

State of New Mexico
Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department

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New Mexico State Parks Celebrates Excellence *39 Awardees Honored*

ALBUQUERQUE, NM – The New Mexico State Parks Division honored 39 staff and volunteers at their Annual Fall Training on October 10th in Albuquerque. Awards celebrated individual achievement, team achievement, customer service, and years of service.

“New Mexico State Parks values the hard work and dedication of employees and volunteers,” said State Park Director, Tommy Mutz. “Our staff performs amazingly well, with limited resources and huge responsibilities.”

The top honor is the Governor’s Award, which was received by Manager Kelly Richerson of Bluewater Lake State Park. With limited staff and a huge influx of visitors due to the popularity of tiger muskie fishing, Kelly Richerson streamlined operations, worked well with volunteers and provided great customer service. His park saw a huge increase in visitation and revenue.

The second highest honor is the Secretary’s Award, which was given to Sumner Lake Park Superintendent, Raymond Drake. This employee was also at a very short-staffed park and worked long hours keeping visitors safe, moving boat docks to address changing water levels. He also helped create a new Friends Group at his park.

Director’s Awards recognize employees who set and meet high standards and high performance levels in job responsibilities. This year, five Directors Awards were given to: Christopher Vigil, Manager, Coyote Creek State Park; Paul Lucero, Park Technician, Sumner Lake State Park; Mike McFadden, Statewide Construction Supervisor; Danny Byler, Park Technician, Conchas Lake State Park; and Christy Tafoya, Acting Field Support Bureau Chief, Santa Fe Office.

The Exemplary Park Award recognizes one park and its staff that have contributed to State Park goals and objectives. The 2012 awardee was Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Park for maintaining high standards and quality services to ensure accreditation by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. This park was a leader in providing the public with educational programming and logged over 10,000 hours of volunteer service hours.

Customer Service Awards were given to three employees, including: Andrew Archuleta, Park Technician, Coyote Creek; Jacque Wiebe, Region 1 Administrator; and Ranger Manny Sanchez, Elephant Butte Lake State Park.

The prestigious Ranger of the Year went to Ranger Robert Gonzales of Elephant Butte Lake State Park. Public safety was the key goal of Ranger Gonzales, who handled many difficult and dangerous situations calmly and deftly.

At times, State Park staff are called upon to save lives, and two groups were recognized for 2012. Ute Lake State Park staff were honored for their role in saving a victim from a boat accident, including: Rodney Paris, Rick Martin, Rex Stall, Juan Maestas and Danelle Earle. State Park First Aid Instructors, Paul Lisko, Daniel Gurule, Byron Wilson, Robert Apodaca and Ramon Lopez, were also recognized.

Volunteers provide invaluable service to State Parks. Awardees for 2012 were: Don and Cathy Odegard for their work at Bluewater Lake State Park; Hugh and Joan Graves at Conchas Lake State Park; and Ernie Lovato and Martha Pirillo for assistance at Percha Dam State Park.

Spouse's awards were given to Debbie Fishell from Conchas Lake State Park and Kathy Rector from El Vado Lake State Park.

Partners are key to the success of State Parks. Honored in 2012 were the Friends of Oasis State Park and Brent Tanzy, Resource Management Specialist from the Elephant Butte Field Division of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

Finally, a total of six retirees were honored. Years of service in five year increments were acknowledged and a total of 27 individuals received service pins.



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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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