

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 Hosts Fall Training and Employee Recognition Awards Ceremony

Santa Fe, NM – *The Heart of a Ranger* was the theme at the 2019 Fall Conference and Employee Recognition Program for New Mexico State Parks. On November 7th, State Parks proudly honored staff, volunteers and partners during its annual awards ceremony held at Rio Grande Nature Center State Park in Albuquerque. A total of 18 awards were given and five retirees honored.

“State Parks has so many exceptional employees, and we were happy to recognize the outstanding achievements of our staff,” said Christy Tafoya, State Parks Director. She added, “The employees recognized at the awards ceremony are nominated by their supervisors and peers and reflect the dedication of our staff to service.”

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 2019 recipient was Joshua Herron, Park Manager, Fenton Lake State Park.

The Secretary’s Award recognizes a full-time 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 2019 Secretary’s Award recipient was Pat Walsh, Interpretive Ranger from the Northeast Region.

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. The 2019 Director’s Award was presented to Tony Godfrey with Sugarite Canyon State Park.

The Exemplary Park Award is the annual recognition of one park and its staff who have contributed significantly to the Division’s goals and objectives. Any park whose staff performs its duties in a superior manner and exemplifies those traits most desired in the Division and sustains this high level of performance throughout the year is eligible for this award. The 2019 Exemplary Park Award was presented to Bluewater Lake State Park.

The Customer Service Award recognizes employees who exemplify the principles of customer service towards fellow employees, park visitors and the public. This year, three dedicated employees were honored: LeeAnn Romero, Santa Fe Office; Teresa Fresquez, Southwest Region Office; and Shanna Parsons, Northwest Region office.

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 Caleb Bellah from Navajo Lake State Park.

Park staff work hard to keep the public safe – this sometimes means conducting life-saving actions. Life-Saving Awards are the annual recognition of any employee, full-time or temporary, who has directly contributed to saving or attempting to save a life.

The following employees received the Life Saving Award: Saul Baquera, Michael Brazel, Rick Martin, David Ford, Gary Henry, Caleb Bellah, Chris Smith, BJ Fetrow, Richard Utton, Bronti Bellah, Chris Bolen, Kevin Wilcox, and Ken Abalos.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of State Parks and this year's awardees were David Beasley, Cimarron Canyon State Park; Leroy Montoya, Clayton Lake State Park; and Steve and Shirley Schou from Sugarite Canyon State Park.

State Parks also recognizes partners. Our Partnership Award recognizes a citizen or organization that made a positive and significant contribution to the Division. In 2019, the recipient was LOBOLIFE, Marketing Students from the University of New Mexico who visited several parks and helped promote State Parks through social media posts.

State Parks also presented the Emeritus Pass to Alfred Kline with Eagle Nest Lake State Park for logging over 5,000 volunteer hours.

State Parks was also honored to recognize retirees Daniel Acosta, John Read, Stephen Folkes, Anthony Marquez, and Mark Sullivan for their years of dedicated service to the Division. For more information about State Parks and park programs 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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