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NEWS RELEASE

Visitor Center at Vietnam Veterans Memorial State Park to Close June 15 for Major Renovations

Park Grounds and Chapel Remain Open; Special Events Continue

ANGEL FIRE, N.M. – The Visitor Center at Vietnam Veterans Memorial State Park will close to the public beginning June 15 for an \$855,000 renovation and expansion project. All other facilities at the park will remain open during the construction project, including the grounds and chapel. Park staff will continue to provide guided tours at 10 a.m. on Saturdays and Sundays throughout the summer as well as special events such as the July 4 flag retirement, memorial brick installation and Veterans Day ceremonies in November.

“We regret having to close the Visitor Center temporarily,” said Park Manager Tom Turnbull. “But in nine months, we are going to have a significantly upgraded facility that will mean dramatic improvements to the visitor experience.”

This project is part of Phase II renovations to the Memorial to upgrade the parks’ facilities and educational exhibits to national standards. Phase I improvements to the Chapel and grounds were completed in May 2008. Phase II improvements to the Visitor Center will include reconfigured interior space to accommodate new interpretive exhibits, a new veterans’ research room, a conference room, a curation and storage space for the memorial’s artifacts, and a new gift shop. The interpretive exhibits, originally installed in the 1980s, are showing signs of severe wear and are lacking major elements that would fully relate the history of the Vietnam War. An interpretive master plan was developed for the park with the extensive input of veterans groups and other key stakeholders in the Memorial. The new exhibits will be museum-quality and will help the park achieve its goal of promoting remembrance, healing, honor and education.

In addition, park staff offices will be improved and moved closer to the entrance and three new rooms and a garage space also will be added. Other improvements to the building will include maintenance for the floors, leak repair and new plumbing fixtures. New windows and doors will be installed in the front entrance to reduce energy requirements for heating the facility in the winter.

During the construction period, which is expected to last from July until May 2010, the Memorial’s staff will be available by phone at 575-377-1594 or in-person at Eagle Nest Lake Park, located 10 miles north on U.S. 64. Staff also will be on-site periodically at the Memorial. Tours, special events and holiday celebrations will continue at the Memorial as usual. The David Westphall Veterans Foundation and gift shop will be housed on site at the Memorial in temporary facilities near the Visitor Center. A “grand re-opening” celebration is tentatively planned for Memorial Day 2010.

Vietnam Veterans Memorial was established in 1968 and became New Mexico’s 33rd state park in 2005. The

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site is the only state park in the United States dedicated solely as a Vietnam Veterans Memorial. For more information, call 1-888-NMPARKS or visit www.nmparks.com.

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