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HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL 13
45TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2002
INTRODUCED BY
Mimi Stewart

A JOINT MEMORIAL
COMMENDING THE NEW MEXICO BLACK-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG WORKING
GROUP FOR USING A COMMON-GROUND APPROACH TO DEVELOP A
CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN; REQUESTING THAT A
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDING OPTIONS
FOR THE 2004 SPECIES SURVEY AND WORKING GROUP STAFF.

WHEREAS, the New Mexico black-tailed prairie dog working
group is striving to find common ground in resolving a
contentious issue in the spirit of Senate Joint Memorial 27 of
the forty-second legislature, first session, which was written
by wild friends students; and

WHEREAS, while progress continues to be made toward
greater environmental and economic prosperity, the challenges
presented by rapid population growth and continued economic
expansion throughout the western states, including New Mexico,

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1 have led to increasing conflicts that disturb the balance of
2 the western states' ecosystems; and

3 WHEREAS, it is important for the youth of our state to
4 understand ecosystems and to recognize their own impact on
5 efforts to find solutions to environmental and human issues;
6 and

7 WHEREAS, the New Mexico black-tailed prairie dog working
8 group brings together people and organizations with very
9 different viewpoints, including Animal Protection of New
10 Mexico, incorporated, the Animas foundation, the bureau of
11 land management, the national park service, the national
12 wildlife federation, the natural resources conservation
13 service, the New Mexico cattle growers' association, New
14 Mexico state university, the New Mexico farm and livestock
15 bureau, the department of game and fish, the New Mexico
16 department of agriculture, the New Mexico natural heritage
17 program, people for native ecosystems, the Turner endangered
18 species fund, the United States air force, the United States
19 army, the United States fish and wildlife service, the United
20 States forest service and citizens of New Mexico, to reach
21 agreement in dealing with prairie dog issues; and

22 WHEREAS, the small, but integral, furry little ground
23 squirrel, *Cynomys ludovicianus*, commonly known as the black-
24 tailed prairie dog, is a keystone species critical to the
25 continued well-being of nearly two hundred species in

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1 grasslands ecosystems; and

2 WHEREAS, populations of black-tailed prairie dogs, as
3 well as those of other prairie dog species, are declining
4 throughout the west; and

5 WHEREAS, as a result of a petition, the United States
6 fish and wildlife service found that listing the black-tailed
7 prairie dog as a threatened or an endangered species under the
8 Endangered Species Act of 1973 was warranted but precluded;
9 and

10 WHEREAS, black-tailed prairie dogs aid in the growth of a
11 vast array of plants and wildlife as their digging actions
12 enhance soil structure, water filtration and forb growth; and

13 WHEREAS, black-tailed prairie dogs create habitat for
14 other species and sustain the environment for an abundance of
15 life in grassland ecosystems; and

16 WHEREAS, the disappearance of black-tailed prairie dogs
17 could lead to the downfall of grassland ecosystems in eleven
18 western states and may have adverse consequences for other
19 ecosystems as well; and

20 WHEREAS, these complex and highly social animals, with
21 their well-known burrows and towns, have contributed greatly
22 to the history and vision of the west. For example, the
23 famous explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark sent a
24 prairie dog to President Jefferson because they were so
25 impressed with the little creatures; and

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1 WHEREAS, the plethora of plant and animal life belonging
2 to western ecosystems directly contributes to the
3 attractiveness and distinctive qualities that attract visitors
4 to the west; and

5 WHEREAS, nongame animals such as the black-tailed prairie
6 dogs deserve to be valued because they are important living
7 creatures that enhance the environment in which all New
8 Mexicans live; and

9 WHEREAS, many of the problems believed to be caused by
10 black-tailed and other prairie dog species are being
11 reevaluated by scientists, and it is now known that prairie
12 dogs are critical to maintaining a balanced cycle of life in
13 grasslands; and

14 WHEREAS, knowing the state of the black-tailed prairie
15 dog populations is necessary to make crucial decisions about
16 those populations and to make informed decisions about listing
17 them as a threatened or endangered species; and

18 WHEREAS, surveys of black-tailed prairie dog populations
19 are planned every three years until 2010, and funding is
20 needed for such a survey in 2004; and

21 WHEREAS, a grasslands coordinator would help coordinate
22 many different groups spread over a wide geographic area as
23 they work together to resolve issues that affect each group in
24 different ways; and

25 WHEREAS, the establishment of a preserve for a population

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1 of black-tailed prairie dogs set aside from usual human
2 activities would provide valuable information and educational
3 opportunities and could provide a home to prairie dogs whose
4 burrows are being destroyed by new homes, roads and other
5 developments; and

6 WHEREAS, the legislature encourages federal and state
7 agencies in New Mexico to consider establishing such a
8 preserve; and

9 WHEREAS, the legislature wishes to preserve a beautiful,
10 healthy and diverse world for New Mexico's children and to
11 prevent the extinction of the myriad species who depend on the
12 black-tailed prairie dog for their own existence; and

13 WHEREAS, if the New Mexico black-tailed prairie dog
14 working group is successful, it can be used as a model for
15 investigating problems faced by other nongame animals in New
16 Mexico;

17 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE
18 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the New Mexico black-tailed prairie
19 dog working group be commended for using a common-ground
20 approach to develop a conservation and management plan to help
21 solve this challenging environmental problem; and

22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the appropriate legislative
23 committee be requested to study and make recommendations as to
24 whether a grasslands coordinator position should be created,
25 which agency would include the position and how to fund the

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1 position; and

2 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the black-tailed prairie dog,
3 a valuable part of the west, be studied and protected where
4 possible for the benefit of New Mexico children who are our
5 future; and

6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the appropriate legislative
7 committee be requested to study and make recommendations as to
8 whether a preserve should be created to set aside a population
9 of black-tailed prairie dogs and other nongame animals for
10 study and educational purposes and to provide more publicity
11 about the importance of nongame animals; and

12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that state agencies be encouraged
13 to view New Mexico's black-tailed prairie dogs as wildlife
14 that contribute to the uniqueness, health and diversity of
15 ecosystems in the west; and

16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the appropriate legislative
17 committee be requested to recommend funding options for a
18 fiscal year 2005 species survey of the black-tailed prairie
19 dog; and

20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
21 transmitted to members of the black-tailed prairie dog working
22 group and members of the New Mexico congressional delegation.