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NEWS RELEASE

***Flying Thunder and Run for the Wall* Held May 16 at Vietnam Veterans Memorial State Park**

ANGEL FIRE, N.M. – The rumble of 500 motorcycles reverberated in Taos Canyon May 16 as the 10th Annual *Run for the Wall* roared into the Moreno Valley and Vietnam Veterans Memorial State Park. This year for the first time in the history of the Run, four restored, fully operational and combat-certified Vietnam-era helicopters – three UH-1 “Hueys” and an OH-58 Kiowa –echoed that roar as *Flying Thunder* escorted the motorcycle cavalcade. The helicopters were from Wings and Rotors Air Museum in Murrieta, Calif.

“We are honored to host the riders and pilots of *Run for the Wall* and *Flying Thunder*,” said Park Manager Tom Turnbull. “We are united in our mission to offer healing and to never forget those who served our country in Vietnam and other wars.”

Flying Thunder and *Run for the Wall* were on a stopover during their mission ride to the Vietnam Veterans National Memorial in Washington, D.C., making layovers along the way at other Veterans’ memorial sites. The cavalcade arrived at Vietnam Veterans Memorial State Park at 4:00 p.m. May 16, where the helicopters were available for the public to view up close after landing. They have been restored to their original appearance, including the paint jobs of the units they served in while on duty in Vietnam.

Run for the Wall began in 1989 by two Vietnam veterans to call attention to the thousands of men and women still unaccounted for from all of our wars, including Prisoners of War, Missing in Action and Killed in Action. Every Memorial Day Weekend since 1989, motorcycle riders from all corners of the country have converged on Washington, D.C. at the Vietnam Veterans National Memorial, better known as The Wall. The motorcycle trip takes ten days from the Los Angeles area to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C., where the Run officially ends on Sunday evening before Memorial Day.

Vietnam Veterans Memorial State Park also honors American service men and women with events scheduled throughout Memorial Day weekend, culminating with a Flag March and Memorial Day Ceremony May 26 featuring special speakers, music, flag and medal presentations and an F-16 flyover.

Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire was established in 1968 by Victor and Jeanne Westphall to honor their son, Lt. David Westphall, who was killed in Vietnam in May 1968. The Memorial was formally transferred to New Mexico State Parks in 2005 and is the only state park in the United States dedicated solely as a Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The Memorial provides veterans, and those who honor them, a refuge in which to reflect and heal. The 6,000 square foot visitor center and museum houses exhibits, videos and memorabilia. Vietnam Veterans Memorial

State Park is located in Angel Fire, 30 miles east from Taos on U.S. 64. For more information, call 575-377-6900 or visit www.nmparks.com.

Run for the Wall/Flying Thunder is one of many special events held during New Mexico State Parks 75th Diamond Anniversary celebration in 2008. Over 75 years, State Parks has evolved from a federal New Deal initiative in 1933 to a vibrant system of 34 parks serving over 4 million people annually. New Mexico State Parks celebrates its 75th Diamond Anniversary throughout 2008 with a 3-carat diamond bracelet giveaway, special events, the Geocaching Challenge, Outdoor Classroom initiatives and more. For more information, call 888-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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