NEWS RELEASE

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RAINBOW FAMILY SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETES CLEANUP WORK OF PARQUE VENADO AREA

(Cuba, NM)— Rainbow Family rehabilitation (rehab) crew has successfully completed the cleanup and rehabilitation work in the Parque Venado area, site of the 38th Annual Rainbow Family of Living Light Gathering. This year's gathering drew up to 10, 500 participants at the peak of the event on July 4th. "The 60 Rainbow rehab workers who stayed behind were true to their word," said Derek Padilla, Cuba District Ranger, "They did a good job and their work was completed before the July 31st (the agreed upon deadline). The site is recovering well at this early stage and time and nature will complete the healing process, we refer to as "rehab"."

On July 7th, immediately following the Gathering, the crew worked steadily up until July 27th to breakdown the 79 sites (trails, camps, kitchens, and other structures) that were built. Specific cleanup and rehabilitation work for the 8,880-acre permitted area was outlined in the agreed upon Gathering Rehabilitation Plan. The Plan provided specifications, methods, guidelines, and objectives for returning the Gathering site to the way the area looked, as close as possible, before the Gathering. During the cleanup and rehab period, the crew worked to restore, riparian areas (areas adjacent to streams), minimize erosion, remove trash, dismantle structures, and more.

Cleanup and Rehabilitation work entailed:

- Removing all hardware, such as hoses and PVC pipes. from water collection points;
- Removing all soil, rock, and vegetation that were used to divert water;
- Restoring all creek and stream crossings to their natural state;
- Placing erosion control measures in stream crossings;
- Constructing water bars on trails to minimize erosion;
- Blocking-off newly created trails that entered a water source such as a river;
- Obliterating and blocking trails and roads;
- Removing all signs, markers, and rock cairns (landmark mounds);
- Collecting and separating trash. Trash and recyclables were transported to several separate facilities, which helped to reduce the impact to any one facility;
- Covering up all fire rings, gray water pits, compost pits, and latrines. Covered areas were mixed with native dirt and scattered with rocks to achieve a natural look;
- Dismantling, scattering or removing all structures including kitchens, ovens, pole frames, sweat lodges, and shrines;
- Scarifying (scraping or raking top soil layer) to allow for moisture to penetrate, encouraging grasses and plants to re-establish;

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- Mulching, and water-barring all highly compacted areas such as kitchens, trails, and other heavily compacted areas;
- Removing all string , rope, wire, twine, from trees;
- Removing all abandoned animals and vehicles. As of July 27, 2009 two abandoned vehicles still remain onsite, however, arrangements are being made for removal.

In general, the site is recovering well; however, the work conducted by the rehab crew was the first step in the process. The next step is to allow the area to heal naturally over time. Grass and other vegetation have begun to grow back in most areas. "Some wildlife, such as elk and deer that were displaced because of the Gathering are all already starting to return to the area," said Ranger Padilla, "In time, more will return." Seeding was not necessary at the site due to the natural re-vegetation that is occurring. Several of the areas most heavily impacted will continue to be monitored by Forest Service into next spring and beyond to ensure that they completely recover.

The completion of the cleanup and rehab work draws an end to the 38th Annual Rainbow Family of Living Light Gathering. Despite minor issues this year, the event was deemed a success by participants and cooperators. "This year's event built and strengthened relationships between the Rainbow Family the Forest Service and the various local, county and state agencies that came together to create a safe and peaceful event for all," said Deputy Forest Supervisor, Erin Connelly. "We worked together with respect and stepped forward in a positive direction to achieve success. We are grateful for everyone's contribution," added Connelly.

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Before and After Photos (jpg files available upon request)

Photo Tag Line: Community fire pit located right off the Main Meadow during the Gathering and after cleanup and rehab. This community fire pit was a main attraction during the Gathering, drawing up to 100 participants each night.