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**New Mexico State Parks**



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## **NEWS RELEASE**

# **NM State Parks Requests Public Comments on Shiprock State Park Feasibility Study**

SHIPROCK, N.M. – New Mexico State Parks invites public comment on the draft feasibility study for the proposed Shiprock (Tse bit' a'i) State Park. Shiprock is a statewide and nationally-significant site that deserves and needs additional protection and management. House Joint Memorial 11, passed by the Legislature in 2008, requested State Parks to complete a feasibility study to consider the designation of the Shiprock pinnacle as a state park.

"It's no surprise to Navajo people that Shiprock is a tremendously significant resource," said State Parks Director David Simon. "It meets all the criteria to be designated as a state park. The pinnacle is an extremely important cultural site and is very much worthy of our respect and protection. There are numerous and complex issues to overcome, however, if State Parks is to ever partner with the Navajo Nation on this project—which is a choice that has not been made and which depends on the decisions and commitments of the administration, the Legislature, and the Navajo people."

"If we made Shiprock into a park, we would have a sense of belonging, of ownership, of business development," said Rep. Ray Begaye, D-Shiprock, who sponsored House Joint Memorial 11. "Without a strong plan, this area will deteriorate."

The feasibility study concludes that the Shiprock site does meet the criteria as a State Park laid out in state law. Those criteria are: (1) the park should contain a diversity of resources of scientific, aesthetic, geologic, natural or historic value; (2) the park should provide recreation opportunities to assure visitation; and (3) the park is required to conform to the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, or SCORP.

The draft study lays out four alternatives: Alternative 1 is for no action; Alternatives 2 and 2a would establish Navajo Nation Tribal Park with varying degrees of design, development and possibly management assistance from State Parks; Alternative 3 would establish a New Mexico State Park with all operational roles and responsibilities.

In Alternative 1, Navajo Nation and Shiprock Chapter may pursue their own strategies, such as establishing a Navajo Nation Tribal Park with various resource protection measures and visitor facility options. State Parks could offer limited assistance and advice.

In Alternative 2, Navajo Nation would establish a tribal park to set a legal framework for operation and management. State Parks could provide temporary staffing for planning, design services, construction management and funding for facility development, subject to appropriation by the Legislature. Under Alternative 2a, Parks also might provide staff for educational programming and park maintenance stationed at Shiprock.

In Alternative 3, State Parks would assume all operational roles and responsibilities. Legislative authorization and a formal agreement between State Parks and Navajo Nation in the form of a contract, joint powers agreement and/or lease would be required. The legal complexities of trying to overlay standard state park management on Navajo Nation land make this alternative the most challenging.

The feasibility study will be available for public review and comment for at least 60 days. The study is available at [www.nmparks.com](http://www.nmparks.com) or the State Parks Division main office, located at 1220 S. St. Francis Drive, Santa Fe; or by calling 505-476-3355.

Copies also are available at the Shiprock Chapter House (U.S. 64, just east of Hwy 491, Shiprock); Red Valley Chapter House (Route 63 and 13, Red Valley); Gadiiahi/To'kai Chapter House (Route 57 north of U.S.64, Cudei); Beclabito Chapter House (U.S.64, Beclabito); Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Office (Building 36A, Highway 264 at Route 12, Window Rock); Shiprock Library (U.S.491, across from the Medical Center, Shiprock) Farmington Library (2101 Farmington Ave., Farmington); and New Mexico State Parks Regional Office (1002 Rio Brazos, Aztec.

Public comments on the study will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. on Nov.1, 2008. All comments must be submitted by mail, fax, or e-mail to: New Mexico State Parks, P.O. Box 1147, Santa Fe, NM 87504-1147; Fax: (505) 476-3361; E-mail: [nmparks@state.nm.us](mailto:nmparks@state.nm.us).

Public documents can be provided in various accessible formats. Individuals requiring additional assistance may also contact New Mexico voice relay at 800- 659-1779 or TTD 800- 659-8331.

The proposed Shiprock State Park is one of many projects during New Mexico State Parks 75th Diamond Anniversary celebration in 2008. Over 75 years, State Parks has evolved from a federal New Deal initiative in 1933 to a vibrant system of 34 parks serving over 4 million people annually. New Mexico State Parks celebrates its 75th Diamond Anniversary throughout 2008 with a 3-carat diamond bracelet giveaway, special events, the Geocaching Challenge, Outdoor Classroom initiatives and more. For more information, call 888-NMPARKS or visit [www.nmparks.com](http://www.nmparks.com).

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