

State of New Mexico
Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department

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News Release

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New Mexico State Parks Division Recognizes Outstanding Employees

Santa Fe, NM – New Mexico State Parks honored staff, volunteers and partners during its annual awards ceremony on November 4, 2015 in Santa Fe, New Mexico. A total of 21 awards were given and five retirees honored.

“State Parks has hard working, ethical and dedicated employees and volunteers who excel every day to provide excellent customer service within our 35 state parks. The employees recognized at the awards ceremony are nominated by their supervisors and peers and they reflect that dedication,” said Director Christy Tafoya. “Each and every employee is worthy of this special recognition and I am extremely proud to be a part of this special awards program.”

The Governor's Award, State Parks' most prestigious award, recognizes an employee who performs duties in a superior manner and exemplifies, in attitude and action, those traits most desired in the Division. The 2015 recipient was Wilhemina Martin, Administrator, Northeast Region.



2015 Governor's Award Recipient: Lieutenant Governor John Sanchez presents Governor's Award to Wilhemina Martin, Northeast Administrator.

The Secretary's Award recognizes a permanent employee who performs duties in a superior manner and exemplifies those traits most desired in maintaining the administrative functions of a park and recreation

system. The 2015 Secretary Awards were presented to Pat Walsh, Sugarite Canyon State Park and Lauren Aguilar, Graphic Designer, Santa Fe Office. Both women have excelled in their positions and have made significant contributions to the Department; said Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department Cabinet Secretary David Martin.



2015 Secretary's Award Recipient, Pat Walsh, Sugarite Canyon State Park Interpretive Ranger photographed with Energy, Minerals & Natural Resources Department Cabinet Secretary, David Martin



2015 Secretary's Award Recipient, Lauren Aguilar, Graphic Designer photographed with Energy, Minerals & Natural Resources Department Cabinet Secretary, David Martin

The Director's Award recognizes employees at any job level who set and meet high standards and who have sustained a high level of performance when doing the job. Four awards were presented to the following: Antonio Lugones from Navajo Lake State Park, Nick DiMeglio, Manzano Mountains State Park, Richard Utton, Navajo Lake State Park and Wendy Justice from Oliver Lee Memorial State Park.



2015 Director's Award Recipient: Antonio Lugones, Navajo Lake State Park photographed with NM State Parks Director, Christy Tafoya at Awards Banquet

The Exemplary Park Award is the annual recognition of one park and its staff who have contributed significantly to the department's goals and objectives. Any park whose staff performs its duties in a superior manner and exemplifies those traits most desired in Division employees and sustains this high level of performance throughout the year is eligible for this award. The nominees this year included: Bluewater Lake State Park, Cimarron Canyon State Park, Navajo Lake State Park and Oasis State Park. The 2015 Exemplary Park Award was presented to Navajo Lake State Park.

The Customer Service Award recognizes employees who exemplify the principals of customer service towards fellow employees, park visitors and general public. This year, three dedicated employees and park staffs were honored. Brandy Johnston from the Southeast Region Office, Cimarron Canyon and Eagle Nest Staff Daniel Gurule, Stephen Clark, James Lance, Cris Coca, Chris Carrillo, Mark Sullivan, Roy Sinclair, and Cimarron volunteers, and Conchas Lake Park Staff- Lorna Ford, Danny Byler, Lloyd Maestas, and Bruce Ford.

The Ranger of the Year award is the annual recognition of a certified and commissioned park officer in good standing, at any job level, who performs duties in a superior manner and exemplifies, in attitude and action, those traits most desired in a Division officer. That honor went to Ranger Robert Smith from Heron Lake State Park.



2015 Ranger of the Year Award Recipient: Robert Smith, Park Ranger, Heron Lake State Park photographed with NM State parks Deputy Director, Toby Velasquez at the Awards Banquet

Park staff work hard to keep the public safe and to save lives. Life-Saving Awards are the annual recognition of any employee, permanent or temporary, who has directly contributed to saving or attempting to save a life. A huge part of our mission is promoting public safety within our parks.

The following employees received the Life Saving Award: Bluewater Lake State Park: Andrew Armendariz, Park Superintendent, Mark Brown, Park Ranger Supervisor, and Jackie Blanc, volunteer. Bottomless Lakes State Park: Blake Ingram, Park Ranger, Terry Edwards, Plant Operations Specialist, Hannah Manemann, Lifeguard, Kristie Jones, Lifeguard, Stephen Watters, Seasonal, Jorge Chavez, Seasonal Park Tech, Eddie South, Volunteer Camp Host and Roy Lyons, Volunteer Camp Host. Manzano Mountains State Park: Derek Drew and Mark Dimeglio. Villanueva State Park: Ramon Gallegos, Park Manager and Gilbert Baca, volunteer. From Elephant Butte Lake State Park: Greg Claesson, Park Ranger, Byron Wilson, Park Ranger and Jake Morales, Park Ranger. Finally, Eric Ytuarte, Park Ranger and Kelly Richerson, Park Superintendent from Hyde Memorial State Park were also presented with the Life-Saving Award.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of NM State Parks and this year's awardees were: Luis Lopez from Vietnam Veterans Memorial State Park, Jennifer Hermann from Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park, Sandra Cos and from Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Park, Mike and Melinda Chapman from Navajo Lake State Park, and Lynda and Charles Perry from Navajo Lake-Cottonwood.

State Parks also recognizes partners. Our Partnership Award recognizes a citizen or organization that made a positive and significant contribution to the Division. In 2015, the nominees were: Amateur Astronomers Group from Oliver Lee Memorial State Park, the NMSU Agricultural Experiment Station, Friends of Ute Lake State Park, Friends of Eagle Nest Lake and Cimarron Canyon State Parks. The award went to Amateur Astronomers Group from Oliver Lee Memorial State Park. The Amateur Astronomers Group (AAG) is a local group of astronomers who have been providing programming at Oliver Lee Memorial State Park since 2006. A core group of 8 astronomers participate regularly and group interprets various astronomical topics each month. The NMSU Agricultural Experiment Station program was also recognized during the awards ceremony.

As the evening program continued, NM State Parks paid a special tribute to Park Ranger Charles Wood from Oliver Lee Memorial State Park and Hazel Bluhm, beloved park volunteer, who both passed away this year. NM State Parks honored their memory by presenting their family a Memorial Plaque.

Retirees from State Parks in 2015 were: Paul Fishell - 5 years, Marshall Garcia – 12 year, Rolf Hechler – 24 years, Stephen Coca – 25 years and former State Parks Director, Tommy Mutz- 30 years of service. Tommy Mutz attended the ceremony and both he and his family were recognized for their service to NM State Parks.

For more information about State Parks and park programs call 505-476-3381, 877-NMPARKS 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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