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News Release

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State Park Officials Remind Hunters, Anglers of Boating Safety During Fall Season

Santa Fe, NM – Autumn is welcomed in New Mexico with warm days followed by chilly nights—it is Mother Nature’s way of coloring our world and preparing the natural world for winter. Waterfowl are migrating, elk are bugling, and the salmon are spawning! The New Mexico State Parks Division wants to remind hunters and anglers to keep safety as their number one priority. To have a safe, enjoyable, hunting or fishing trip this fall, state park officials recommend following these simple tips:

- ✓ Wear your lifejacket! Once you’re in the water it’s too late! Lifejackets save lives!
- ✓ Never boat under the influence of drugs or alcohol--impairment on the water is deadly!
- ✓ Avoid placing passengers in danger by overloading your boat--refer to your vessel’s capacity plate.
- ✓ Minimize your movement in the vessel. Capsizing, sinking or falling overboard for small boats accounts for more than 70 percent of all boating fatalities.
- ✓ Know the weather forecast. Weather conditions can change rapidly and defeat your operator skills and vessel’s capabilities!
- ✓ Tell someone where you are going, when you plan to return and update them on your plan as it changes; or file a float plan at the local marina or park office.
- ✓ Make sure you have a way to call for assistance--marine radios and cell phones are good options.
- ✓ In the event of an emergency, if possible, try and stay with your vessel because rescuers will look for you there first.

“Regardless of the activity, a boater’s intention is never to end up in the water,” stated Toby Velasquez, Deputy Director for the New Mexico State Parks Division. “In New Mexico, conditions change quickly and accidents happen unexpectedly. More hunters and anglers are killed each year by drowning than by gunshot wounds in the field.”

Typically, hunters use semi-V hulled, flat bottom boats, canoes or kayaks which tend to be less stable and have a higher probability for capsizing. Hunters and anglers need to be aware of their boat’s limitations and their ability as operators when heading out to hunt fish or just enjoy a great autumn day out on the lake. “Late season hunters and anglers should exercise an extra degree of care when air and water temperatures are colder,” Velasquez added. “Boaters could find themselves fighting to survive cold water immersion with sudden movement on a boat overloaded with extra gear and hunting partners.”

The New Mexico State Parks Division offers FREE boating safety classes around the state and online throughout the year. State law requires that you wear a lifejacket when on a canoe, kayak, or raft and that all children 12 years old and younger wear a lifejacket while on the deck of a moving vessel. Experience Adventure at YOUR state parks; for more information, call 888-NMPARKS or visit nmparks.com.

October 28, 2015
Page 2

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