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Outlook Is Good for the 2010 Recreation and Irrigation Season

(ALBUQUERQUE, New Mexico) – The State of New Mexico has relinquished 80,000 acre-feet of accrued Rio Grande Compact credit water in Elephant Butte Reservoir to increase the supply of surface water.

This relinquishment will not affect lake levels at Elephant Butte Reservoir or Caballo Reservoir for the 2010 recreational season. With or without relinquishment if average snowmelt runoff is received this year there will be little or no difference in Elephant Butte water levels for Memorial Day, Independence Day and Labor Day holidays.

“With or without relinquishment, if runoff projections hold, it should be a great year at the Butte—as good or better than last year,” said New Mexico State Park Director Dave Simon.

“This relinquishment is occurring at a time when we have a good snowpack in the northern mountains and the upstream reservoirs are nearly full,” said State Engineer John D’Antonio, who is also the Rio Grande Compact Commissioner for New Mexico. “Therefore most of the runoff that occurs will reach Elephant Butte.”

Snowpack levels in the northern portion of the Rio Grande basin are currently between 85-125 percent of average and the most recent projections by the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service indicate that the runoff should be about average.

Elephant Butte Lake State Park has a full roster of events this summer to add to the water fun, including bird walks, a boat parade, bass fishing tournaments, drag boat races, the Elephant Man Triathlon, and July Fourth fireworks on the lake. The “Butte” is bracing for 75,000 – 100,000 celebrants for the Memorial Day weekend to kick off the summer and water levels are expected to reach into the Narrows for much of the summer.

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"Relinquishing the water downstream will improve water supply below Elephant Butte Dam, and will also allow for more storage in upstream reservoirs in future drought years," said Interstate Stream Commission Director Estevan López.

If the public would like further information about this relinquishment a member of the Interstate Stream Commission staff will be at the Bureau of Reclamation's Annual Operating Plan Public Meeting. This meeting will be held in conjunction with the monthly meeting of the Sierra County Historical Society at 6:30 pm on **Tuesday, May 20** at **Geronimo Springs Museum**. The address is **211 Main Street in T or C**. The Interstate Stream Commission staff will give a short presentation and be available for questions.

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 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.

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