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NEWS RELEASE

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Celebrate World Wetlands Day February 6 at Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park

MESILLA, N.M. – Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park will host *Wetlands, Biodiversity and Climate Change* from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. February 6 in recognition of World Wetlands Day. Sponsored by the New Mexico State Parks Foundation and the Friends of Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park, the day-long event includes bird tours, live raptors, children's activities and programs by area experts about wetlands, jaguars, insects and reptiles.

"We want to showcase wetland species, ecosystems and the issues facing their survival," said Acting Park Manager Alex Mares.

The keynote speaker is Kevin Bixby, director of the Southwest Environmental Center, a Las Cruces organization that spearheaded the drive to make Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park a reality. Programs and activities will focus on the impacts of climate change on wetland ecosystems and the role of wetlands in climate change, mitigation and adaptation.

World Wetlands Day marks the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on February 2, 1971 with programs and events that raise awareness about wetland values and benefits. Wetlands help control flooding, recharge groundwater, capture greenhouse gases, reduce flooding, and improve water quality and critical wildlife habitat.

Established in 2005, Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park encompasses 300 acres along the west side of the Rio Grande. The park is a refuge for wildlife and a haven for people seeking the quiet enjoyment of nature. The park's nucleus is the 52-acre parcel called the Old Refuge, which includes the Picacho Wetlands — originally purchased in 1933 as part of an 85-acre tract by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. The park includes 305 acres of riverside, wetlands, ponds and bosque replanting.

Numerous organizations will offer education and information, including the Mesilla Valley Audubon Society, Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue, Bureau of Land Management, Mayfield High School Future Farmers of America (FFA), New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, Las Cruces Natural History Museum, New Mexico State University Wildlife Society, and the Arthropod Museum.

A schedule of events is as follows:

8:00 a.m. – *Bird Tours*

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9:00 a.m. – *Bird Program* with ornithologist Brian Locke

10:00 a.m. – Keynote speaker Kevin Bixby, Southwest Environmental Center director

11:00 a.m. – *Jaguars* with Kevin Hansen, State Parks interpretive ranger

1:00 p.m. – *Archeology of the Jornada Mogollon* with Deb Dennis, executive director of Human Systems Research, Inc.

2:00 p.m. – *Insects* with David Richman, curator of the Arthropod Museum at New Mexico State University

3:00 p.m. Hawks Aloft live raptor presentation

Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park is located 1.9 miles west of the Town of Mesilla on Calle del Norte (N.M. 359). For more information, call the park at 575-523-4398 or visit www.nmparks.com.

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The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department provides resource protection and renewable energy resource development services to the public and other state agencies.

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