



**For Immediate Release
January 31, 2006**

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NEW CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED TO IMPROVE BOATING SAFETY AT LAKE MEAD AND LAKE MOHAVE

California, Nevada, Arizona, the National Park Service, and the Personal Watercraft Industry Association Join Forces to form the "Lake Mead Safe Boating Partnership"

Los Angeles, CA — The National Park Service, three state agencies and the personal watercraft industry joined forces today to unveil a new campaign aimed at improving safety and reducing boating accidents and fatalities at Lake Mead National Recreation Area. The creation of the "Lake Mead Safe Boating Partnership" was announced today at the Los Angeles Boat Show. The National Park Service (NPS), the California Department of Boating and Waterways, Nevada Department of Wildlife, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and the Personal Watercraft Industry Association (PWIA) created the partnership to promote safe boating practices among boaters who visit Lake Mead and Lake Mohave. The National Park Service reported 149 boating accidents and 4 boating fatalities on Lake Mead and Lake Mohave in 2005; the Lake Mead Safe Boating Partnership aims to bring these numbers down.

"Approximately 8-10 million visitors come to Lake Mead National Recreation Area each year," said Lake Mead National Recreation Area Superintendent Bill Dickinson. "Fortunately most boaters have an enjoyable time free of any incidents but even one boating tragedy is one too many, especially because most boating accidents are completely avoidable. Because so many of our boaters are from California, Arizona, and Nevada, it made perfect sense for all of us to join forces."

About half of all visitors at Lake Mead National Recreation Area come from out-of-state, particularly California. Because each state has its own set of boating laws, the Lake Mead Safe Boating Partnership advises boaters to "play it safe" by following the strictest of guidelines, which include wearing a lifejacket at all times, always taking a boating safety course before leaving the dock or marina, and never operating a boat under the influence of alcohol or drugs. These are guidelines the partnership advises all boaters to follow. In some cases, they might be required by law. Boating laws for California, Nevada, and Arizona are summarized and can be reviewed at www.boatcoloradoriver.com and www.boatlakemead.com.

For instance, anyone born after January 1, 1983 must carry proof of having passed a boating safety course to operate a boat in the state of Nevada (Lake Mead). In other cases, any boater 12 years or younger must wear a lifejacket at all times and anyone riding a personal watercraft (PWC) regardless of age must wear a lifejacket at all times. Additionally, most drownings involve boaters who aren't wearing a life jacket and who have not taken a boating safety course. For this reason, the partnership wants boaters of all ages and boating experience to follow its guidelines and treat them as the "rules of the road."

"Many Californians would consider Lake Mead and Lake Mohave among their top boating destinations," said California Department of Boating and Waterways Director Raynor Tsuneyoshi, "No boater visits Lake Mead expecting to get in an accident and wind up as another statistic, but boating accidents can happen in a split second and most of them result from boaters' inexperience and inattention. We've had great success with the tri-state boating safety campaign,

so we know that partnerships like this can work well to help prevent many of these avoidable accidents.”

The Lake Mead Safe Boating Partnership is unique in that it brings together not only the efforts of the federal government and three state agencies, but also the private sector to strengthen boater safety. The Personal Watercraft Industry Association (PWIA), which represents the four manufacturers of personal watercraft, will play an integral part in the efforts of the partnership.

“Lake Mead is one of the most popular places to ride personal watercraft in the country,” said Maureen Healey, Executive Director of PWIA. “And while boating is one of America’s most treasured pastimes, one must never forget that a boat is a motorized vessel that should be approached with the same caution and respect as a car. No matter how long you’ve been boating, the Lake Mead Safe Boating Partnership wants everyone to take a refresher course this year to brush-up on the rules and guidelines specific for boating at Lake Mead and Lake Mohave,” said Ms. Healey.

The Lake Mead Safe Boating Partnership will host its first public event during the 2006 National Safe Boating Week (May 20-26). On May 20th, 2006 the partnership will host a boating safety day at Lake Mead where boating safety classes will be offered at no cost, and boaters can have their vessels and lifejackets checked so they meet safety requirements.

More can be learned by visiting www.boatlakemead.com.

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Attention Reporters and Producers: Interviews are available by telephone by calling Brian Berry at 202-271-4781 or Kelly Alderson at 202-777-3542 to arrange. A photo of the press event is also available upon request.