

VALLES CALDERA TRUST PUBLIC MEETING
Friday, May 23, 2003 9:00 a.m.
Fuller Lodge, Los Alamos, New Mexico

PRESENT:

William deBuys, Chairman
Palemon Martinez, Vice Chairman
Thomas Swetnam, Member
David Yepa, Member
Leonard Atencio, Member
Tracy Hephner, Member
Barbara Johnson, Member
Larry Icerman, Member
Gary Ziehe, Executive Director
Jack McCarthy, Legal Counsel

ALSO PRESENT:

Rich Engstrom, Business Manager; Dennis Trujillo, Preserve Manager; Randy McKee, Ranch Foreman; Kimber Barber, Recreation Specialist; Julie Grey, Communications Manager; Bob Parmenter, Preserve Scientist; Rick Dustin, Recreation Manager

AGENDA

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS
2. INSTALLATION OF NEW BOARD MEMBERS
3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
4. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES
5. OLD BUSINESS
 - a) Summer Recreation
 - b) Highway 4 Corridor
 - c) Interim Livestock Grazing
 - d) NEPA Procedures
 - e) Fire Management Plan
6. NEW BUSINESS
 - a) Review of Trust Bylaws
 - b) Special Hunting Access and Procedures
 - c) Vehicle Use Policy - Emergency Response
7. PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENTS
 - a) Financial Report and Budget Implementation
 - b) Research, Inventory and Monitoring
 - c) Forest Treatments
 - d) Noxious Weed Control
8. PUBLIC COMMENTS
9. ADJOURN

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman deBuys opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. He recognized Senator Steve Stoddard in the audience as a former Board member. He introduced the three new Board members:

Tracy Hephner of Wagon Mound filling the wildlife management position

Barbara Johnson of Santa Fe filling the conservation position

Larry Icerman of Santa Fe filling the financial position

The Chairman also introduced Dr. Bob Parmenter as the new Preserve Scientist and recognized Dr. Craig Allen for his efforts in building the science program during the first two years of Trust operation.

INSTALLATION OF NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Dr. deBuys administered the oath of office to the three new Board members.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The Chairman presented the meeting agenda for approval. Mr. Atencio moved to approve the agenda as written. The motion was seconded by Mr. Martinez and approved unanimously.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Dr. deBuys also presented the meeting minutes from the April 8, 2003 Board meeting. After discussion of some technical corrections to the draft minutes, Dr. Swetnam moved to approve the minutes as amended. The motion was seconded by Mr. Martinez and unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS

a) Summer Recreation

Dr. Ziehe presented four proposals for interim summer recreation programs. The four were:

1. Hiking: Seven hikes proposed on existing roadways, starting with four and expanding as logistics permit;
2. Fishing: Starting on the San Antonio Creek and expanding to the East Fork of the Jemez River after coordination and approval from the NM Department of Game and Fish;
3. Van tours on existing Preserve roads; and
4. Wagon rides on existing Preserve roads.

After a lengthy questioning of the Executive Director by Board members regarding the logistics and monitoring of individual programs, the Chairman opened the floor for questions from the public. There were several questions clarifying the logistics of individual activities. In addition, there was a question of creating access opportunities in the southwest corner of the Preserve. Dr. Ziehe explained that this is currently not anticipated in these interim programs due to cultural resource considerations. In response to another question, Dr. deBuys explained that there is currently no provision for bringing pets onto the Preserve.

Mr. Atencio made a motion to accept the four proposals as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Yepa. In discussion, the motion was amended to direct the staff to ensure a formal request to NM Department of Game and Fish is prepared as part of the fishing program. The motion was passed unanimously as amended.

b) Highway 4 Corridor

The Executive Director presented a proposal to begin planning for entrance signage and interpretive kiosks along the Highway 4 corridor through the Preserve. He explained that this planning will be conducted in coordination with the NM State Highway and Transportation Department. In discussion, the Board members asked if it was possible to obtain T-21 Scenic Byway funds to assist in any construction within the corridor (yes), and if the Board will have the opportunity to review any educational or interpretive material that goes into the kiosks (yes). The Chairman then opened the floor for public comment. Mr. Jervis asked if pole fences will be used as the Preserve will have an abundance of pine as a result of the thinning (not contemplated but possible). It was also suggested that pedestrian walkways and cycling lanes be included in any designs.

Ms. Hephner made a motion to accept the staff's proposal on the Highway 4 corridor and to direct staff to continue planning on the project. The motion was seconded by Mr. Atencio. In discussion, Mr. Atencio proposed an amendment to the motion that directs staff to give preference to using native materials in the Highway 4 construction effort where feasible. The motion was put before the Board and passed unanimously as amended.

c) Interim Livestock Grazing.

Dr. Ziehe reported that, consistent with the authority given him at the April 8, 2003 Board meeting, he signed a decision on May 20, 2003 to implement Alternative 2 of the 2003 interim grazing program. Alternative 2 which would allow grazing at all three major valleys and the Cerro Seco pasture that was added in the amendment to the Environmental Assessment this year with the caveat in the decision that utilization of the Valle Toledo would be in cases where there was a need to relieve short-term resource concerns in other grazed areas.

Dr. deBuys asked the Executive Director to review the details of the two grazing programs being proposed for this year. Dr. Ziehe outlined the details of the replacement heifer and cow/calf operations the Trust will run this year. Mr. Trujillo added that around 50 applicants applied for approximately 1,500 animal units to fill the 350 units available in each program. Dr. Parmenter reviewed the ecological condition of the Preserve and presented the Range Readiness Team's conclusion that the range conditions will support the proposed number of cattle in both programs.

The Chairman opened the floor for public comment and a detailed discussion followed regarding the timing of the enclosure construction and how the Trust is planning its operations to minimize cattle interactions with riparian areas. Dr. Ziehe provided a description of the Crystalix experiment that is being run to help control cattle location. A question arose regarding the possibility of reintroducing sheep to the Preserve. Dr. Ziehe and Mr. McKee outlined the difficulty of any reintroduction as a majority of previously installed sheep fencing has been removed.

d) NEPA Procedures

The Chairman asked the Executive Director to provide a status report on finalizing the Trust's NEPA Procedures. Dr. Ziehe explained that the draft procedures were released for public comment on February 11, 2003. He went on to summarize the comments that were received and

detail the response that the Trust has compiled to address and incorporate the comments that were received. After Dr. Ziehe addressed a number of clarifying questions from the Board and public, the Chairman outlined the next steps to publish the final procedures as: 1) the Board approves the procedures that have been rewritten in light of the public comments received; 2) the Trust then requests that the Council on Environmental Quality approves them; 3) once they are approved, they are published in the Federal Register as final approved procedures.

Mr. Yepa moved that the Board adopt the May 17 draft of the Trust's NEPA Procedures and request approval of the procedures by the Council on Environmental Quality. The motion was seconded by Mr. Martinez. During discussion, Mr. Atencio suggested an amendment to the motion to ensure the response to public comments received is included in the procedures. The amended motion passed unanimously.

e) Fire Management Plan

The Executive Director provided a status report on the final development of pre-suppression and suppression agreements between the Trust and the Santa Fe National Forest. Both agreements are complete and ready to be signed.

NEW BUSINESS

a) Trust Bylaws

Dr. Ziehe explained that the staff had reviewed the Trust bylaws and found two areas where the bylaws should be amended. The first change would drop the requirement for the Trust to announce public meetings in the Federal Register. The second change would eliminate the requirement for a corporate seal.

Mr. Martinez made a motion to adopt the amendments to the Trust's Bylaws as proposed. The motion was seconded by Dr. Swetnam and passed unanimously. Two-thirds of the seated Trustees having voted affirmatively as required for changes, the Trust Bylaws were amended.

b) Special Hunting Access and Procedures

The Executive Director outlined for the Board a request from the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish to provide access to two special hunters who have been authorized through legislation passed in the state legislature this past session. The legislation allows these special hunters, who are terminally ill and have requested through an authorized or an approved wish-granting foundation, to have a hunt experience. The Department is requesting this of all operations similar to the Trust, such as other private lands that offer exceptional elk hunting, and they would like for the Trust to grant them the ability to offer the Preserve as an option for those individuals to hunt at any time in season.

After Dr. Ziehe addressed some clarifying questions, Ms. Johnson moved to approve the request made by the New Mexico Game & Fish Department. The motion was seconded by Mr. Atencio and approved unanimously.

c) Vehicle Use Policy

Dr. Ziehe explained to the Board the staff's work in developing administrative policies for the Trust. In lieu of a finalized vehicle use policy, he informed the Board of his decision to assign a

vehicle to the Preserve Manager on a full-time basis for official business and emergency response uses.

PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENTS

a) Financial Report and Budget Implementation

Dr. Ziehe outlined for the Board the current status of the finances and explained that due to unforeseen expenses the approved budget for FY 2003 will have to be revised. The Chairman asked the Executive Director to be prepared to present a revised FY 2003 budget for consideration at the next Board meeting.

b) Research, Inventory and Monitoring

Dr. Parmenter, the Preserve Scientist, presented a summary of all of the research, inventory and monitoring projects currently ongoing on the Preserve. He fielded clarifying questions from both the Board and the public.

c) Forest Treatments

Dr. Ziehe gave a status report on the forest treatment efforts being undertaken in cooperation with the Walatowa Initiative and the Pueblo of Jemez to provide thinning on the southwest corner of the Preserve and around the headquarters area. Based on a review of the proposed area, the Pueblo is reassessing the cost to determine how many acres of the Preserve will be able to be thinned within the grant funding they have available for the effort.

d) Noxious Weed Program

The executive Director explained the current proposal to treat Canada Thistle along the roadways under a categorical exclusion and then analyze the broader noxious weed control needs of the Preserve. This project will commence as soon as the decision for the project is issued.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The Chairman then opened the floor for public comment.

Mr. Ken Kujak asked how the Trust was going to handle extreme drought conditions if the monsoons do not materialize. Chairman deBuys stated that the Trust will follow the lead of the Santa Fe National Forest with respect to any closure orders.

Ms. Christamar expressed her wish to see the Preserve entry fees lowered. The Chairman noted that the comment period on fees is open through June 7th and encouraged her to comment.

Mr. Staley Adde, a resident of the Jemez, noted that volunteers get on the Preserve for free. Mr. Trujillo summarized the Trust's volunteer program, currently comprised of about 80 volunteers.

Mr. Jervis encouraged the Trust to implement its thinning program as soon as possible.

ADJOURN

There being no more comments, the Chair entertained Mr. Atencio's motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Martinez and the motion was carried unanimously.