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NEWS RELEASE

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ICE FISHING SEASON OPENS AT EAGLE NEST LAKE STATE PARK

EAGLE NEST -- Eagle Nest Lake State Park opened for ice fishing Tuesday, December 29, the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and New Mexico State Parks announced.

All terrain vehicles and snowmobiles will be allowed on the ice at this time, but not on the state park shorelines. Full-sized vehicles are not allowed. All vehicles must be taken into the park on trailers and driven directly onto the ice from the boat ramp. Ice fishing access to the lake is available through the state park for a \$5 per vehicle day-use fee, or free of charge through access points outside the state park boundaries.

Fishing for rainbow trout, kokanee salmon and yellow perch should be good because the fish have not been disturbed since the lake froze over a few weeks ago. Anglers are advised to protect themselves against the harsh elements by choosing clothing that provides protection from low air temperatures, wind and precipitation while at the same time allowing mobility. Also keep in mind the possibility of falling through the ice. Clothing that would severely restrict your ability to swim or to stay afloat is not a good choice. Hip boots or waders should never be worn, as they can fill with water and restrict movement. A personal flotation device should be worn. This can be a vest or jacket, either inflatable or naturally buoyant. State Parks also recommends the use of ice cleats on footwear while on the lake.

The State Parks Division has a formal procedure for checking the depth of ice. The ice thickness is measured starting at the shoreline and progressing out over the lake. When the ice is of a thickness that is considered safe, the lake is opened to ice fishing. The ice thickness was 13-plus inches on Tuesday. Park staff continually makes visual checks of the ice looking for cracks, water on top of the ice, and open water, all signs that the ice may not be safe for anglers.

Anglers are reminded that the 2010 Ice Fishing Tournament will be held Saturday, Jan. 16, at the boat ramp.

The State Parks Division and the Department of Game and Fish jointly manage Eagle Nest Lake and surroundings via a Joint Powers Agreement. According to criteria established by both agencies under the agreement, Eagle Nest Lake State Park staff report the ice conditions to the Department of Game and Fish. When the ice thickness meets its requirements, the Department allows ice fishing on the lake.

The Department of Game and Fish has the authority to open or close the lake to ice fishing. State Parks assists with the on-the-ground posting and enforcement of the ice-fishing determinations. In addition, State Park managers and superintendents have the authority, by regulation, to close or restrict access to areas of parks, as well as to restrict, limit or prohibit activities such as ice fishing as conditions require. Such actions are taken in the interest of public safety and resource protection.

For more information and current updates about ice conditions, please contact Eagle Nest Lake State Park, (575) 377-1594, or for questions about fishing in northeastern New Mexico, call the Department of Game and Fish in Raton, (575) 445-2311. Information also is available on the Department of Game and Fish or New Mexico State Parks respective Web sites, www.wildlife.state.nm.us and www.nmparks.com.