

A MEMORIAL

SUPPORTING THE IDEA THAT EVERY NEW MEXICO CHILD SHOULD HAVE AMPLE OUTDOOR OPPORTUNITIES USING EXISTING RESOURCES.

WHEREAS, New Mexico is a state rich in diverse natural resources and wildlife as well as outstanding natural areas that provide residents with a wide variety of outdoor recreation opportunities; and

WHEREAS, a growing body of research and literature indicates that being in nature is increasingly important for children, especially for children raised in highly industrialized urban environments; and

WHEREAS, outdoor activity in natural environments has the potential to improve children's mental health and physical well-being or, in the words of one student, "we need to get more air and oxygen, which fuels our bodies and helps us think"; and

WHEREAS, an increase in outdoor school activities can increase student attendance, focus, enthusiasm for school and academic performance and reduce negative behaviors; and

WHEREAS, outdoor activities can reduce obesity and diabetes in New Mexico where one-third of our children are overweight and where diabetes rates jumped forty percent from 1990 through 2000; and

WHEREAS, teens and young adults have one of the highest

rates of unemployment and would benefit from volunteer and other job training opportunities in outdoor and natural resources fields; and

WHEREAS, taking care of natural resources and forming good stewardship habits at an early age are important aspects of learning to care for the world around us and to work for positive change; and

WHEREAS, the wonder and joy of discovery in nature is a fundamental childhood experience and promotes mental and physical health, academic achievement, future economic success, civic engagement and environmental literacy;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that it support the idea that every New Mexico child should have the opportunity to:

- A. play outside and explore freely;
- B. watch wildlife in the outdoors;
- C. wade in a river, creek, lake or pond;
- D. catch a fish and hunt for food;
- E. camp out under the stars;
- F. plant a seed and visit farms and ranches;
- G. hike a trail;
- H. explore public parks, open spaces, nature centers and wildlife sanctuaries;
- I. actively care for land, water and wildlife;

J. dig in the dirt and learn about the world from the ground up; and

K. use their imaginations to draw, dance, sing and play outdoors; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the children, youth and families department, the state parks division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department, the department of game and fish, the public education department, the state land office, the tourism department and the department of health be encouraged to develop and advertise outdoor programs for children, including opportunities on New Mexico state-owned lands, activities in and around schools such as outdoor gardening and increased physical education and outdoor and natural resource job and skills training; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the governor, the children, youth and families department, the state parks division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department, the department of game and fish, the public education department, the state land office, the tourism department and the department of health.