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Bill to Improve Dam Safety in New Mexico Now Heads to the Governor's Desk

(SANTA FE, New Mexico) - The New Mexico Senate passed a bill that would improve dam safety in the state, which is now on its way to the Governor's Office for signing.

House Bill 63, sponsored by Rep. Larry Larranaga (R-Bernalillo), passed through the Senate by a vote of 30 to 1 over the weekend after it cleared the House of Representatives by a unanimous vote.

This bill requires the State Engineer's review and approval for the construction and operation of dams in New Mexico. It would increase the size standard by which dams are excluded for state rules and regulations, would remove the exemption for erosion control structures (because it is no longer needed), would provide that applicants of flood control dams that drain in 96 hours do not need to file an application for an appropriation of water, and recognizes the State Engineer's authority to determine height, storage and storage duration time.

Governor Richardson has three days after the legislation is passed to sign the bill into law.

"I would like to express my gratitude to all those in industry and government who helped make this bill a true collaborative effort for the benefit of all," said State Engineer John D'Antonio.

The Office of the State Engineer is charged with administering the state's water resources. The State Engineer has power over the supervision, measurement, appropriation and distribution of all surface and groundwater in New Mexico, including streams and rivers that cross state boundaries. The State Engineer is also Secretary of the Interstate Stream Commission.

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