

# New Mexico State Parks

Presentation to the Economic and Rural Development and Policy Committee  
August 21, 2024

Toby Velasquez, Director, State Parks Division  
Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department



*Navajo Lake State Park*





*Elephant Butte Lake  
State Park*

NEW MEXICO'S STATEWIDE  
**COMPREHENSIVE OUTDOOR  
RECREATION PLAN**  
Strategic Plan for 2022-2026  
December 2021

**GET OUTSIDE,  
NEW MEXICO**  
Thinking for the Future  
of outdoor recreation in  
the state

Prepared by:  
**SITES**  
SOUTHWEST

Prepared for:  
**NEW MEXICO**  
Department of Game and Wildlife  
Land and Water Conservation Fund

- ✓ Complements and supports LWCF outdoor recreation efforts.
- ✓ Provides recommendations to guide outdoor recreation to achieve a common vision for outdoor resources in our state.
- ✓ Identifies economic contributions of outdoor recreation to our state.
- ✓ Is updated every five years to enable New Mexico to continue to receive federal funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund.
- ✓ Provides analysis and recommendations to inform federal, state, and local decision-making regarding outdoor recreation as it relates to:
  - **Economic Development**
  - Resource Protection
  - Outdoor Education
  - Access and Equity
  - New Mexico's unique regional contexts



## Outdoor Recreation Trends

- ✓ New Mexico is already a national leader in outdoor recreation participation and equity.
- ✓ New Mexico has abundant public land resources for a range of outdoor recreation activities.
- ✓ Outdoor recreation is an important part of the New Mexico economy and could contribute even more to jobs and incomes.
- ✓ While climate change threatens New Mexico's economy and natural resources, outdoor recreation can be an important tool to mitigate these impacts and transition to a carbon-neutral economy.
- ✓ Outdoor recreation can have important health benefits and contributes to overall quality of life for New Mexico residents.
- ✓ Outdoor recreation is important to New Mexicans and further improvement and development of facilities has strong public support.



*Cerrillos Hills  
State Park*

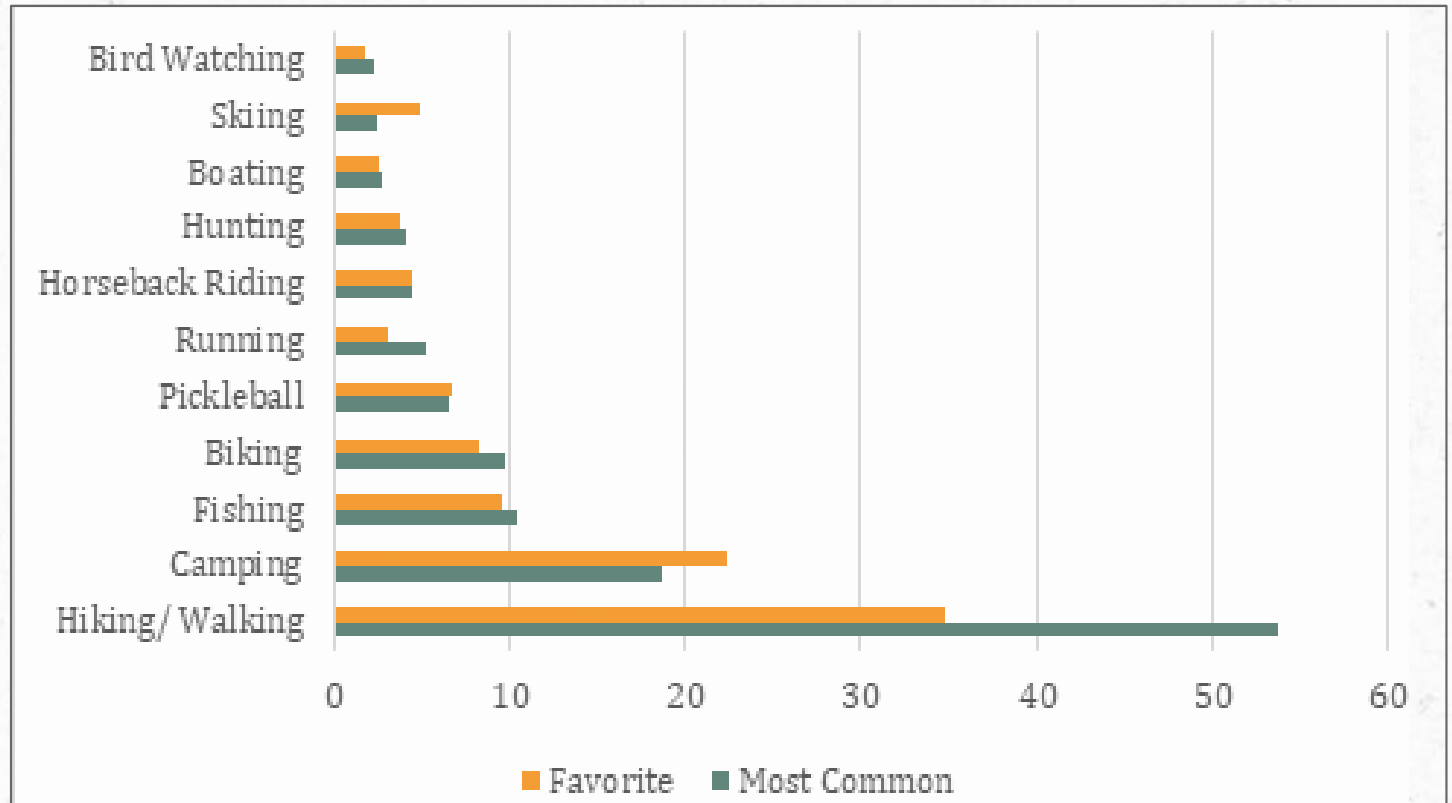
**Table 3.3. Annual visitation on federal and state lands in New Mexico**

Agency	Acreage	Visits in 2018	Approx. visitors per acre
Bureau of Land Management	13,485,894	3.3 million	0.24
US Forest Service	9,213,637	4.8 million	0.52
National Park Service	385,127	2.1 million	5.45
State Parks	98,118	5 million	50.95



*Pecos Canyon  
State Park*

**Figure 3.5. Common and favorite outdoor recreation activities in New Mexico**





## Economic Impact of Outdoor Recreation in New Mexico

- ✓ Outdoor recreation represents a growing portion of the state's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), but New Mexico's outdoor recreation economy still trails other nearby states like Colorado and Arizona.
- ✓ Outdoor recreation particularly supports rural economic development in areas with exceptional protected resources.
- ✓ Supporting services like shops, restaurants, and hotels are an important part of the outdoor recreation economy.
- ✓ Outdoor recreation events like bike races and festivals are often overlooked catalysts for economic development. New Mexico communities need improved promotion, connections between resources and communities, infrastructure, wayfinding, and support for local services to encourage economic development through outdoor recreation.

*Oasis State Park*



*Clayton Lake and  
Dinosaur Trackway  
State Park*

### **Economic Impact of Outdoor Recreation in New Mexico**

- ✓ Land protection supports sustainable economic development through outdoor recreation.
- ✓ New Mexico's history, cultures, and heritage complement outdoor recreation. Heritage activities and traditional stewardship practices must factor into outdoor recreation development in New Mexico.
- ✓ Economic growth through outdoor recreation must be shared equitably and benefit New Mexico residents. Economic development should focus on high employment and wages and should address cost of living impacts associated with outdoor recreation development.



*Fenton Lake  
State Park*

## **Economic Impact of Outdoor Recreation in New Mexico**

- ✓ The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) reported that in 2019 outdoor recreation contributed \$2.4B to New Mexico's GDP, 2.2% of the state's total GDP. Of that number, 27% came from direct spending on outdoor recreation activities and 63% came from supporting services like construction and travel.
- ✓ Recreational Vehicle (RV) camping was the top value-added outdoor recreation activity in New Mexico in 2019, followed by equestrian, snow activities, and boating & fishing.
- ✓ The BEA also found that outdoor recreation contributed to the creation of 35,065 jobs in the state and \$1.2 B in total compensation, along with 3.1% and 2.3% of total employment and compensation in the state, respectively.





*Navajo Lake  
State Park*

## **Economic Impact of Outdoor Recreation in New Mexico**

- ✓ New Mexico's outdoor recreation economy is growing quickly. The state ranks fifth in the country for value-added growth and second for employment growth in the outdoor recreation industry.
- ✓ New Mexico's tourism economy is also growing, attracting more visitors to enjoy the state's outdoor recreation amenities. Between 2015 and 2019, the number of total visitors to New Mexico grew 12% and visitor spending grew 18%.
- ✓ A 2018 survey of out-of-state visitors by the New Mexico Tourism Department found that 9.1% of tourists reported that visiting the outdoors, skiing or snowboarding was their primary reason for visiting the state. Also, 18.5% said that they visited parks and 14.4% said that they went hiking or backpacking on their trip to the state.
- ✓ The visitor survey used for this SCORP found that the majority of tourists surveyed participated in some kind of outdoor recreation activity on their trip to New Mexico and spent an average of \$1,780 in the state.



*Cimarron Canyon  
State Park*

**Table 4.2. Visitors and visitor spending in New Mexico, 2015-2019 (NM Tourism, 2019)**

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Total Visitors (millions of visitors)</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>36.1</b>	<b>37.5</b>	<b>38.2</b>
Day	18.3	19.2	19.7	20.4	20.9
Overnight	15.7	15.9	16.3	17.1	17.2
<b>Total Spending (millions of \$)</b>	<b>\$6,294</b>	<b>\$6,427</b>	<b>\$6,631</b>	<b>\$7,092</b>	<b>\$7,446</b>
Day	\$1,419	\$1,483	\$1,537	\$1,636	\$1,742
Overnight	\$4,875	\$4,944	\$5,094	\$5,457	\$5,703
<b>Per Visitor Spending (\$ per person)</b>	<b>\$185</b>	<b>\$184</b>	<b>\$184</b>	<b>\$189</b>	<b>\$195</b>
Day	\$77	\$77	\$78	\$80	\$83
Overnight	\$310	\$312	\$312	\$320	\$331

**Table 4.3. Spending on select outdoor recreation activities in New Mexico, 2020 (ORD, 2020)**

Activity	Spending	Recreation Days
Fishing	\$267.7 million (2013)	2.5 million
Hunting	\$342.4 million (2013)	746,000
Alpine Skiing	\$142.3 million (2018-19)	1 million

Mission: To protect and enhance natural and cultural resources, provide first-class recreational and education facilities and opportunities, and promote public safety to benefit and enrich the lives of visitors.



*City of Rocks State Park*



## *Caballo Lake State Park*

Outdoor recreation is a driving force in New Mexico's economy, and State Parks is an essential partner and provider. Connected to communities statewide, state parks are economic drivers for local businesses, towns, and cities. Many rural communities rely upon a state park as a major source of economic development.



*Elephant Butte Lake  
State Park*

## Since 1933...

Over the last 91 years, your New Mexico State Parks have become a thriving and cherished 35 state park system.

Your State Parks system is comprised of 41 decentralized locations found in 25 of 33 counties across our Land of Enchantment.

State Parks connect us! 70% of New Mexicans live within 40 miles of a State Park.





# Why We Are Essential

Your New Mexico State Parks are more valuable and meaningful than ever before. They protect our heritage, provide low-cost and family friendly recreation that places millions of adults and children in touch with nature, while generating essential economic benefits.



## What We Do

- ✓ Public Safety
- ✓ Building & Facilities
- ✓ Public Education
- ✓ Resource Protection
- ✓ Utilities and Infrastructure
- ✓ Public/Private Partnerships
- ✓ Grounds & Roadways
- ✓ Vehicles & Equipment
- ✓ Economic Development

27

Operations, Administrative &  
Program Support Staff in Santa Fe

153

Field Operations & Administrative  
Support Staff at 35 State Parks

10

Operations & Administrative  
Support Staff at 5 Region offices

45

Field Operations positions that  
support up to 136 seasonal hires

## STAFFING

235 Full Time & 136 Seasonal Employees.





**HISTORIC PARKS**



**NATURE PARKS**



**DARK SKY PARKS**



**LAKE PARKS**



**INTERPRETIVE PARKS**



**ZOO**

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



**CERRILLOS HILLS**  
Burro Race



**ELEPHANT BUTTE LAKE**  
Balloon Regatta



**EAGLE NEST LAKE**  
Ice Fishing Tournament



## REWARDING CAREERS

State Parks is committed to our mission by employing professional and dedicated staff to ensure that parks are cared for and preserved to the highest professional standards.



**FULL TIME**



**SEASONAL**



**VOLUNTEERS**



18,732,935

*Murphy Lake State Park*

**VISITORS TO NEW MEXICO STATE PARKS**

January 1, 2021 – August 5, 2024.



\$20,000,000

*Hyde Memorial State Park*

**The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021**



**CONCESSIONAIRES**



**WORK WITH  
STATE PARKS**

**CONTRACTORS**



**OUTFITTERS**





# \$13,179,726

*Eagle Nest Lake State Park*

## **Land and Water Conservation Fund Awards**

Funds awards to cities, towns, counties, Native American Tribes, regional park authorities, and state agencies



In 2024-2025, the State Parks Division will partner with the New Mexico State University Arrowhead Center to complete a two-phase State Parks Economic Impact Study. This study will present an analysis of the importance of New Mexico's State Parks to the state's economy and to the 25 of 33 county economies where state parks are located.

The study will measure two types of economic effects: county economic impacts and state economic contributions. The study will also consider all visitor and agency spending in and around state parks in estimating the economic contribution of state parks to New Mexico's economy. The study will also evaluate the state park system's quality of life and social benefit contributions.



## **BROAD CANYON FEASIBILITY STUDY**

Prepared on behalf of the State Parks Division in response to Senate Memorial 38 (SM 38) sponsored by Senator Jeff Steinborn and Representative Nathan P. Small, which passed in the 2023 session of the New Mexico State Legislature. SM 38 requested that State Parks Division consider the establishment of a state park at Broad Canyon Ranch.

- ✓ The Broad Canyon Ranch Study Area (Study Area) is located in Doña Ana County along a stretch of the Rio Grande in southern New Mexico. The Study Area is approximately 20 miles north of Las Cruces and straddles NM 185.
- ✓ The three Study Area parcels were evaluated based on the statutory criteria for establishing a state park (NMSA 1972 Chapter 16 Article 2). This involved an assessment of natural and cultural resources, potential recreational opportunities, and the suitability of lands available for recreational development within each parcel. Additionally, the study analyzes whether state park development would conform with the New Mexico State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).



- ✓ This study finds that only some parcels in the Study Area meet the criteria for designation and development as a state park. The three Study Area parcels were evaluated based on the statutory criteria for establishing a state park (NMSA 1972 Chapter 16 Article 2).
- ✓ Various development and management alternatives were considered based upon the findings of the feasibility study.
  - Alternative 1 involves no development of the Study Area.
  - Alternative 2 involves limited development of the Riverside and Upland Parcels (collectively Broad Canyon Ranch) for day-use as a state park or as a recreation area associated with Leasburg Dam State Park.
  - Alternative 3 involves the full development of Broad Canyon Ranch as a state park with camping.



- ✓ The State Parks Division supports Alternative 2 as the preferred alternative. Alternative 2 contemplates the development of the Riverside and Upland Parcels as either a day-use state park or a recreation area that functions as a satellite of Leasburg Dam State Park.
- ✓ Alternative 2 meets the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) goals identified at the time of the purchase of Broad Canyon Ranch which include permanent public access to the property with parking and comfort station, non-intrusive trail alignment with the proposed Rio Grande Trail, and future development of additional trails to support wildlife viewing.
- ✓ Alternative 2 also allows for phased development as described by Alternative 3, if there is support for full development of Broad Canyon Ranch as a state park with camping.



# NAVAJO LAKE STATE PARK

New Mexico's second largest state park was established in 1963 by the State Park and Recreation Commission entering into an agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation to operate two recreation sites, at Pine and Sims Mesa. In 1982, recognizing the important recreation potential created on the tail waters of the San Juan River, the San Juan River Recreation Area was added to the park. These three sites were operated as separate state parks until 1995 when they were reorganized into Navajo Lake State Park.

There are two marinas administered by Navajo Dam Enterprises, and in 2017 the Pine Marina won Marina of the Year for the Northern Hemisphere honors from the industry magazine, Marina Dock Age.

The park is operated through the dedicated efforts of twelve full time employees and multiple seasonal employees and volunteers.



*Gracias!*



*Fenton Lake State Park*