

Minutes of the Valles Caldera National Preserve

Board of Trustees

March 9, 2001

Los Alamos, Fuller Lodge, 1:00-3:00

Trustees Present

Bob Armstrong  
Leonard Atencio  
William deBuys (Chair)  
Karen Durkovich  
Palemon Martinez  
Stephen Stoddard (Vice-Chair)  
Thomas Swetnam  
Dennis Vasquez  
David R. Yepa (Secretary)

USFS Employees Present

Buck Sanchez  
Jim Whittington

Audience

27 individual entries were on the sign-up sheets. At one point, 35 individuals were counted.  
Organizations listed on the sign-up sheets:

KPMG  
Jemez Area Resource Association  
Jemez Pueblo  
Los Alamos Monitor  
Project Citizen-Chamisa  
Valles Caldera National Preserve Coalition  
New Mexico Audubon  
The Wilderness Society  
National Park Service  
United States Geological Society  
Office of Senator Bingaman  
Pajarito Environmental Education Center  
New Mexico Wildlife Federation  
World Conservation and Parks Association  
Los Alamos Multi-Agency Volunteer Task Force  
Communities (and number of entries) listed on the sign-up sheets:

Los Alamos (11)  
Jemez Valley (3)  
Santa Fe (2)  
Sierra Los Pinos/Jemez Mountains (1)  
Albuquerque (1)  
Tesuque (1)  
Placitas (1)  
Los Angeles, CA (1)  
Denver, CO (1)

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#### Welcome and Introductions

William deBuys thanked the audience for attending. The Trustees introduced themselves.

#### Approval of Proposed Agenda

The Chair asked that the agenda be approved with one addition. Palemon Martinez so moved and Karen Durkovich offered a second. The motion passed by unanimous consent.

The Chair explained to the audience that the additional item on the agenda was a chance to hear from elementary school students. The Chair then asked Dennis Vasquez to introduce the students and provide them with an opportunity to address the Trustees.

The students belonged to a Chamisa Elementary School 6th grade class studying local government. After a short oral presentation, the students presented the Trustees with the results of their survey of groups interested in the Preserve. The Chair thanked the students and encouraged them to remain involved in the process as the Trustees move forward with the development of a management plan.

#### Approval of 2/13 Board Meeting Minutes, including Resolutions

Mr. Martinez moved that the minutes and resolutions be approved as written. Thomas Swetnam seconded and the motion passed by unanimous consent.

#### Report of Topics covered in Executive Session

The Chair reported on the executive session held earlier in the day:

1. The Board will soon hire an interim Executive Director, who will be available for the next few months while the Trustees search for a permanent Executive Director.
2. The Trustees discussed external correspondence and responses.
3. The Trustees addressed budgetary needs and communicated a desire to keep the congressional delegation and officials at the Department of Agriculture informed.
4. The Trustees discussed the scheduling of meetings, possible future locations, and other upcoming activities.

#### Discussion of Upcoming Activities

The following meetings and activities were announced, though some of the details are not finalized:

1. Listening session tonight in Los Alamos
2. Listening session tomorrow at Ghost Ranch
3. Listening session at Espanola at the Northern New Mexico Community College on April 3, 6-8:30
4. Executive Session Meeting on April 4 in Espanola from 10:00-12:00
5. Public Meeting on April 4 in Espanola from 1:30-4:00
6. Listening session in Albuquerque on May 7, 6:00-8:30
7. Executive Session Meeting on May 8 in Albuquerque from 10:00-12:00
8. Public Meeting on May 8 in Albuquerque from 1:30-4:00
9. April 24-25, the Trustees will hold a mini-retreat on the Preserve to talk about management philosophy and to digest the information acquired during the listening sessions. Part of this mini-retreat will address the need to plan for a management plan and develop criteria for management decisions
10. May 20-23, the Trustees will hold another mini-retreat to learn about the natural resources on the Preserve.

The Chair also discussed communications with Sandoval and Rio Arriba counties. The Sandoval County Commissioners meet on the 2nd and 4th week of each month and Rio Arriba commissioners meet on March 29 in Espanola. Mr. deBuys stated that he will attend both meetings and asked that the Trustees make note of the meetings and try to attend. Mr. deBuys asked for names of those who might be able to attend. Leonard Atencio and David R. Yepa could possibly attend the meetings.

#### Committee Reports

##### Science--

Mr. Swetnam discussed the last meeting and introduced Craig Allen, who will be assisting the Board with organizing the scientific activities. Surveys will be important to the planning effort and there is a need to start as soon as possible to take advantage of the weather. Several people and organizations are willing to help, including Jim Davis of the New Mexico Surface Water Quality Board. Soils surveys have been acquired from the Natural Resources Conservation Service. There may be an effort to tie in the soils information to the TES mapping done by the Forest Service.

One of the more immediate tasks is collating the biological and geological work that has already been done. Some assistance may come from James Biggs and Randy Balice at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) on elk impacts and vegetation. Buck Sanchez, USFS, submitted a request to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation to examine sources of matching funds for elk studies. Craig Allen will be holding a meeting of interagency biologists to discuss the state of work in the Jemez Mountains.

Other projects include the study of raptors, butterflies, martens, and other threatened and endangered species. The Board will be looking for volunteer and in-kind projects to help with these studies.

The University of Arizona will provide initial cover type classification of vegetation for the Preserve.

The Board needs to acquire skills in data management and geographic information systems. In the interim, Bandelier will provide assistance.

Craig Allen emphasized the importance of having a good field season for the collection of data.

Mr. Stoddard discussed the Seeking Common Ground meeting and the LANL presentation at that meeting.

Mr. Atencio asked whether the monitoring included roads and trails and could provide information on making decisions about campgrounds or other potential recreational uses. Mr. Swetnam responded that the Board needed to consult with the Santa Fe National Forest on roads inventory procedures.

Mr. Atencio then noted the need to identify projects that the board will fund, including a list for the Board to consult when making funding decisions. Mr. Swetnam agreed and offered that he is working on the issue. Mr. Swetnam added that there would be several studies that will be done at no cost to the Board due to other funding sources or ongoing projects. Mr. Swetnam will try to identify two or three major projects.

Mr. Armstrong asked about fisheries surveys and Mr. Swetnam responded that those would be included.

A comment from the floor suggested that the Audubon members would offer to do bird surveys and suggested the Board create a volunteer coordinator position.

Mr. Vasquez noted that the social sciences must also be addressed. Sociological issues for the Preserve will be of great importance. Mr. Vasquez offered the assistance of the Chief Sociologist of the National Park Service.

A comment from the floor suggested visual resources be addressed. The Chair noted that this is not currently being addressed, but will be formally addressed later. The Chair then offered comments about the desire to keep the visual resources of the Valle Grande intact.

A question from the floor concerned wilderness. The Chair said the Board would do an inventory of the roads first and then look at the empty spaces. There is little possibility for congressionally designated wilderness, but the board may decide to manage in a way that suits the purposes where appropriate.

A question from the floor concerned the name of the Preserve. The Chair commented that Congress bestows the name. A brief discussion on the merits of Valles Caldera versus Baca followed.

Mr. Martinez discussed his research of Baca Ranch brands.

The Chair thanked Mr. Swetnam and Allen.

#### Cultural Resources

Mr. deBuys reported that there seems to be a bottleneck at the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). A key question is whether the Board needs to move forward with an agreement for the protection of resources. Is it necessary immediately, or can the Board get by with one for just roads, which would allow work to be done on the Preserve this coming field season and a greater time

frame for the planning process. The management plan will include a historic preservation plan.

Because the Preserve is now Federal property, and because sites lie in the roads or adjacent to roads, the Board needs to evaluate the resources that may be disturbed. There is a plan to hire an archaeological field crew to survey roads and identify sites in and around roads so the Board can maintain an internal roads system. Lynn Sebastian may be used to guide the board in an agreement of a programmatic agreement. Evaluation of the buildings on the Preserve need to be done for historic preservation, which may guide the maintenance issues. Mr. deBuys would also like to start an oral history program for the Preserve, which would include interviews with former employees and others with ties to the property.

Sec 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires consultation with all interested tribes. Mr. Yepa is setting up meetings with the 8 Northern Pueblos and the 10 Southern Pueblos. Mr. Yepa noted that after the meetings, the Board will have a better idea of which tribes need to meet individually with the Trustees. Efforts are also underway to meet with the Jicarilla Apache and several Navajo Chapters.

Mr. Atencio noted that the Board needs an agreement on roads with the SHPO quickly, because snowmelt leads to erosion and road maintenance.

A comment from the floor suggested the oral history program be expanded to include those whose families have lived in the area since the 1800's.

From the floor, the Lieutenant Governor of Jemez Pueblo said he looks forward to the tribal consultation.

## Communications

Mr. Vasquez made several comments about communications:

The board expanded the arc of public outreach. We found that after the first round of meetings, press releases were not the best way to communicate. Ads were bought, and radio stations consulted. Notices were also placed on public access channels in Los Alamos and Santa Fe. The email list for notification now has about 75 names.

The Board is in the process of acquiring an address for official web site.

There is a draft proposal for a logo contest, which will include outreach to schools, relevant web sites, and organizations. The proposed reward is \$500. Mr. Atencio asked if the contest were limited to New Mexico. Mr. Vasquez replied that since the logo is for a national preserve, the contest should be national in scope. In response to a question from Mr. Stoddard, Mr. Vasquez noted that the contest is not included in the current budget. In response to a question from Mr. Yepa, Mr. Vasquez commented that the dates and a few other items would need to be changed before the contest announcement was distributed.

Mr. Stoddard moved that the Communications Committee be delegated to move forward with the logo competition. Ms. Durkovich seconded.

In response to a question from the floor, Mr. Vasquez said that a disclaimer could be inserted that

would protect the Board should there be no submissions that met the need of the Board.

The measure then passed by unanimous consent.

## Tours

Ms. Durkovich discussed tours. There is a strong desire to get the public on site in a limited fashion, but there are some constraints including lack of facilities and cultural surveys. The Board is currently working on a plan to run tours this year.

A question from the floor concerned eco-tours. Ms. Durkovich responded that eco-tours might be considered. She added that any tours should be affordable.

Mr. Atencio asked what would be the focus of the tours. Ms. Durkovich responded by saying half-day tours would not be feasible, but shorter tours using a lottery or some other scheduling mechanism might work.

A question from the floor concerned permits for fly-overs. Mr. Vasquez replied that fly-overs are a major issue in some national parks and the Board is not ready to address that issue.

The Chair then asked for comments from the floor, some of which were:

1. Exercise restraint on tours like was done on hunting. The Board needs to be ready.
2. Resist public pressure in favor of science. Need to be careful with tours.
3. The Board needs to develop a strong communication system to inform the public.
4. Tremendous opportunity for winter access, as winter sports will not destroy the land.
5. Focus on Children and emphasize education and science.
6. Ignore the pleas of the public for access.
7. Make use of Pajarito Ski Area to access the Preserve.

## Finance

Mr. Stoddard discussed finances. The Board will need to ask for a supplemental budget for FY 2001. The Forest Service financial system will be used on an interim basis.

Mr. Atencio discussed the process for acquiring a supplemental appropriation.

Mr. deBuys noted that the contract procedures need to be in place quickly to provide for a good field season. He then asked if the Forest Service will be able to handle contracting expeditiously or should the board transfer blocks of money for Craig Allen to use under a United States Geological Survey (USGS) system.

Mr. Atencio answered by noting there had been two major fires on the Santa Fe National Forest last year, and with the rehabilitation work and extra initiatives in the National Fire Plan might preclude the Forest Service from acting quickly on Preserve contracts.

Mr. deBuys asked Allen if USGS could handle cultural as well as scientific contracts. Allen noted

that was probably possible.

Mr. Armstrong suggested consulting with the congressional delegation to see if there were any other alternatives.

In response to a question from Mr. Martinez asking if the Forest Service could expedite matters, Mr. Atencio asked Allen how many contracts were being considered. Allen replied that around six would need to be completed. Allen then explained the complexities of the process, which includes identifying what is needed, identifying interested parties, and then proceeding with the contracting phase.

Mr. Atencio said he would consult with the Forest Service Regional Office on the matter.

#### By-Laws

Mr. Yepa discussed the by-laws. He submitted a draft to Daniel Hylton in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Hylton suggested the powers of the act be incorporated into the by-laws because future iterations of the Board may not go back to the act. Mr. Yepa is waiting on USDA lawyers to respond on two points: financial disclosure and ethics. Once those issues are resolved, the by-laws will be presented to the Board for approval.

In response to a question by the Chair, Mr. Yepa noted that the outstanding issues might be resolved by the next meeting.

#### New Business

No new business was brought forth.

#### Public comments

Tom Jervis-Welcomed the board to Los Alamos and Fuller Lodge. The Ranch School used the Preserve as part of the school curriculum. Local ponderosa pine were used in the construction of Fuller Lodge, but one would have a hard time building such a structure today using nearby trees. There has been great change in the forest structure and landscape, which has created a need to restore the resilience of the ponderosa pine ecosystems.

Mr. Swetnam spoke favorably of the comments and then spoke briefly on the state of the forests on the preserve and the concern for wildfires. One of the goals of the scientific monitoring and analysis is to look into forest structure, examine small diameter trees, identify potential hazard areas, and mark areas suitable for prescribed fire. Mr. Swetnam added that the Preserve needs to become part of the larger forest restoration activities in the southwest.

John Zolti, the author of the Camp May access point letter, would like to see a plan for a trail to go down from the ski hill onto the Preserve.

#### Adjourn

Mr. Stoddard moved to adjourn. There were many seconds and the motion passed by unanimous consent.

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