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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 in our northern and Colorado's San Juan mountains, and the predicted average runoff from those regions, reservoir levels are projected to be good in much of New Mexico for the Memorial Day and Independence Day holidays.

A joint news conference scheduled for today in Albuquerque was cancelled due to treacherous winter driving conditions for state officials scheduled to attend including: Interstate Stream Commission Director Estevan López, Deputy Secretary of Tourism Jennifer Hoffman, State Parks Division Director David Simon, and Deputy State Forester Tony Delfin.

"Elephant Butte, Navajo, Heron, El Vado, Abiquiu, Caballo, and Ute Reservoirs are anticipated to hold water volumes similar to if not higher than last year," said Interstate Stream Commission Director Estevan López. "Rafting on the Rio Grande and Rio Chama should be good into early June, if not longer. Water recreation in those areas should be great for much of the summer. At the same time, moderate drought conditions are developing in the southern and far eastern parts of New Mexico and more rain is needed to bring the area reservoir levels up."

A La Nina weather pattern began affecting New Mexico in January and is expected to continue doing so into April or May. In some parts of New Mexico, little or no precipitation has occurred since September, especially as one heads south. The state received significant snowfall in the west central and northern mountains in December 2008. If we experience near average precipitation from now through May, snowmelt runoff flows across the state will be between 50% and 100% of the 30-year average. With the exception of Abiquiu Reservoir, no flood control operations are anticipated. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers may make safe channel capacity releases from Abiquiu Reservoir for several weeks in late April or early May. Finally, storage restrictions of the Rio Grande Compact will not be an issue this Spring meaning that normal storage operations will occur at El Vado and Nichols and McClure reservoirs during the snowmelt runoff.

**(MORE)**

New Mexico State Parks are the perfect 'staycation' destination in 2009," said State Parks Division Director David Simon. "Most State Park lakes will be in excellent shape, but lake recreation is just a part of the picture. State parks offer so much to discover and are the best family recreation value in New Mexico. "New Mexico State Parks is a vibrant system of 35 parks serving more than 4 million people each year. In 2009, State Parks will offer a growing program of special events (including an expanded 'Reach for the Stars' astronomy program as part of the International Year of Astronomy) and many new visitor facility improvements, including:

- the newly-opened Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park visitor complex,
  - a new visitor center at Eagle Nest Lake State Park slated to open this fall,
  - comfort station improvements at Percha Dam State Park,
  - a new astronomy observatory at Heron Lake State Park, and
  - a completely redesigned main entrance at Elephant Butte Lake State Park – to name just a few.
- State Parks is leading the state in development and construction of energy-efficient, "green" building techniques throughout the park system. More information is available at [www.nmparks.com](http://www.nmparks.com).

"While we are optimistic New Mexico's water recreational opportunities will remain a mainstay of our spring and summer seasons," said Jennifer Hoffman, Deputy Secretary of the New Mexico Tourism Department, "we must also remember that the Land of Enchantment is 22 million acres of prairies, plains and forests, offering every recreational pursuit imaginable. Inspired moments are inevitable in New Mexico, whether on a morning hike, the back nine or deep in Carlsbad Caverns. The horizons fill with possibilities. New Mexicans annually welcome nearly 12 million domestic visitors, who contribute more than \$5 billion to the state's economy. This is 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. Because high fire danger exists in many parts of the state, all precautions should be taken when it comes to things like pulling over to the side of the road, preparing campfire or outdoor grill areas and smoking in areas with thick vegetation.

"New Mexicans are culturally and economically tied to the land and while the recreational opportunities are unlimited here, we have a responsibility to protect our natural resources," said New Mexico State Forester Butch Blazer. "Because our fire danger in many areas is high right now, I strongly urge all state residents and visitors to be sure to check if any fire restrictions exist in the area they plan to visit."

*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 nine-member Interstate Stream Commission has broad powers to investigate, protect, conserve and develop New Mexico's water including both interstate and intrastate stream systems. It ensures the state meets its obligations under eight interstate stream compacts. The Commission was also given water planning responsibilities for the state.*

*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.*