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## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **Valles Caldera Trust Publishes 2008 Report to Congress**

The Valles Caldera Trust announces the publication of its Report to Congress for Fiscal Year 2008 (October 1, 2007 through September 30, 2008). The annual report includes information on the Trust's operations, programs, activities and accomplishments. It also discusses the status of the Trust's goals for Fiscal Year 2009.

The report is available on the Trust's website: [www.vallescaldera.gov](http://www.vallescaldera.gov). A link is provided on the home page. To request a copy via surface mail call 505-661-3333, or submit your request in writing to P.O. Box 359, Jemez Springs, NM 87025. Please include your physical mailing address.

Highlights in the report are:

- For the first time the Preserve was open seven days per week during the summer recreation season and provided outdoor recreation and interpretive opportunities to visitors without prior reservations. This expansion in our summer recreation program led to a substantial increase in overall visitation.
- The Preserve continues to be a draw to scientists, educators and researchers from all over the world. Over \$1.6 million of extramural funding established the Preserve as part of a global network in the study of climate, water, carbon, and other local, regional, and global land management issues. Spreading scientific knowledge into our classrooms has also been a focus as programs outreach to educators and students alike.
- The Trust continues to demonstrate efficiencies in fiscal management. Administrative costs, which include fixed costs, account for only 27 percent of the Trust's annual planned budget. The second largest allocation at 22 percent goes towards providing programs for public access and use. The combined salary and benefits for all employees accounts for 50 percent of the Trust's budget.

- While it appears that public access and use (with the potential revenues as derived from fees, donations, fund development, and associated sources) is the key to financial self sufficiency, significant investment will be required. Analysis on deferred maintenance, compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act Standards, and potential investment in infrastructure and facilities could range from \$15 to \$50 million over the next 10 years. It is also important to remember the investment in the Valles Caldera National Preserve, to date. The initial purchase price was \$101 million and the operating costs since federal acquisition have been approximately \$3.5 million each year.
- The report briefly describes the challenges the Trust faces by not having access to the permanent judgment appropriations under section 1304 of Title 31, U.S.C. (the Judgment Fund). The annual cost for liability insurance in FY 2008 increased 105 percent over FY 2007. In addition, the Trust had difficulty finding a provider willing to underwrite our activities. There simply is not an accepted model for quantifying the risks associated with multiple uses on public lands, especially those associated with hunting and other unguided recreation activities.

The Valles Caldera Trust manages the Valles Caldera National Preserve, formerly the privately owned “Baca Ranch”. The Preserve is located in the Jemez Mountains in Northern New Mexico. The Valles Caldera Preservation Act (the Act) created the Valles Caldera Trust as an experiment in public land management. Section 102 of the Act states: “...to *establish a demonstration area for an experimental management regime adapted to this unique property which incorporates elements of public and private administration in order to promote long-term financial sustainability consistent with the other purposes enumerated ...*”

The Act identified the primary building blocks as:

- Operation as an Innovative Federal Corporation
- Operation as a National Preserve incorporating Multiple Use Management
- Operation as a Working Ranch
- Public Access and Use
- Financial Self-Sufficiency while benefiting local communities

In the six years that the Valles Caldera Board of Trustees (the Board) has managed the Preserve they have executed the first three building blocks of the Act....

- Operation as an Innovative Federal Corporation
- Operation as a National Preserve incorporating Multiple Use Management
- Operation as a Working Ranch

In Fiscal Year 2008, the Board placed emphasis on exploring the last two building blocks...

- Public Access and Use
- Financial Self Sufficiency while benefiting local communities.

As the Government Accountability Office focuses on the adequacy of the existing federal land management framework, the Trust is committed to the success of this experimental management regime. We realize that we are faced with many challenges. The Valles Caldera Board of Trustees and the Trust Staff are prepared to overcome these challenges in a collaborative manner working with local communities, Federal, State and local agencies, Pueblos and Tribes, as well as all interested publics.