

Minutes of the Valles Caldera Trust
PUBLIC MEETING

Thursday, February 28, 2002
1:30 p.m. Santa Clara Pueblo
Española, New Mexico

PRESENT

Stephen Stoddard, Vice Chairman
Gary Ziehe, Executive Director
David Yepa, Member
Palemon Martinez, Member
Thomas Swetnam, Member
Karen Durkovich, Member
Bob Armstrong, Member
Leonard Atencio, Member
Dennis Trujillo, Preserve Manager
Steven Romero, Interim Preserve Manager

PROCEEDINGS

Vice Chair Stoddard presided as Chair in Chairman deBuys' absence,
Governor Gutierrez of Santa Clara Pueblo is the host of this meeting.

VICE CHAIR STODDARD: If the trustees and the staff have all read it, I would entertain a motion to accept the agenda as presented,
Motion seconded and approved
We have three sets of minutes to approve probably at the next meeting or maybe tomorrow at our executive meeting which will be made public at a later date.
The approval of the minutes was dispensed with.

ASSUMPTION OF MANAGEMENT - Financial Management System

VICE CHAIR STODDARD: We are on the brink of assuming management of the Preserve and ending the interim management of the Forest Service. The one main item that remains is to be able to conduct business on our own behalf, and that means we need to establish a financial management system. That is the last big issue, to set up the financial management system that will meet government standards. We have made that selection. Now it's the process of getting that selection implemented. We will be using an agency called the Bureau of Public Debt who will end up being our service provider for that function of the Trust. We need to move very quickly now and see if we can't get that system installed and in place so that we can assume management from the Forest Service.

Personnel

DR. ZIEHE: We are also in the process of hiring a business manager, and we're conducting interviews at this point in time. We have a good slate of candidates. We should have that selection made hopefully within the next couple of weeks.
We are also looking at a couple of other staffing needs that we have and going into borrowing through detail agreements with some of the other agencies, and hopefully we will have a staff up and running here pretty quickly as soon as we're ready to move into the office space.

Office Space

DR. ZIEHE: The renovations are ongoing. We're in the process of selecting the furniture and the computer equipment that will need to be installed.

MR. PHILLIPS: Ultimately the Trust's offices will be located in Los Alamos. It is in what used to be the restaurant part of the Los Alamos Inn. It's about 1,800 square feet. They are reconfiguring that and doing some construction to make it available for the staff that will ultimately move to Los Alamos.

As part of that, we issued several Requests for Proposals, for vendors to provide furniture and our computer and web base and our information technology systems. We have two responses for furniture only. There's one response where a vendor wants to provide our computer support, and then one vendor wants to do furniture and equipment.

Several of these proposals have been reviewed and we had a presentation by one of the vendors last week. Probably by early next week, Dennis and I and Gary will settle on one or two vendors and hopefully let that contract.

All of this funding is being provided by the Los Alamos County Lodgers Tax Association due to an agreement which was made by the county council. The construction of the facility is a little behind schedule, but we're still shooting for early April to move in and start up.

DR. ZIEHE: From start to finish, from the time we let the contract until they have everything set up for us, is about 30 days.

LOGO CONTEST

MR. WHITTINGTON: The contest generated over 130 applications. There was a review of several art experts from the Santa Fe area that narrowed down the list to five or six, and then the Board looked at those five or six and went through and looked at the rest of the 130 or so. The design was presented from the final winner. We have the understanding that we can go back to the designer and make a few minor corrections in relation to a few design elements like the spacing and the lettering and maybe put a little stream down through the Valles so it doesn't look like a lake, and maybe a couple of other things as well.

The winning design is from Jeff Fischer of Portland, Oregon, and this is it in black and white.

He runs a one-man design shop. About 80 percent of that is logo designs. He does all the secondary designs for the Seattle Seahawks, the Portland Trailblazers, a lot of brew pubs and coffee houses in the Pacific Northwest, also very active in the nonprofit logo design area.

Dennis Trujillo spoke to him, and apparently he is extremely excited about winning and willing to work with the Board to fine tune the design the way that everybody wants it.

PLANNING/MEETING SCHEDULE

VICE CHAIR STODDARD: We are going to be doing some board business in Albuquerque in March, and as a consequence our next public meeting will be April 16 and 17.

DR. ZIEHE: Our intent is to have that meeting in Los Alamos and have a welcoming/house warming into our new office space.

MS. DURKOVICH: In the agenda for today we're working on both range management and the livestock grazing program and on the elk hunt, two of our publics that we deal with. I want you to know that tomorrow we are also, in our executive session, going to begin to talk about public

access, because this place belongs to the public, and you deserve the right to walk on it and hunt and fish and do things that you want.

It's a little more difficult for us to deal with this issue because we have to do some infrastructure things, like make sure the roads are acceptable, we need water, we need toilets. The water at headquarters is not potable on the ranch at all. We have to build an entire new water system, and it will take some time. We will be discussing in a beginning way public access tomorrow in our executive session.

INVENTORY AND MONITORING

DR. SWETNAM: Last January we had a very successful couple of meetings with scientists and researchers who have been doing projects out on the Preserve. We had an open session of the Jemez Mountains Biological Symposium. It was held in Santa Fe at the State Lands Office. We heard presentations by a dozen or so people who have been doing various kinds of inventories of wildlife and plants and water on the Preserve.

The next day, the Board met with a smaller group of scientists, and we heard some more detailed reports of some of the projects, in particular, the projects that we had been funding to get new information on the wildlife and the plants and other aspects of the Preserve.

We had a good chance to build some collaborations with Los Alamos National Laboratory, with the U.S. Geological Survey, the Forest Service, the University of New Mexico, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, New Mexico State University, Jornada Experimental Station, and quite a few other institutions were represented at that meeting.

The scientists interacted with the Board, and they offered some recommendations for future research.

Next, we are continuing to receive reports from the inventory and monitoring work that took place on the Preserve last summer. We recently received two new reports which the Board has not seen yet, one of them from the National Riparian Service Team.

This National Riparian Service Team is an interdisciplinary group of scientists from the BLM, Forest Service, and a couple of other agencies, and they came to the Preserve last summer and spent, I believe, more than a week looking at the issues of rangeland health and riparian issues on the Preserve.

They have now provided to us an assessment of the status of the Preserve in terms of the watershed conditions and range conditions. They drew upon some other work that had been done by Steve McWilliams with Santa Fe National Forest and other research that is going on out there, and they provided us a draft report.

This draft report is currently being reviewed by Craig Allen, our science advisor from USGS, and by me and a couple of other external scientists, and there will be a final version of that ready, I think, within a month or so.

We currently have, at my last count, maybe nine different reports. We're working toward getting these reports up on the web site.

The second report that just recently came in is on whirling disease. The report indicates the disease is not present on the preserve. Now we have a report that details the sampling, and this is in review also.

The other reports that we have include trails and historic roads.

We have a report, a bird survey, that was done by traveling through the Preserve and tallying birds. Regarding Raptors, we just recently received a report from Terry Johnson that is a summary of his findings regarding Bald Eagles, Golden Eagles, Peregrine Falcons and Mexican Spotted Owl.

Some of those reports we're not going to make all of the information public because it is somewhat sensitive in terms of the location of endangered species, for example.

We have a couple of reports now on range monitoring conditions. We have a very extensive report

on the establishment of range monitoring plots by Will Barnes. This has a summary of all of the findings of the first year's measurement on the plots set up on the Valles Caldera.

We have a summary range report put together by Kris Havstad of the Jornada Experiment Station. There are two separate reports that are coordinated together on the range condition, and these are now being used in preparation for our grazing plan.

There is a survey of butterflies. We are waiting on a report of the flora, a complete tally of all of the species of plants contracted with Ron Hartman, and we have an interim report on habitat type and vegetation mapping from Estevan Muldavin.

We're now in our planning stages for the next year, for the next summer's inventorying and monitoring work to take place on the Preserve. We're still going through the budget and prioritizing projects that we know we need to get started and continuation of projects we started last year.

One of the ones that we are hoping to get started this next summer is inventory and monitoring of the forest conditions. We're hoping to get a good map of the stand conditions and the history of logging and harvesting that has taken place on the Preserve. We should be able to do this from data sets that we have from the New Mexico State Forestry Division and also from a forest inventory that was conducted in advance of the sale.

The Dunningans had very extensive forest inventory done on the Preserve, and we just were able to get this data recently. We will be able to use that data in preparing our forest inventory that we hope to get started this summer.

RANGE MANAGEMENT AND LIVESTOCK GRAZING

MR. TRUJILLO: What we're doing right now is working on the environmental analysis portion as well as trying to start brainstorming ideas and setting up criteria for how we're going to do the selection and who is going to be able to participate, those types of items.

First let me brief the public on where we're at with the environmental analysis. Last week we had a couple of public meetings held the 21st and 22nd. I know that there was some concern that the scoping letter was sent out late, which it was, and that was by no means to leave anybody out. It was just a matter of logistics.

The deadline that we have for accepting public comments is March 11, and we hope that the public will still continue to please send us their comments, concerns, or ideas on our proposed action on what the Board is proposing out there.

Public meetings were held in Espanola and one at the Jemez Pueblo at the Visitor Center. We're continuing to incorporate those comments, concerns, and ideas and continue with the processes. From here we're going to take it to the next step which is to try to develop alternatives to present to the Board.

In regards to public participation, we're also contemplating the idea of trying to hold maybe one more public meeting sometime in March, maybe somewhere in Santa Fe, just to give everybody else an opportunity.

We hope to come out with something in the next couple of weeks because we know that, again, it is very important for those that will be participating or hope to participate to have as much up-front time as possible to get ready if we do initiate our program.

There was an op^oed that was in the paper and also on the scoping letters. There is a telephone number for ID Team Leader John Phillips where he can be contacted directly or you can send all your comments to myself, Dennis Trujillo, at the Santa Fe office.

MR. MARTINEZ: There was good input in the environmental assessment and ideas on implementation, and I think that is important, and it may be developed as a draft for the Board to consider and then take on at some point. Time is a constraint, and we're trying to do the best we can to see if we can implement something, but we don't know where it's going to end up.

2002 ELK HUNT

VICE CHAIR STODDARD: We have already had some references in the paper, some correct and some incorrect, and at this point I would like the Superintendent of the Santa Fe National Forest, Leonard Atencio, to talk about our plans, and they can be supplemented by Dennis Trujillo who has spent a lot of time on this also.

MR. ATENCIO: Unlike the range program, the hunt program is 98 percent set in concrete. We do have a few more things that we still have to work out, and we're going to hopefully work one of those out here at this meeting.

This is the first time we will hunt in two years since it was acquired so we predict that we will make a lot of mistakes.

There are three reasons why are we going to have a hunt:

- One is that, as quickly as possible we want to manage the herd size and quality on the Valles Caldera in conjunction with what is going on in the whole Jemez Mountains, which is very important.
- We also see this as an opportunity to generate revenue as part of our mandate.
- The third thing is to try to do as good a job as we can to protect the natural resources.

Tomorrow, what we will do is finalize the dates of when we will put the applications out and when it will close.

We're talking about two different kinds of hunts. One hunt is going to be a bull hunt, and that's the part that is experimental and new, and I'm going to talk specifically about that.

The second hunt is a cow hunt, and the cow hunt is going to be run pretty much the same way as all hunts are run in New Mexico by the New Mexico Game and Fish.

Each lottery ticket is going to cost \$25 to provide the chance for one access permit. What needs to be clear for everyone is that we're only selling an opportunity to access the Valles Caldera. The actual license to hunt on the Valles Caldera, will be issued by the State of New Mexico Game and Fish, by the state. That is a different fee.

Our next concern, and it is open for discussion later, is concerning multiple tickets. A person could put in to purchase as many tickets as they want, but the question would be how many could you actually draw. And the other point on that is whether or not they're transferrable.

Again, this is experimental. There are 90 bull tags actually that we're talking about. Eighty-five of them will be selected through the lottery. There are five of these hunts that will be done in a different way, and that is through an auction. These auctions are being done in different venues. There are going to be ten different hunting seasons to hunt antlerless elk. There will be a total of 150 antlerless elk permits issued. And, again, these are going to be issued by the New Mexico Game and Fish.

Information on how and what hunts to apply for is available in the New Mexico Game and Fish 2002-2003 Proclamation

This would be the basic process; you will be applying for a bull hunt access. You'll submit your name, and you will have five hunts to select from. You can enter all five hunts, if you want to buy one ticket per hunt or five or ten or whatever, but you have five different hunts to choose from. The first one is archery, and then there are three different rifle hunts, and the last is a muzzle. We'll have a separate draw for each one of the five hunts.

For hunt number one on archery, there will be 20 different permits available. The rifle, one of them will be 15, and the other two will be 20, and then muzzle, the last one, will have 10.

DR. ZIEHE: The way that the lottery would be set up is for each entry that you pay \$25, you are entering in one of those five pools.

There are five hunts that we will be drawing. Each hunt will be a separate pool, and each entry in each one of those pools would be a \$25 chance. That's just to make it clear. You can't check all five hunts and pay \$25 and be entered in all five hunts. That is just to simplify the process of the draw, to narrow it down. Each individual hunt will be a separate pool from which we are drawing from.

MR. TRUJILLO: In regard to outfitters on the Valles Caldera Preserve, for the five auctioned permits, the one that was just raffled off at Reno and the other four, the Trust will select through a Request for Proposal or for Quote, specifying our criteria, what we want out there in regards to outfitting and guide services. We in turn will select somebody from those proposals based on probably best value and what we think is the best program for us to use.

The rest of the 85 that get drawn will have a choice of either selecting an outfitter or guide from a list that we'll provide that's licensed by the state, or they might want to go ahead and hunt on their own and bring what we call the buddy system, bring somebody with them. One person will be allowed to come with that person that gets selected. But on those 85, you will have a choice of either selecting a particular outfitter that is on the list or going out on your own.

Those that will be going out on your own will have some representation from the Trust, from the employees that will act as chaperones with you out there.

DR. ZIEHE: For those selected in the lottery, if you choose an outfitter, that will be up to you to work out details with that outfitter.

We'll be putting out some information to all of the registered outfitters in New Mexico and letting them know how they can get on the approved list. That will require some orientation because we want to make sure that the outfitters that are out there with hunters are familiar with the area, and all the guides that will be out there will be familiar with the area as well. They will have a process that they will have to go through to be included on that list.

DR. ZIEHE: We're working out details right now with the Public Land Interpretative Association to actually conduct the mailing, and we're hoping to have that finalized. They will be doing all the mailing and receiving all the entries and accounting and assigning numbers to each entrant and making sure it all gets into a database that we can then run through a random selection process, and we will have help from New Mexico State University to make those selections randomly.

It will be completely hands-off by the Trust. It will be sent to New Mexico State, and they will conduct that random selection of the entries as we receive them.

MR. ARMSTRONG: No member of our staff or our group will be able to participate in the lottery, or any of our employees, or family.

DR. ZIEHE: Each applicant would receive an applicant number. They would have a unique number for each applicant, each individual that applies. Then for each pool, for each entry that that person has in each of those five pools, they will be assigned a unique number for each one of those entries. Each \$25 raffle chance will be assigned an individual, a unique number, or identification so that that can be entered in that pool for the draw.

VICE CHAIR STODDARD: We have had the utmost cooperation from the New Mexico Game and Fish and the Commission, and we are working on their recommendations insofar as the number of bulls and the number of cows that we allocate hunts for and so forth.

MR. ATENCIO: Each lottery ticket provides one chance for one access permit. Persons buying

multiple tickets may win multiple permits, and that's the one we need to discuss. You're free to apply for a license anywhere in the State of New Mexico, and you can also apply for an access permit on Valles. But if you luck out and you draw out both, you won't be able to hunt under both permits. You can only hold one license in the state.

Access permits may either be used by the recipient or any individual of the recipient's choice through sale, barter or gift. We are not going to change the transferrable part.

VICE CHAIR STODDARD: The proposition is before the Board and we'll refer to it this way. We'll call "For Cap," which is just one chance, one winner, all he gets no matter how many chances he bought. And "No Cap" would be he would get ?? whatever number he has drawn out that were winners, he can have all of them because they are transferable. That will be the two propositions.

MR. ATENCIO: The other thing is, the only cap that we're talking about is the cap for the winners on the Valles Caldera. There is no cap on the number of times you can apply. Here is my proposal. I would like to make a motion, Mr. Vice Chairman, and it would go something like this, that persons buying multiple tickets may not win multiple permits.

VICE CHAIR STODDARD: Do I hear a second?

MR. MARTINEZ: Second.

VICE CHAIR STODDARD: No further discussion necessary. Put your hands up might be the best. All in favor of the motion as stated?

We show Dr. Swetnam, Mr. Atencio, Ms. Durkovich, Mr. Yepa and Mr. Martinez as voting for a cap.

MR. ARMSTRONG: Count me as for the cap.

VICE CHAIR STODDARD: The record will show then that the vote was unanimous in favor of having a cap.

DR. ZIEHE: Resolution that staff has drafted to be voted on; "Whereas the Valles Caldera Trust was established by Congress to provide management of the Valles Caldera National Preserve under the Valles Caldera Preservation Act and other applicable laws; and whereas the Board of Trustees must maintain public confidence in its ability to conduct its duties in a fair and impartial manner with the best interest of the Trust and the Preserve in mind; and whereas the Board of Trustees has elected to conduct a public lottery to select individuals who will be authorized to access the Preserve for the purposes of hunting bull elk, and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish will conduct a public draw for hunting antlerless elk during the 2002 hunting season; and whereas participation by members of the Board of Trustees and employees of the Trust in such lottery and authorized elk hunts during the 2002 hunting season could be viewed by the public as compromising the Trust's objectivity in determining lottery winners in a fair and impartial manner; now therefore it be resolved that no member of the Board of Trustees nor any employee of the Trust nor members of their immediate families will be authorized to participate in the taking of any elk from the Preserve during the 2002 hunting season."

The Chair would entertain a motion to approve the resolution as just read by Dr. Ziehe.

All in favor raise their right hand.

The motion is approved as written and read by Dr. Ziehe. This needs to be read and signed by our Secretary, Mr. Yepa, and by Mr. deBuys, our Chair, and it will be entered into the record that way.

INITIATION OF ROADS, WATER SYSTEM, AND NOXIOUS WEED ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

DR. ZIEHE: We're moving forward on the roads, and the staff at Santa Fe National Forest is assisting us in preparing contracts to improve ?? actually reconstruct the existing entry road from Highway 4 almost to the headquarters, to the cattle guard, just before you get to the headquarters area, plus four bridges that have either collapsed completely or are in bad shape. That is in the process. We will be doing whatever is required under NEPA to make sure that we can get all of that done.

The second issue is the water system. We have had a complete failure of the water treatment system at the headquarters area. We're in the process of determining what portion of that system we can replace this season.

It may end up being just the catchment facility. It is a springwater capture facility. We have no well water in the headquarters area. We need the catchment and the treatment part of that done as quickly as possible with the delivery system to be put off until we can make sure that we have all of the clearances and the appropriate documentation on that.

DR. SWETNAM: We don't have a good quantitative understanding of what the impacts of the elk have been and how they are changing through time. Part of the strategy and our thinking about a future grazing program and also a future inventory and monitoring program, is to try to approach this in an experimental way where whatever grazing that we do out there we have good controls and we have set in place measurement devices, and we're following it through time so that we can begin to separate out the influence of cattle versus elk and how this changes on a year-to-year basis.

MR. ATENCIO: We are trying to get a handle on the elk numbers because that is very important. As far as water is concerned, the Valles Caldera is very important to water in the Jemez Mountains. So that is another area that is very important.

And another thing that we're finding out is that there's over 25,000 acres of pure high mountain grasslands up there that are very important. We're seeing that the Valles Caldera is very important for a lot of people and different uses.

MR. GLEN CASE: We're trying to determine what impact the elk have had in the last two years because they haven't been hunted. There shouldn't be much impact. The Dunnigans were killing 65 or 75 bulls a year and 135 or 180 cows a year. Over two years this is, 150 or 160 bulls and maybe 300 cows. When you compare that to 3,000 head of elk on the Valles Caldera, I think you're not going to see much difference in the actual use of the property.

As far as the actual numbers of elk in the Jemez, and we do agree that the herd on the Valles Caldera is the nucleus of the elk herd in Unit 6, in 1998 we had about 6,000 head of elk in the Jemez, and we did a very aggressive hunt that year. We had about 3,000 antlerless permits in the Jemez. We knocked that herd down to about 3,800 elk, and it has slowly started growing again. We just completed our surveys up there three weeks ago and just got the data back. With the state-of-the-art sightability index we are using now on our surveys, we are trying to get an actual population number, it looks like we have about 4,500 head up in the Jemez. That herd has grown by about 500.

That is what we call the pre-hunt population, that's how many elk we have today. After the cows have calves this spring and those elk, the ones that survive through the summer before next year's fall hunt, will be a pre-hunt population. We should have in excess of 5,000 head of elk before the hunt next year.

We will have a slight increase of permits next fall, not a great increase, but we're trying to stabilize that population to about 4,000, 4,500 head of elk post-hunt population is what we're trying to get

to.

DR. ZIEHE: Right now the options are what are being developed, and that is the product of all the comments that we'll get in. The public comment period is open until March 11 for written comments, and as those comments come in, those will help us frame those various options. So the proposal is as it stands. We basically put those side boards on it, that it will be from zero to 2,000 in this current proposal.

It is premature now to really talk about the various alternatives because that is what this public comment period is for, it's just to help frame those.

MR. ATENCIO: The grazing program, at least this proposal, it is short term, and then we also need to look at a long-term grazing program for the Valles Caldera.

Two different options were presented;

One is probably going to be short-term. It could be one or two years.

Second, is the need to initiate a long-term grazing program for the Valles Caldera using a lot more information than we have presently.

MR. SANCHEZ: Historically there was 6,000 head of cattle run up there, and the numbers that I'm getting recently are leaning towards 10,000 head. That needs to be considered up front, and we need those economic analyses based on those historic figures so the public can make a decision on how many cattle we need to have up there and what kind of benefits there is going to be to the public.

DR. ZIEHE: Regarding county taxes; Basically under payment of taxes, Sandoval County is receiving more under PILT as government land than they do in taxes, and the magnitude is even greater there.

As far as the provision of grazing fees, the legislation that sets up the Preserve allows for all the fees that are collected for whatever purpose to come back to the Preserve without regard to any of the splits that are on other public lands. That's the way that that legislation was set up, so that all of those monies come back into the Trust and the Trust then uses that in the furtherance of the purposes of the Act as it says, but that's for the management of the Preserve.

The grazing program will have no impact from the standpoint of fees collected on the Preserve to any of those surrounding areas. What the impact will be, the economic impact of that, is more livestock in the area. That's at least potentially.

MR. ATENCIO: In the Valles Caldera, the mandate is that once the Board took over management, they would prepare a comprehensive plan. The Board realizes that we need to get on with managing some of the resources, for example, elk, and managing the herds and all that, and the effect on the overall Jemez Mountains, we want to begin to try and manage that. We're trying to accomplish a comprehensive management plan, but at the same time, we're trying to manage it as it was designated, and that is to be a working ranch, as quickly as possible and be responsible to the public.

DR. SWETNAM: The inventory and monitoring work is never going to be completed, particularly the monitoring. The whole idea of monitoring is that you track things through time.

We have a year of measurements that we have obtained. Now we have put in measurement sites where we have sampled the range conditions. That is a start. If we're going to initiate a grazing program this next summer, we're going to build into it an experimental approach where we have controls. We have some grazed and ungrazed areas and probably some exposures so that we can establish the different combinations of cows without elk, cows and elk, and neither.

This a fairly standard approach that is necessary in land management. You have to move forward and build an adaptive management program where you're experimenting and learning as you go. And we have obtained at least one year of inventory data for this first year.

VICE CHAIR STODDARD:

No other comments from the board or floor at this time.

The Chair will entertain a motion to adjourn.

(Moved and seconded.)

Thank you very much for coming out today. We very much appreciate it. It's your input that helps us make our decisions.

(The hearing concluded at 3:30 p.m.)

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