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AGENCIES INSPECTING BOATS FOR INVASIVE SPECIES

SANTA FE -- The vigilance will be continuing during the Independence Day holiday weekend as Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) inspections will be occurring at major lakes. The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and the State Parks Division will be conducting mandatory inspections, while the Army Corps of Engineers will be providing courtesy boat inspections. The public is advised to arrive at the boat ramp with a clean, dry boat and to be prepared to answer questions about where they have most recently boated.

“Expect to be inspected,” said Barbara Coulter, AIS Coordinator for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. “If boaters make sure their boats and gear are clean and dry prior to launching, they will be doing their part to protect our most precious resource. New Mexico does not have any invasive mussels in our waters and we want to keep it that way.”

Aquatic Invasive Species include zebra and quagga mussels, which occur in some water bodies in states adjacent to New Mexico. Inspectors will be looking for these small mussels and standing water. These devastating invasive species are carried from place to place on boat trailers and boats. They are highly successful in part because they attach to any hard surface and can live out of water for weeks at a time. The mussels can be devastating; they reproduce rapidly, cause irreversible environmental damage and can seriously damage boat engines by clogging engine cooling systems and causing motors to overheat. Dealing with a waterbody infested with AIS entails significant costs.

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish together with the State Parks Division, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation would like to thank boaters for their cooperation and support over the Memorial Day Holiday in stopping the spread of AIS. Almost 700 boats were inspected during the holiday weekend and all were found to be clean and dry.

“Inspectors are trained to inspect boat hulls, live wells, motor ports, and other places where AIS are

known to hide,” said Dan Brooks, Chief of Law Enforcement for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. “Boaters are reminded that it is illegal to transport AIS into or within New Mexico, and the fines can be up to \$500.”

Boaters directly benefit from watercraft inspections because the waters they use will be kept clean and free from new invasive species. “If you are a boater, angler, or aquatic recreational user, you must remain alert and make your friends and family aware of the threat of AIS,” said Toby Velasquez, Law Enforcement Bureau Chief for New Mexico State Parks Division. “Prevention is simple: CLEAN, DRAIN and DRY your boat.”

“We ask boaters throughout the state for their continued vigilance and cooperation. The damage that these invasive species would do to our waters, our ecosystem, our facilities and your watercraft is severe. Allowing a little extra time to go through a thorough inspection will help us to avoid the situations we’re seeing in neighboring states,” said Mary Carlson, Public Affairs Specialist for the Bureau of Reclamation.

For information on aquatic invasive species please visit: www.wildlife.state.nm.us/ and look under the Quick Clicks section.

Short Trips, Long Memories: Your Best Recreation Value Close to Home

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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