

Michelle Lujan Grisham, Governor
Sarah Cottrell Propst, Cabinet Secretary
Todd E. Leahy, JD, Ph.D., Deputy Cabinet Secretary
Toby Velasquez, State Parks Division Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact:

Wendy Mason, Marketing Manager
NM State Parks Division
wendy.mason@emnrd.nm.gov
505-819-1785

Sidney Hill
Public Information Officer, EMNRD
sidney.hill@emnrd.nm.gov
505-629-7403



July 20, 2023

**New Mexico State Parks ranger receives double recognition,
nationally as State Boating Officer of the Year and for saving the life
of a 10-year-old drowning victim**

Santa Fe, NM – Navajo Lake State Park Ranger Supervisor Leigh Kirkeeide was recently presented with a Life Saving Award for her skilled observation and swift action that saved the life of a 10-year-old child last month.

On Saturday, June 17, 2023, a 10-year-old boy went into the water from the shoreline near the Navajo Lake State Park Marina to retrieve a toy. The child, who could not swim and was not wearing a life jacket, went out too far and was overtaken by conditions. A family member pulled the boy from the water and Mr. Matt Adamson, who was nearby, started CPR. Officer Kirkeeide was on duty when she was flagged down by other park guests rushing to the scene. Officer Kirkeeide immediately moved the child to a flat location and continued CPR. The boy was unresponsive for approximately one to two minutes before she was able to get him breathing again. The boy was then air lifted to a regional hospital conscious, breathing, and talking.

Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) Cabinet Secretary Sarah Cottrell Propst honored Officer Kirkeeide with the State Parks Division Life Saving Award and Mr. Adamson with a Certificate of Appreciation during a presentation at Navajo Lake State Park on July 19.

“Officer Kirkeeide’s quick thinking and actions after the initial response of a good Samaritan undoubtedly helped save this child’s life,” said Secretary Cottrell Propst during Wednesday’s

awards ceremony. “Had either of them hesitated it would have ended tragically for the child and his family.”

Supervisor Kirkeeide has also been recognized by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) as the New Mexico State Boating Officer of the Year for her professionalism, drive and dedication to marine enforcement, natural/cultural resource protection, education, and public safety.

“Officer Kirkeeide exemplifies the professionalism of our State Parks staff and their dedication to ensuring that our parks and visitors are cared for to the highest professional standards,” said Toby Velasquez, NM State Parks Director. “Leigh’s commitment to our agency’s mission makes her an invaluable member of our team.”

Kirkeeide joined the State Parks Division and then graduated as valedictorian from the San Juan County Criminal Justice Training Authority in Farmington in December 2019. Since then, her exemplary work and dedication earned her a promotion to Park Ranger Supervisor at Navajo Lake State Park in February. She is a dedicated Boating Safety instructor, a nationally certified Inland Boat Operator Instructor, a state certified Marine Enforcement instructor, and a volunteer member of the San Juan County Fire and Rescue.

Learn more about general water and life jacket safety by visiting the State Parks Boating Program online at www.emnrd.nm.gov/spd/.

For more information on all 35 of your New Mexico State Parks, please visit our [website](http://www.reserveamerica.com/). Book your reservation six months in advance! Log onto <https://www.reserveamerica.com/> and save the perfect camping spot at your favorite New Mexico State Park today!



(L-R) Matt Adamson, Officer Leigh Kirkeeide, Cabinet Secretary Sarah Cottrell Propst. Photo: NM State Parks



¡Vámonos! Let's Go New Mexico!

Follow us



###

The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department provides resource protection and resource development services to the public and other state agencies. Learn more at <https://www.emnrd.nm.gov>



LIFE SAVING AWARD
HONORING
Matt Adams
In recognition of your heroic actions in assisting with lifeguard efforts to evacuate a
20 year old swimming pool in Hana, Maui, Hawaii on June 17, 2012.
Presented by:
The Maui Board of Water Works & Sewerage
Honolulu, Hawaii

2011
LIFE-SAVING AWARD
Presented To
LEIGH KIRKEIDE
In Recognition Of
Distinguished Service
E.M.N.J.L.D.
New Mexico State Parks Division



NEW MEXICO STATE PARKS



WEAR IT

In partnership with the National Safe Boating Council

New Mexico