

VALLES CALDERA TRUST (VCT) STRATEGIC PLANNING DOCUMENT

NOVEMBER 2006 VERSION DERIVED FROM THE OCTOBER 2005 PLANNING SESSION

Vision Statement

The vision of the Valles Caldera Trust is to create a successful model of public land management that protects and preserves the Valles Caldera National Preserve's unique values.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Valles Caldera Trust is to operate the Preserve as a working ranch; to become financially self-sustaining; to meet the varied needs of visitors; to utilize and steward the multiple resources of the Preserve; and to work collaboratively with our neighbors.

Overarching Goal

To operate as a Working Ranch in the broadest definition.

Working Ranch Definition (Short)

An operation that places its primary emphasis on stewardship of resources as the foundation for both ecological and economic sustainability.

Working Ranch Definition (Expanded)

An operation that:

- *emphasizes stewardship of resources as the foundation for ecological and economic sustainability;*
- *uses natural resources for revenue-generating activities (e.g., grazing, hunting, fishing, hiking, bird-watching, scientific research, and other low-impact recreational activities);*
- *applies adaptive management on a day-to-day basis to ensure resource protection; and*
- *monitors the impact of its activities.*

Six Actions Necessary to Achieve the Overarching Goal

1. Define, communicate, and share the VCT's mission

- articulate the VCT's concept of a working ranch to the staff and public
- model and teach innovative resource management and ranching practices
- improve the VCT website and communications with our neighbors, the Congressional delegation, and the public
- develop educational programs around the VCT's current activities
- investigate the concept of an educational interpretive center on the Preserve

2. Implement viable natural resource programs

- establish an ecologically sound and financially sustainable livestock program that includes an educational component

- complete forage management assessment tasks and identify related efforts necessary for the comprehensive management of the forage and forests of the Preserve
- design a flexible recreation program for the next five years, as comprehensive public access and use planning is undertaken
- design in-house fishery and wildlife management programs for an interim period
- establish a law enforcement program on the Preserve
- work toward a Preserve-wide grazing plan through the forage management effort and a new Environmental Assessment (EA) for grazing
- complete the forest management and fire use plans

3. Demonstrate fiscal responsibility

- establish an auditable accounting system
- be fiscally accountable at all levels
- work toward financial independence and self-sustainability
- establish a fund-raising organization with 501(c)(3) nonprofit tax status
- study options for increasing income from all programs on the Preserve, especially elk hunting

4. Practice science-based, adaptive management

- design a practical, affordable, and integrated monitoring program
- establish management needs as the priority for the approval of proposed research projects
- require outside or “pure” research projects to be self-funded, including overhead expenses for the Trust

5. Develop and operate as a “right-sized” organization

- maintain a smaller, more focused, properly supervised staff
- identify key positions to supervise a dynamic and flexible staff
- recognize and work to our capacity
- create an enjoyable work environment

6. Evaluate existing facilities and identify needs for additional infrastructure

- assess the condition of existing facilities
- evaluate the need and potential uses of existing facilities
- identify additional facilities that are needed
- address safety and esthetic concerns at the front entrance of Preserve
- establish replacement costs on existing facilities for insurance purposes
- remove staff from unsafe and substandard housing

Near-Term Goals Related to the Actions Supporting Attainment of the Overarching Goal

Goal 1 - Communicate with and educate the VCT’s constituencies about the mission of the Trust
Desired Outcome: The VCT staff, neighbors, elected officials, and the public understand and are able articulate the concept of the Preserve operating as a working ranch
Objectives. Achieving this outcome requires focusing on four specific objectives:

1. Evaluate the current definition of a working ranch and explore ways to rephrase or expand the definition to achieve a clearer understanding by the VCT's constituencies
 2. Bring the improved definition before the public at every opportunity
 3. Develop a communications strategy and plan that includes education and outreach and integrates the VCT's mission and the Interpretive Master Plan
 4. Develop a plan to fully integrate the VCT website with the communications plan
- Key Strategies and Actions. To accomplish these objectives, the VCT will take the following four actions:
- a. Review and update the position description for a Communications Director
 - b. Hire a Communications Director
 - c. Refine the definition of a working ranch, and use the definition, or a select portion thereof, on all communications from the Trust
 - d. Establish a timeline for the Communications Director to develop a communications plan, based on strategic guidance by the Board of Trustees and the Executive Director

Metrics. Progress toward this goal will be measured by:

- Hiring a senior communications-oriented employee during FY07
- Implementation of a workable, efficient, and effective VCT website for public programs during FY07
- Completion of the revision of the definition of a working ranch, as appropriate
- Regularly posting appropriate scientific and management data on the VCT website during FY07 and beyond
- Development and maintenance of effective communications avenues other than the VCT website during FY07 and beyond

Goal 2 - Implement viable natural resource programs

Desired Outcome: To establish a comprehensive and affordable natural resource program

Objectives. Achieving this outcome requires focusing on four specific objectives:

1. Complete the assessment work for forage management and identify additional efforts necessary for the development of a comprehensive forage management plan for the Preserve
2. Complete the assessment work for public use and access and identify additional efforts necessary for the development of a comprehensive public use and access plan for the Preserve
3. Compile data and draft the State of the Preserve report, which should serve as an essential component of a variety of future planning efforts
4. Establish plans for law enforcement and emergency services on the Preserve

Key Strategies and Actions. To accomplish these objectives, the VCT will take the following three actions:

- a. Identify the components, costs, and tasks for the development of the comprehensive forage management and comprehensive public use and access plans
- b. Request assistance from experts (e.g., Bob Cunningham of the U.S. Forest Service) to identify the purpose and uses of the State of the Preserve report

- c. Investigate alternatives and strategies for law enforcement and emergency services programs, based on, in part, discussions with neighboring agencies and pueblos

Metrics. Progress toward this goal will be measured by:

- Completion of the assessment work for a forage management plan by yearend FY06 (*Accomplished*)
- Completion a comprehensive forage management plan during FY08
- Initiation of a comprehensive public access and use plan during FY08 with completion scheduled during FY09
- Completion of the State of the Preserve report by August 2007
- Preparation and implementation of a plan for law enforcement and emergency services by yearend FY07

Goal 3 - Operate with fiscal responsibility

Desired Outcome: Define a path to achieve financial self-sustainability

Objectives. Achieving this outcome requires focusing on five specific objectives:

1. Establish an auditable financial system
2. Implement VCT staff responsibility and accountability through program-based accounting procedures
3. Optimize revenues while providing fair access opportunities for the programs on the Preserve
4. Identify an aggressive fund-raising strategy
5. Obtain liability insurance covering visitors and volunteers

Key Strategies and Actions. To accomplish these objectives, the VCT will take the following seven actions:

- a. Search for a Chief Financial and Administrative Officer concurrently with the Executive Director search so that the position can be filled quickly after a new Executive Director is hired
- b. Produce quarterly income statements and balance sheets
- c. Continue the investigation into options for optimizing income from all programs on the Preserve
- d. Establish a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization for fund-raising purposes
- e. Begin the selection process for engaging an auditing firm and prepare financial records for audit
- f. Develop prospective financials for FY07 and retrospective program financials for FY06
- g. Contact commercial insurance agents to investigate the availability of general liability coverage for a wholly-owned federal corporation

Metrics. Progress toward this goal will be measured by:

- Hiring a senior financial and administrative employee during FY06 (*Accomplished*)
- Preparation of quarterly auditable financial statements by yearend FY07
- Expanding revenues derived from existing and new programs on the Preserve by 15% per year
- Obtaining 501(c)(3) nonprofit tax status for a new associated fund-raising organization and initiation of an initial fund-raising program by yearend 2006

- Completion of a fiscal audit for FY07 and beyond
- Acquisition of appropriate general liability insurance during FY06
(*Accomplished*)

Goal 4 - Practice science-based, adaptive management

Desired Outcome: To be able to modify or adapt the natural and cultural resource programs on the Preserve based on scientific information from program monitoring activities

Objectives. Achieving this outcome requires focusing on six specific objectives:

1. Design and implement practical, affordable monitoring programs for each resource activity, as specified in the VCT's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) procedures
2. Develop protocols for identifying specific parameters to be monitored
3. Evaluate established protocols from other national programs for possible adoption
4. Establish monitoring is an integral part of activities under every program, including operational designs and estimated costs
5. Investigate partnerships with other agencies and organizations as a potential way to reduce monitoring costs and improve efficiencies
6. Present monitoring data and information to the Board of Trustees on an annual basis and make these data and information easily available to other agencies and the public

Key Strategies and Actions. To accomplish these objectives, the VCT will take the following six actions:

- a. Identify the diagnostic monitoring parameters for each resource use, preceding and accompanying the development of the program
- b. Analyze and synthesize the existing data for trends and demonstrate an understanding of the corresponding system dynamics
- c. Evaluate current monitoring procedures for effectiveness and affordability
- d. Develop appropriate monitoring parameters before the start of resource use to gain pretreatment data and establish existing conditions
- e. Utilize a full range of monitoring, such as social sciences, physical attributes, and economic indicators, appropriate for the monitoring component of each activity
- f. Develop efficient and effective systems for the timely delivery of monitoring data and information to the Board of Trustees and the VCT's constituencies

Metrics. Progress toward this goal will be measured by:

- Preparation of an annual monitoring plan for FY08 and beyond
- Establishment and implementation of rigorous procedures for selecting research programs to be conducted on the Preserve based on their contribution to science-based, adaptive management during FY07
- Requiring all research programs to generate data for management purposes in a usable and consistent format by FY08
- Expansion of monitoring activities to include social and economic, as well as physical, parameters by FY08
- Development of efficient and effective systems for delivering monitoring data and information to interested parties

Goal 5 - Operate as a dynamic, efficient, and effective organization

Desired Outcome: A cost-effective, flexible organization that plans and implements innovative programs

Objectives. Achieving this outcome requires focusing on four specific objectives:

1. Identify, fill, and retain key management positions
2. Establish a revenue-based staffing plan and organizational chart
3. Prioritize projects and programs
4. Establish and maintain employee accountability

Key Strategies and Actions. To accomplish these objectives, the VCT will take the following six actions:

- a. Retain or hire four key management positions: Executive Director, Preserve Manager, Chief Financial and Administrative Officer, and Preserve Scientist
- b. Hire a Communications Director as a permanent, non-management position
- c. Develop an organizational structure consistent with realistic future revenue projections
- d. Institute program-based accounting that accurately reflects true costs and revenues generated
- e. Develop annual work plans for all full-time employees based on strategic priorities to be included in their performance appraisal plans that support rigorous employee accountability
- f. Implement training programs, as necessary, to achieve employee accountability

Metrics. Progress toward this goal will be measured by:

- Hiring and retaining qualified senior staff during FY 06 (*Accomplished*)
- Staff size consistent with revenue projections by FY08
- Achievement of program-based cost and revenue accounting by yearend FY07
- Development of specific work plans including accountability measures for all full-time employees for FY07 and beyond
- Demonstrated employee accountability during FY07 and beyond

Goal 6 - Evaluate existing infrastructure and identify additional needs

Desired Outcome: Identification of essential infrastructure to contribute to operational efficiencies, to address safety concerns, and to support achievement of financial self-sustainability

Objectives. Achieving this outcome requires focusing on eight specific objectives:

1. Improve the entrance to the Preserve and the visitor service center
2. Repair the potable water collection and distribution system to meet the required water quality standards
3. Design permanent sanitary facilities in keeping with a rural working ranch theme to replace the current portable facilities
4. Identify components of needed infrastructure and separate facilities essential for the operation of the Preserve from those that might be better located off the Preserve
5. Maintain, improve, or remove existing infrastructure and facilities
6. Obtain insurance on essential existing buildings
7. Continue to update the Interpretive Master Plan
8. Identify the transportation and infrastructure components of other planning efforts

Key Strategies and Actions. To accomplish these objectives, the VCT will take the following eight actions:

- a. Engage a contractor for the design and construction of an improved entrance to the Preserve
- b. Engage a contractor to complete the repair of the water collection and distribution system
- c. Work with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to prepare a Programmatic Agreement between the SHPO and the VCT
- d. Engage a contractor to design and build permanent sanitary facilities on the Preserve
- e. Engage a contractor to perform a facilities assessment of all existing buildings, identifying condition deficiencies, maintenance priorities, cost estimates, and assessed values
- f. Engage a contractor to perform an historic structures assessment, documenting historic status of candidate structures and developing guidelines for maintaining such structures
- g. Initiate comprehensive transportation planning consistent with other major planning efforts
- h. Contact commercial insurance agents to investigate the availability of loss coverage for essential infrastructure located on the Preserve

Metrics. Progress toward this goal will be measured by:

- Completion of the design and construction of a new entrance to the Preserve during FY07
- Achievement of compliance with national and state safe drinking water standards for the potable water system on the Preserve during 2006 (*Accomplished*)
- Completion of a Programmatic Agreement with SHPO during FY07
- Completion of a facilities assessment of all existing buildings during FY06 (*Accomplished*)
- Completion of an historical structures assessment of the existing facilities and buildings during FY07
- Installation of improved, permanent sanitary facilities on the Preserve by FY08
- Preparation of annual updates to the Interpretive Master Plan
- Development of a comprehensive transportation plan by FY09
- Acquisition of insurance coverage for the essential infrastructure on the Preserve during FY07

Actions of the Board of Trustees

- Define specific focus areas with measurable outcomes for the next five years, consistent with the Valles Caldera Preservation Act
- Provide clear direction and priorities to the VCT Executive Director and staff
- Move aggressively toward financial self-sustainability
- Demonstrate an integrated approach to providing guidance with decisive action items
- Identify and focus on what is actually accomplishable on the Preserve
- Expand the public understanding of the meaning of a working ranch
- Be experimental and practical, require appropriate monitoring mechanisms, and emphasize the ability to adapt

