

**Valles Caldera Trust**  
**Minutes of the Public Meeting – June 12, 2008**  
Trust Offices  
18161 Highway 4  
Jemez Springs, NM

Board Members Present

William Keleher, Chair  
Stephen Henry, Secretary  
Jim Gosz,  
Tracy Hephner  
Daniel Jiron  
Brad Traver  
Ed Tinsley

Staff Present

Jeff Cross, Executive Director  
Debbie Boggess, Administrative Officer  
Will Breedlove, IT Specialist  
Pam Dale, Human Resources  
Berta Pantoja, Purchasing Agent  
Bob Parmenter, Preserve Scientist  
Marie Rodriguez, Natural Resource Coordinator  
Dennis Trujillo, Preserve Manager

I. Welcome and Introductions

Chair William Keleher opened the meeting at 1:10PM and welcomed the Board members, staff, and public attendees. Chair Keleher informed the meeting that Executive Director Jeff Cross, will be leaving next week to work for the National Park Service's Ocean and Coastal Resources Center in Fort Collins, Colorado. Keleher noted that Cross has contributed greatly to the Trust and will be missed.

**Approval of Agenda**

Chair Keleher asked the Board for approval of the agenda. **Member Tracy Hephner moved and member Ed Tinsley seconded the motion. The agenda was approved.**

**Approval of Minutes**

Keleher asked the Board to approve the minutes from the March 14, 2008 meeting. **Member Steve Henry moved and member Jim Gosz seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.**

II. Board Business

**Executive Session Conducted**

An executive session was conducted via telephone on May 8 to discuss the procedures for securing and qualifications of an Interim Executive Director. , Member Brad Traver, Bandelier National Monument and member Daniel Jiron Santa Fe National Forest were asked to post notices on their respective web sites. Lucia Turner, was among the applicants discussed and was enthusiastically approved by the Board for a six month interim position. Turner has been a Department of Agriculture employee for 42 years and was involved in implementing the legislation that established Preserve.

#### **Approval of Executive Session**

Chair Keleher asked the Board to approve an executive session should one be needed. **Member Hephner motioned and member Tinsley seconded the motion. The motion was passed.**

### III. Operations

#### **FY2008 Budget**

Debbie Boggess, Administrative Officer, presented an update on the FY2008 budget. She referred to a handout which summarized the fiscal year to 5/31/08. The Trust received a \$3.75 million appropriation this fiscal year-coupled with a carry over to total \$4.3 million. As of 5/31 the budget was on target with approximately 50% spent. Boggess also reviewed the revenue summary which included an accumulation of approximately \$3,000,000 since the beginning of the Trust – primarily from fishing, hunting, and other recreational activities.

#### **Action Item: Review Trust Policies**

Jeff Cross reminded attendees of the Board's request for a review of the Trust's policies -20 are in the handbook and seven are under review. Two policies were presented to the Board for their approval. The Collection Officer Policy implements internal controls and standard procedures for handling cash at the two visitor centers. The policy also pre scribes consistent job training and requires employee/supervisor signatures to confirm their compliance with the procedures. Fifteen collection officers are currently employed by the Trust. **Member Hephner motioned to approve the proposed Collection Officer Policy and member Gosz seconded. The policy was approved.**

Pam Dale presented the newly proposed Harassment Policy. The policy is consistent with standards set for all federal agencies. It lists behaviors that are not tolerated and the processes to follow if harassment is claimed. **Member Stephen Henry motioned to approve the proposed Harassment Policy and member Traver seconded. The policy was approved.**

### IV. Existing Programs

#### **2008 Wild Turkey Hunt**

Preserve Manager Dennis Trujillo reported on the 2008 Annual Turkey Hunt. Nineteen permits were issued via either direct purchase (\$1950) or a lottery (\$20 per chance). The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and New Mexico Wild Turkey

Federation received donations to raffle as well. A total of 5 turkeys were taken, the largest weighing around 18 pounds. The total net revenue for the effort was \$17,880.

*An unidentified attendee noted that the hunters and staff did an excellent job. Attendee David Menicucci added that the staff was very knowledgeable and attentive.*

### **Livestock Program**

Trujillo reported on Gary and Suzie Morton's one year contract for cattle grazing on the Preserve. On May 27/29 1960 steers averaging 456 pounds were delivered, vaccinated and chipped. They will be managed as a single herd for a 120 day grazing season, rapidly rotating through the Preserve's pastures. The contractor will be on the Preserve the entire time either camping or using a cabin and will only use pack animals. Gary Morton is as revered as an artist as he is a cowboy. He is the Director of the Working Ranchers Cowboy Association and a member of the New Mexico Arts Commission. Morton commented that he is looking forward to the summer.

*Attendee Randy Logan asked if there is a provision for renewal. (The Trust needs to conduct a full Environmental Assessment(EA) to be able to make a longer commitment to any vendor). Attendee Betsy Barnett asked how future drought will be incorporated into ongoing calculations.(The Trust is using adaptive management techniques so that the carrying capacity will be considered year by year).*

### **Recreation**

Trujillo explained that the spring/summer recreation program began on May 22. The Preserve will be open from 8:00AM – 6:00PM / seven days a week. The program will include: "Spontaneous Visitor Activities" such as no fee hiking and guided hikes; "Advance Reservations-Required Visitor Activities" such as wildlife viewing and horseback riding; and "Special Events" such as the marathon this weekend. Details about all of the summer recreation activities are posted on the web site. All the activities are guided by the management principle of quality not quantity. Summer activities also include work at the front entrance to enhance aesthetics and safety.

*Unidentified attendees expressed the need for more hikes and primitive camping opportunities and expressed a general concern about limited access to the Preserve. (Marie Rodriguez, Natural Resource Coordinator, clarified that the Preserve has an interim camping program which allows camping related to organized special events, some volunteers projects, and the cattle management. She added that a more extensive program will be proposed upon the completion of the Business Plan/Comprehensive Management Planning Process that is currently being conducted by INTRIX. The Business Plan should be available for review by September 2008. After the Business Plan is presented desirable options will then be explored via an Environmental Impact Statement(EIS).*

*Attendee Barnett asked for more information about the qualifications of INTRIX. (Travis Greenwald, Senior Economist from INTRIX explained that Natural Resource Economist Gretchen Geronimo is leading the project. INTRIX has been in business 25 years, and currently has 20 employees).*

*Mrs. Barnett urged the Board to provide numerous and early opportunities for public input in the Business Planning process, in addition to those required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). She also urged the Board not to choose activities that have severe environmental impacts in order to maximize revenues. (Chair Keleher reminded the group that the Trust's statutory mandate requires fiscal sustainability by 2015. INTRIX is exploring ideas for securing revenue that also respect the environmental/cultural spirit of the Preserve. Member Tinsley added that the Trust's annual operational budget is around \$4,000,000 while the current revenues are approximately \$750,000. Congress is planning on reducing appropriations in two years. The Business Plan/Comprehensive Management Planning Process is taking time but The Trust needs to understand the resource to have a sound basis for making future decisions).*

### **Range Readiness**

Preserve Scientist Bob Parmenter presented the range readiness calculations used to assess biomass available for forage in order to determine herd size. Fall biomass estimates are revised in the spring considering the following: winter precipitation, soil moisture, precipitation forecast, stock tank volume, stream flow, and height of forage stub grass. These assessments are conducted on grazeable woodland, mountain meadows, mountain valleys, and riparian areas. The estimates this year determined that the resource could support about 2000 steers. On-going monitoring will be conducted throughout the summer.

*Attendee David Menicucci asked about the status of turkey monitoring project. (Parmenter informed the group that one of the five collared turkeys was shot in Santa Fe National Forest. He also added that they still have 75 more transmitters and hope to get them on turkeys this summer. A preliminary report will be available this fall).*

*An unidentified attendee asked how the Trust would respond to variables such as a drought this summer. (The Trust would speed up the pasture rotation so that utilization rates do not exceed 40%- and if necessary the cattle would be removed early).*

*Attendee David Horne asked if the Trust had any plans for grass burning. (There is no fire management plan at this time).*

*An attendee asked about the Trust's plans to reduce the elk herd if needed. (The Trust can only manage livestock to reduce pressure on the preserve. Fish and Game has regulatory oversight over the elk population. The Board acknowledged*

*that elk will forage where they can in a drought and that it is difficult to protect riparian areas).*

**Historic Structures** –Cultural Resources Coordinator Ana Steffen was unable to attend the meeting so this agenda item was tabled until the September meeting.

V. Public Comment/Discussion

Attendee Dorothy Horne urged the Board to put trails around the 80 miles around the rim. There are currently logging roads and supporting this access would do much to enhance goodwill with the community. (The Board asked staff to study the question and make a recommendation to the Board).

Attendee Tom Ribe, Caldera Action, asked if the EA as amended legally allows for the interim grazing program this summer. He explained that the EA effectively expired in 2003. He reminded the group that NEPA alone provides legal standing for Preserve activities. (Rodriquez explained that the initial EA in 2002 was amended in 2004 and she understands that this allows an interim grazing program. Rodriquez added that she will review the documents again and respond to Ribe individually).

Monique Schoustra, Caldera Action, expressed concern about the continued delays in enhancing public use and access. She noted that citizens who fought for the Preserve expected more access sooner. (Rodriquez reminded the group that the Business Plan will present various alternatives and that preferred alternatives will be folded into a NEPA process that will ultimately result in a Public Use and Access Plan).

An attendee asked about the status of a fire management plan. (The staff is in the process of conducting an inventory of the forest. This data will eventually inform a fire management plan but the timing depends on priorities and funding).

Attendee Schoustra commented that the public is asked to contact the recreation manager for permission for activities but they are unable to reach the manager. (The new recreation manger, Mark Jarvis was offered a new employment opportunity and the Board and staff noted that they are also disappointed and challenged by the staff turnover. The Board has asked members Traver and Jiron to assist by detailing an interim employee to fill that role).

Several attendees expressed frustration about the understaffing. They asked if volunteers could be used to help create more access. (The first step, “cultural clearance” needs a certified archeologist).

An attendee urged the Board to allow hiking on the caldera to the finest views by opening up 1000 acres in the north. She argued that the Trust would not need to establish trails to allow access to these views. She urged the Trust to initiate several easy access activities. (Jeff Cross noted that NEPA does not require a Business

Plan/Comprehensive Management Plan but it is important not to manage the preserve in a piece meal fashion. He explained that the Business Plan will develop a range of options of enterprise activities and the promising alternatives that will then fold into an EIS. Member Tinsley added that the Board is embracing long term comprehensive planning that includes a business model approach. Congress is not willing to add public lands without financial caveats at this time. The Board urged that the best way increase staff is to develop a successful Business Plan and bring that to Congress. Member Tinsley urged the group to understand that management of the Trust is going to involve compromises -balancing a unique vision with financial sustainability).

Attendee Fred Pierson also urged the staff and the Board to provide numerous and early opportunities for input into the Business Plan/Comprehensive Planning Process.

Attendee Menicucci asked if INTRIX has an NEPA specialist on staff and if INTRIX include an estimate of the costs for NEPA compliance (Susan Star is a NEPA specialist on staff and will include cost for compliance in their analysis).

An attendee asked if the Board is concerned about the feasibility of financial sustainability. (Member Traver explained that a component of the planning process is to assess if the proposed activities line up with the vision for the preserve).

Tom Ribe reminded the group that the land will not revert to private use, it belongs to the people who have the power to shape it. It is a political discussion at some point and a dynamic public process.

Member Tinsley listed the categories for revenue considered by INTRIX: lodging hospitality, education/recreation, livestock, hunting, fishing, photography, merchandise, foundations, and natural resources.

VI. Adjournment

Chair Keleher adjourned the meeting at 3:50PM.