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Prescribed Burning Act passes Senate with bipartisan support

The bill now goes to Gov. Lujan Grisham for signature

Santa Fe, NM – Last night, the Prescribed Burning Act, an Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) priority bill, passed the New Mexico Senate with a 37 – 1 vote. The bill, sponsored by Representatives Matthew McQueen and Gail Armstrong and Senators Peter Wirth and Pat Woods, focuses on managing our forests for a changing climate and aims to prevent future catastrophic fires. Having previously passed the House, the bill now goes to Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham for signature.

“Passage of this bill highlights the importance of bringing everyone to the table to produce common-sense legislation that all New Mexicans can support,” said EMNRD Secretary Sarah Cottrell Propst. “I applaud State Forester Laura McCarthy for her expert coordination in getting this bill passed, our sponsors for their tireless work, and the many community members who voiced support for this bill.”

“Passage of the Prescribed Burning Act is a big win for New Mexico and will provide an important tool to manage rangelands and forests and respond to a changing climate,” said Representative Matthew McQueen. “It has been a great experience working with the diverse coalition of supporters throughout this process.”

“Healthy and resilient grasslands and watersheds will benefit New Mexicans for generations to come,” said Representative Gail Armstrong. “By taking action today we can ensure stronger forests tomorrow.”

“Senate passage of the Prescribed Burning Act on a 37 – 1 vote further highlights the bipartisan support this bill has garnered through the entire process,” said Senate Majority Leader Peter Wirth. “Ensuring our state agencies have the tools they need to manage our natural resources in the face of a changing climate is a top priority and I look forward to the governor signing this bill into law.”

“Having another forest management tool at our disposal will only improve our efforts to prepare for fire season,” said Senator Pat Woods. “I was honored to sponsor this bill that will support responsible management of our resources.”

Prescribed burns are an important tool in forest management, especially as the climate changes and fire season becomes longer and more intense. The Prescribed Burning Act clarifies liability for private landowners who conduct prescribed burns making insurance more available and

March 14, 2021

Page 2

affordable. This has resulted in increased prescribed burning in other states that have enacted similar legislation.

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