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SENATE MEMORIAL 3

**57TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2025**

INTRODUCED BY

Peter Wirth

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 Mexico's 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 ground water  
18 percolation, which raises local ground water tables and  
19 storage; 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 adopted a statewide beaver  
16 management plan developed in a process that involved a wide  
17 range of public and private landowners, users and managers;

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

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1 included in the development and a time line and budget; and

2 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department of game and  
3 fish, the forestry division of the energy, minerals and natural  
4 resources department and the state land office be requested to  
5 present their recommendations jointly to the appropriate  
6 interim committee or committees by October 1, 2025; and

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