

Minutes of the Valles Caldera National Preserve

Board of Trustees

May 8, 2001

2:00-4:00 p.m.

Sheraton Old Town, 2:00-4:00

Albuquerque, New Mexico

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/BLM Employees Present

Bill Merhege

Steve Romero

Denise McCaig

Welcome and Introductions

William deBuys thanked the audience for attending.

Approval of Proposed Agenda

The agenda was approved by unanimous consent.

Summary of the Morning Executive Session

Board members will have a working session/tour of the property in May.

The budgets for FY 2001 and 2002 were reviewed.

Long discussion of planning needed to meet the 2-year deadline for a management plan.

The Board discussed procedures for hiring a Director

Code of conduct for board member access to the Preserve was discussed.

Committee Reports

Science

Mr. Swetnam discussed the inventories and monitoring work and the status of upcoming contracts.

Mr. Swetnam expects the first ones to be issued within the next few weeks via USGS. A detailed vegetation map with some aerial and on ground data is forthcoming. A range assessment will soon

be underway. Surface water quality plots have been set up and information is now being gathered. About \$1.3 million for contributed research from several sources is in the pipeline. Approximately \$5 million for geological mapping will be forthcoming through the generosity of LANL. The Board faces a challenge in coordinating the research this summer.

Mr. deBuys noted that a visual resources survey inventory is being donated by the National Park Service and the Forest Service requested an additional \$346,000 to do more work this summer.

Ms. Durkovich asked if fisheries work will be assisted by Trout Unlimited and New Mexico Trout. Mr. Atencio said the biologists are aware of the offers of volunteer help.

Mr. Swetnam noted that Sean Ferrell of the Santa Fe National Forest is coordinating all fisheries work.

### Cultural Resources

Mr. deBuys plans to send a letter to several tribes and pueblos. Since the Board has not yet assumed management authority, coordination is done through the Santa Fe National Forest in conjunction with the State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO).

Dr. Robert Sherman of the Archeological Society offered to volunteer for field work and will follow with a formal letter. Mr. deBuys will forward the letter to the Santa Fe archeologist.

### Communications

Dennis Vasquez reported on the last of 7 listening sessions yesterday evening in Albuquerque. Summaries will be posted on the web site along with board minutes and other information. The Board has met with the 8 Northern Pueblos and several county commissioners. We have more than 60 offices and over 120 members of the public on regular mail list and over 20 in the media. Will launch a national logo contest with \$500 award. Funding has been requested to develop a VCNP-specific web site.

Mr. Armstrong has talked to New Mexico Game & Fish about reintroduction of native fish species and the potential for whirling disease. If cutthroat is introduced then the current thinking is to limit the fish to just one stream.

### Bylaws

Mr. Yepa reported on his communications with the USDA Office of General Counsel. The Bylaws, with the exception of one correction are ready for final approval. The one correction is to strike the two-day notice for emergency meetings. Mr. Yepa made a motion that the bylaws be approved. The motion was seconded and passed by unanimous consent.

### Finances

Mr. Stoddard offered thanks to the Forest Service for helping with the finances during Fiscal Year 2001. The Board will need \$2.5 to 2.8 million for FY 2002. Denise McCaig noted that there might be help forthcoming from the Treasury Department on setting up the system. The Chair remarked that there was no manual on how to do the finances.

## Tours

Ms. Durkovich reported that the Tour Subcommittee has identified six days in September for possible tours. Operating through a reservation system and using 3 buses, about 500 people per day could access the Preserve. The tour would last about 2 hours and would likely be staffed by volunteer guides with a staging area off the Preserve. Ms. Durkovich would like Board advice on a possible \$5 fee and information packets for the tours.

Mr. Stoddard remarked that he would not like to see a \$5 fee, which would not cover costs and put the Trusts in a position of losing money on its first major undertaking.

Mr. Atencio noted this would be the best chance for the public to see what they purchased and it should be free. If logo is selected by the time of tours, perhaps the Board could sell t-shirts for a fee.

Mr. Yepa inquired about plans for interpretation and was told it is not being pursued at this time.

Mr. Vasquez followed by saying this would be a good opportunity for interpretation.

According to Ms. Durkovich, the total cost for the tours would be \$18,000.

Mr. Armstrong would not like to start with a free trip as Domenici said the Preserve was to be a working ranch and make some kind of money.

In response to a question by Mr. Martinez, Ms. Durkovich noted that the parking would be staged off of the Preserve, perhaps at the Dome Road area, which has about 60 parking spaces.

Several questions were raised about how the funds would be collected. The Chair noted that there were several questions that needed to be answered.

Mr. Atencio suggested the Tour Committee proceed with planning and the Board can examine the issue again at the July meeting..

## Planning Process and Requirements

### CEQ Regulations for NEPA

McCaig noted that the Board must follow the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and therefore must engage in planning. Since the Board has no regulations mentioned specifically in the enabling legislation, the Board can choose which set of regulations it will follow. The simplest is the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations.

Ms. Durkovich entered a motion that the Board adhere to the CEQ regulations. The motion was seconded and passed by unanimous consent.

## Personnel

McCaig stated that the Board desires an Executive Director and a Ranch Manager. Vacancy

announcements have been drafted and will be distributed. The closing dates for the applications are staggered so that the Executive Director will be hired before the Ranch Manager.

#### Trust Actions

Mr. Vasquez remarked that the Board is looking at potentially sharing office space in Los Alamos with other agencies, but nothing definite has yet been proposed.

Mr. deBuys proposed that the Board needs to think about the need for an administrative position that would initially be temporary but later evolve into a permanent position.

Mr. Atencio began a discussion of law enforcement. The Secretary of Agriculture's regulations would apply to the Preserve and a draft agreement is forthcoming that would allow closures to be set up for the Preserve. The law enforcement agreement would require the Trust to pay for 50% of a Law Enforcement Officers salary.

#### New Business

Merhege is drafting a vehicle plan and in so doing, checked on lease, purchase, and GSA options. Mr. Atencio noted that there is a need to have vehicles on hand when staff arrive and GSA leases have worked well for the Forest Service. Mr. Stoddard entered a motion that the Board acquire vehicles using GSA leases. Ms. Durkovich seconded and the motion passed by unanimous consent.

#### General Floor Comments

Bob Parker of New Mexico Winter Sports has prepared a winter recreation plan for the Preserve and will provide copies to Board members.

#### Adjourn

Motion to adjourn was made and passed unanimously.

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