is creating exceptional strains on farmers and the state's
6 wildlife resources; and

7 WHEREAS, maintaining, or restoring, upper watershed health
8 is an important element in assisting New Mexico's communities,
9 industries and wildlife to meet water scarcity challenges; and

10 WHEREAS, watershed health and restoration efforts
11 typically require coordination among private businesses and
12 organizations, as well as local, state, tribal and federal
13 agencies; and

14 WHEREAS, numerous state agencies participate in ongoing
15 watershed restoration efforts; and

16 WHEREAS, the dams, ponds and associated wetlands created
17 by the North American beaver are known to increase groundwater
18 percolation, which raises local groundwater tables and storage;
19 and

20 WHEREAS, beaver dams and ponds and their associated
21 wetlands attenuate erosion, instream silt loading and other
22 harmful effects associated with heavy rainfalls and sudden
23 snowmelts; and

24 WHEREAS, beaver ponds and their associated wetlands act as
25 contaminant sinks and filters, enhancing downstream water

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1 quality; and

2 WHEREAS, during extended periods of drought, beaver ponds
3 and their associated wetlands greatly enhance the resiliency of
4 riparian zones, including riverine plant communities and fish
5 and wildlife populations; and

6 WHEREAS, the department of game and fish has developed
7 guidance for individual landowners regarding how to relocate
8 beaver families to their land and how to mitigate or avoid
9 problems created by beavers already on their land; and

10 WHEREAS, New Mexico would benefit from a strategic plan
11 for statewide beaver management designed to capture the full
12 watershed benefits of beaver populations and minimize conflicts
13 with other land uses, such as agriculture and the development
14 of transportation infrastructure; and

15 WHEREAS, the state of Utah recently adopted a statewide
16 beaver management plan developed in a process that involved a
17 wide range of public and private landowners, users and
18 managers;

19 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE
20 OF NEW MEXICO that the department of game and fish, the
21 forestry division of the energy, minerals and natural resources
22 department and the state land office be requested to develop
23 recommendations jointly on how New Mexico may proceed to
24 develop a statewide beaver management plan. The
25 recommendations should include which agency should take the

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1 lead role for development, which stakeholder groups should be
2 included in the development and a timeline and budget; and

3 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department of game and
4 fish, the forestry division of the energy, minerals and natural
5 resources department and the state land office be requested to
6 present their recommendations jointly to the appropriate
7 interim committee or committees by September 1, 2014; and

8 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
9 transmitted to the director of the department of game and fish,
10 the secretary of energy, minerals and natural resources, the
11 commissioner of public lands and the co-chairs of the New
12 Mexico legislative council.

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