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Summer Recreational Opportunities Are Promising Based on Winter Snowpack and Runoff

(ALBUQUERQUE, New Mexico) — As a result of average winter snowpack and spring runoff, reservoir levels statewide are projected to be good for recreational opportunities in New Mexico for Memorial Day and the Fourth of July.

A joint news conference was held today in Albuquerque with state officials attending including: State Engineer John D'Antonio, Secretary of Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Joanna Prukop, Secretary of Tourism Michael Cerletti, State Parks Division Director David Simon, and New Mexico State Forester Arthur "Butch" Blazer.

"If the state receives additional spring rains, it may open the door for an extended recreational season through Labor Day," said State Engineer John D'Antonio. "At this point, it is too early to tell whether additional rain may be a factor in bringing that about. I do want to emphasize that it will take at least a couple of more years of average or above average snowpack before reservoirs are returned to pre-drought levels."

"Drought in the Southwest is a long-term phenomenon, so we're always concerned about wildfires and low lake levels," said Joanna Prukop, Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department. "But, we had decent snowfall this winter, and we're cautiously optimistic that we'll have a good summer for outdoor recreation statewide."

Abiqui, El Vado and Cochiti reservoirs are projected to be at least 100 percent of capacity by Memorial Day Weekend. In fact, based on basin reservoir projections, most basin reservoirs are expected to surpass 2006 numbers and even 2005 capacity levels – including Heron, El Vado, Abiquiu, Elephant Butte, Navajo, Ute and Brantley.

"State Park lakes are in excellent shape this season, and the revamped camping permit is the best camping value in the country," said State Parks Division Director David Simon.

(MORE)

State Parks recently revised its Annual Camping Permit (ACP) to provide a better value for visitors, especially during the busy summer season. The ACP is now good for a full year from month of purchase, and is one of the best camping values in the country.

In addition, visitors to State Parks will see many new features including a new patio at the Dam Site restaurant at Elephant Butte, several new comfort stations at various parks, and new interpretive exhibits at Sumner Lake State Park, among other improvements. State Parks provides unlimited educational, cultural and interpretive activities throughout the year. More information is available at www.nmparks.com.

“While we are optimistic New Mexico’s water recreational opportunities will remain a mainstay of our spring and summer seasons, remember that the Land of Enchantment is 22 million acres of prairies, deserts and forests, offering every recreational pursuit imaginable,” said Michael Cerletti, Secretary of the New Mexico Tourism Department. “Over the past three years, New Mexicans have welcomed 65 million domestic visitors, who have added more than \$13 billion to the state’s economy. This has been accomplished through partnerships - public and private - dedicated to overcoming challenges like higher prices at the pump and dry winter seasons, and working to expand tourism opportunities to every corner of the state.”

While New Mexicans and other visitors are enjoying the state’s natural resources, the New Mexico State Forestry Division would like them to remember to be safe when using campfire sites and open cooking areas. While early forecasts are calling for a less severe fire season than last year, danger still remains and all precautions should be taken, such as clearing the area of all debris and brush from around the campfire or outdoor grill.

“We’ve already seen numerous fires across the state on private and public land this year,” said New Mexico State Forester Arthur “Butch” Blazer. “I can’t urge strongly enough that vacationers in our state be sure of any restrictions or rules on the use of fire in the area they plan to visit. While drought conditions have eased in many areas, there is still a lot of dry fuel out there that could catch fire very easily.”

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 and oversees its staff.

The Interstate Stream Commission is charged with separate duties including protecting New Mexico’s right to water under eight interstate stream compacts, ensuring the state complies with each of those compacts, as well as water planning.

New Mexico State Parks’ mission is to protect and enhance natural resources, provide recreational facilities and opportunities, and promote public safety and education to benefit and enrich the lives of our visitors.

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