

Valles Caldera Trust
Minutes of the Public Meeting – 3/12/09
Hilton Garden Inn
Albuquerque, New Mexico
1:00PM-4:00PM

Board Members Present

Stephen Henry, Chair
Daniel Jiron
Raymond Loretto
Ed Tinsley
Brad Traver
Virgil Trujillo

Staff Present

Gary Bratcher, Executive Director
Rob Dixon, Outdoor Recreation Planner
Kimberly Duval, Public Education and Interpretation
Tim Haarmann, Ranch Foreman
Terry McDermott, Communications and Marketing Manager
Berta Pantoja, Executive Assistant
Bob Parmenter, Preserve Scientist
Dennis Rino, Administrative Officer
Marie Rodriguez, Natural Resource Coordinator
Ana Steffen, Cultural Resource Coordinator
Dennis Trujillo, Preserve Manager

I. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Steve Henry opened the meeting at 1:05PM, welcomed and introduced the Board, staff, and public attendees. Chair Henry specifically welcomed new Board member Virgil Trujillo. Trujillo brings a background in resource management and worked for years as land manager at Ghost Ranch. Chair Henry also introduced Sarah Cobb, Senator Udall's Santa Fe Field Representative, John McAndrews, an Udall Intern, and Patricia Dominguez, Field Representative for Senator Bingaman.

Oath of Office

Chair Henry administered the Oath of Office to new Board member Virgil Trujillo and reappointed member Raymond Loretto

Approval of Agenda

Chair Henry asked the Board for agenda approval. **Member Ed Tinsley moved and member Dan Jiron seconded the motion. The agenda was approved.**

Approval of Minutes

Chair Henry asked the Board to approve the December 11, 2008 public meeting minutes. **Member Jiron moved and member Tinsely seconded the motion to approve the December 11, 2008 meeting minutes. The minutes were approved.**

II. Board Business

Authorize Future Executive Session

Chair Henry asked the Board for permission to conduct an executive session should one be required. **Member Tinsley moved and member Raymond Loretto seconded the motion. The motion was passed.**

Attendee Tom Jervis, Caldera Action, reminded the Board that Public Law 248 requires the Board to cite a specific reason for convening an executive session. (Chair Henry responded that the bylaws allow executive sessions to address confidential personnel decisions etc. He added that the Board never makes final decisions during these sessions.)

Attendee Jervis also requested that minutes from these sessions be posted in a timely manner on the web. (Chair Henry agreed to improve posting the minutes from the sessions.)

Schedule of Public Meetings – 2009

Chair Henry presented the schedule for the 2009 public meetings: June 11th in Los Alamos and September 24th in Los Cruces. Due to a request from an attendee, the Los Alamos meeting will be conducted in the evening beginning at 6:00PM. Chair Henry also announced the plan to conduct open houses in May and September at the Preserve.

III. Management Comments

Executive Director

Steve Henry introduced the new Executive Director, Gary Bratcher, and shared that he brings many years of experience managing large agricultural operations primarily in Central America. Bratcher reviewed a list of issues of concern on which he is focusing. Key issues range from public access and liability concerns to road improvements, water availability, and leasing/borrowing options.

Financial Review- Chief Administrative Officer

Dennis Rino, Administrative Officer, presented an update on the FY2009 budget. He reviewed that the FY09 appropriation is \$4,250,000. He discussed planned and actual expenditures broken down by program. Expenditures by the end of February were projected to be 42% of total - actual expenditures were 33% of total. He noted that they anticipate final annual expenses will be at or under budget projections. Reno then reviewed revenue collections. He noted that they are anticipating \$825,000 which is a 20% increase from FY2008. As of the end of February, the Preserve has collected \$94,487. **Rino added that the Financial Statement Audits for 2004 – 2007 will be available soon.**

Attendee Tom Ribe asked why grazing is not specifically designated on the spread sheet given that it has had such a large programmatic focus. Ribe also asked to understand the real cost of the program and to clarify if the stated \$58,000 is net profit. (Rino responded that he has request six additional codes (including grazing) from the Department of Agriculture in order to make the financial data more specific. The grazing numbers are currently embedded under operations. Member Tinsley also clarified that grazing will not be a dominate revenue stream and that it can be assumed that \$56,000 represent net profit for the 2008 season.)

Attendee Betsy Barnett, Caldera Action, asked if the \$50 million requested for infrastructure improvements reported in the Albuquerque Journal is in addition to the 1.2 million already reported. She also asked if these funds would be used for road improvements. (Ed Tinsley responded that this money is potential stimulus package money and road improvements would be a component of that request. Dennis Trujillo, Preserve Manager, added that \$2,000,000 have been requested to improve and allow year long access to the “long route.” Trujillo noted that Marie Rodriquez, Natural Resource Coordinator, will provide more contexts for the above during her presentation. Member Jiron added that these funds have been requested only.)

An unidentified attendee asked Rino if the audits will be at a level of precision to reveal the real cost of activities. (Rino responded the audits will be presented in a format similar to private sector balance sheets.)

Science/Education – Director, Science and Education

Bob Parmenter, Preserve Scientist, provided updates on the ongoing ESPSCORE project and three new projects in the proposal stage.

- New Mexico EPSCORE, funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF), is assessing climate change impacts on the upland water resources in New Mexico. The Preserve will receive \$3 million for five years. The study is focusing on the Valles Caldera, Rio Hondo, and Chama River Basins. Students and faculty will be working this summer.
- The Preserve has submitted a \$1.1 million proposal to NASA to create remote sensing tools for northern New Mexico to assess production of forage and fire potential.
- The Preserve has also submitted to the NSF Information Science Program a proposal to create capability for a wireless information stream on site.
- A consortium of fourteen partners (lead by The Santa Fe Institute) submitted a proposal to the NSF to provide support for a northern New Mexico network of science teachers, **students** to participate in an on-site summer continuing education program.

Attendee Tom Jervis asked about the various grants’ real income potential for the Trust. (Parmenter responded that the Trust charges 26% overhead for indirect

costs. The Trust also receives specific funds for personnel, materials, and supplies etc.)

An unidentified attendee asked if grants get full cost recovery. (Parmenter responded yes.)

Communications – Manager, Marketing and Communications

Terry McDermott, Manager Marketing and Communications, has been in New Mexico 35 years and brings work experience ranging from Intel to television sports. He presented an overview of his proposed approach/goals to marketing and communication for the Preserve. He articulated the goals as follows:

- Establish clear and consistent internal and external messaging and feedback (e.g. establishing communications policy, identifying contact experts, developing fact sheets etc.)
- Conduct proactive engagement of all audiences (e.g. speaker's bureaus, face to face meetings, materials distributions, Op/Ed pieces, strategic roll out of key initiatives etc.)
- Increase audiences, visitor participation and revenue through marketing
- Create new marketing tools and venues (e.g. securing appropriate corporate sponsors, exploring product development, developing monthly credit card deductions, advertising in trade magazines, improving web site by creating a search engine etc.)
- Establish internal communications plan and hierarchy
- Take the heat of the Board.

Attendee Tom Ribe noted that corporate sponsorship of public lands has met much resistance in the past and Bush's initiative was not successful. (McDermott responded that sponsorship will be event focused generally such as the marathon; and signage will be appropriate in size and scope. He acknowledged that perhaps sponsorship might be sought for buildings but again the signage will be minimal.)

Attendee Ribe also added that NEPA is the most important communication tool and that the Trust to date has not been timely in their responses to specific comments made during that process. He also added that marketing may be premature without real opportunities for access to the Preserve.

An unidentified attendee asked if the marketing and communications activities will be integrated with the Public Use and Access Plan. (Tinsely responded yes and clarified that McDermott's presentation cited potential tactical marketing and communications tools but all will be guided and informed by the Plan once it is finalized.)

Attendee Betsy Barnett commented that it is difficult to provide useful input about the Preserve without being allowed real access to the resource. She added that she has made numerous recommendations to the recreation planner about how to

increase access. (Dennis Trujillo reminded the group that they will be receiving an update on planning activities from Marie Rodriguez.)

Attendee Tom Jervis expressed concerns that after nine years there is still no real comprehensive plan, no “theme” etc. (Member Tinsley reminded the group that the Board agrees with the need for such planning and therefore, they and the staff are in the process of conducting planning activities. Government processes however move slowly.)

Attendee Barnett urged the Trust to seek public input prior to spending funds and making decisions.

An unidentified attendee asked the Trust to provide more frequent updates on its activities. (Member Tinsley agreed and commented that McDermott’s arrival on staff will support that goal.)

Preserve Activities

Dennis Trujillo, Preserve Manager, introduced Marie Rodriguez, Natural Resource Coordinator to present and update on the Preserve’s planning activities followed by Kim Duval, Public Education and Interpretation and Rob Dixon, Recreation Planner, to update on the 2009 winter season and 2009 summer activities respectively.

a) Multiple Use and Sustained Yield of Forage Environmental Assessment (EA)
Marie Rodriguez, Natural Resource Coordinator, reported on the Multiple Use and Sustained Yield of Foraging planning activity. A detailed summary of the all the stewardship planning activities is available on the web page www.vallescaldera.gov. The EA determined a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the grazing program. The program required an EA and not an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) because it is an interim program and the Trust is proposing a conservative approach – limited in time and space. In the final EA, the staff has listed and responded to all of the comments submitted by the public. The 2009 grazing program will be based on the current conditions of the Preserve and the findings of the EA.

b) San Antonio Watershed – Wetlands and Riparian Restoration Environmental Assessment

This EA analyzed proposed restoration activities within San Antonio and Sulfur Creek watersheds by using aerial and photographic surveys. The study found numerous issues that are mostly infrastructure related. The EA proposes, in cooperation with the New Mexico Environmental Department and Los Amigos, a series of projects to restore and protect the riparian wetland system.

c) Public Use and Access Planning Activities

Rodriguez provided an overview of Phase I activities that have been completed to date. They include the 2006 Public Workshops, business planning and analysis, and

site assessments. Phase II, "Planning and Decision-making," is the NEPA process and should span twelve to eighteen months. It will focus on such questions as those related to the visitor and interpretive center and the programmatic guidance to inform future development. Issues identified at the workshops included scale/location, capacity/types, costs/equities, balance and feasibility of programs and development. For example, alternative locations for development range from Rabbit Mountain to Jemez Spring. Alternative scales range from current conditions to regional centers. The NEPA steps are as follows: Notice of Intent, Public Involvement and Continued Site Assessment, Alternative Refinement, Draft EIS with Preferred Alternative, Final EIS, and Record of Decision.

Member Jiron asked how this NEPA process will be kicked off. (Rodriquez responded that they will conduct open houses and workshops. There will also be a web base forum for public input.)

Attendee Jervis asked when the Letter of Intent will be issued. (Rodriquez responded that it will be issued in several weeks.)

Attendee Ribe asked if they are coordinating with the National Park Service. (Rodriquez responded yes.)

Attendee Ribe asked who issues the final decision on the "Forage" EA. (Executive Director Bratcher)

d) 2008/2009 Winter Season

Kim Duval presented on the 2008/2009 Winter Season which ran from December 27, 2008 to March 1, 2009. Visitors totaled 1814 - 786 skiing, 400 snow shoeing, and 628 general visitors. Revenue increased by \$12,000. Due to contractor problems there were no sleigh rides this year and heating concerns prevented Yurt to Yurt activities. The Preserve also conducted two Public Appreciation days on January 25th and March 1st. The Preserve is continuing to experiment with trail grooming and hopes to become a premier cross country ski destination.

Member Jiron asked how the trails were groomed. (Duval responded that they use snow mobiles for grooming.)

e) 2009 Summer Activities

Dixon presented on the upcoming summer season which dates from May 21st – October 18th. The Trust marketed the season's activities in "New Mexico Vacation Guide," "The Bugle," and "Trail Runner" and staff attended several trade shows such as the Rocky Mountain Elk Forum. They have also created an email list serve and have posted a bill board on Route 550 between Bernalillo and SanYsidro. Core activities include elk hunting, fishing, hiking, equestrian rides, tours, biking, and astronomy. The activities are largely conducted by reservation and hope to bring in revenue of \$674,000. The Preserve will also conduct special events such as the Mountain Bike Fun Ride, Marathon, Equestrian Endurance Race, Pasture Rides, Fly

Fishing Workshops, Photo Adventures, Preserve Day, and Outdoor Skills Workshops. Casa Blanca Lodge and the Bunk House will be available for rentals from May 21st to November 30th with projected revenue of \$45,000. The store hopes to generate \$60,000 from sales. Detailed information about the upcoming season is on the website.

Attendee Barnett asked where the Equestrian Endurance Ride is conducted. (Dixon responded that most of the race is on existing roads.)

Attendee Jervis asked when one can start reserving activities. (Dixon responded that 90% are available now and all will be available in two weeks.)

Marie Rodriguez asked if you need a reservation to accompany someone fishing. (Dixon responded yes.)

Attendee Ribe asked if cow grazing locations will be available prior to reserving a reach for fishing. (Dixon answered yes.)

IV. Board Committee Reports, Recommendations, Actions

a) *Infrastructure Committee*

Board Action - Member Tinsley motioned to have the Board accept, authorize payment, and release the ENTRIX Plan for Revenue Enhancement. Traver seconded motion. The motion was passed.

Board Action – Member Tinsley motioned to allow up to \$50,000 to renovate the Casa Blanca Lodge to meet ADA compliance. Travers seconded motion. The motion was passed.

Tinsley added that the Bunk House will be renovated in the future

Board Action – Member Tinsley motioned to request staff and the Executive Director to research and analyze a water source development plan to address underground water concerns. The study will be open ended. Traver seconded the motion. The motion was passed.

Tinsley clarified that currently the only water available on the Preserve is surface water.

Board Action – Member Traver motioned to approve staff and Executive Director to spend up to \$100,000 for a temporary visitor’s center, including ADA accessible restrooms, in order to improve the current contact station, and that can be used at another location after the completion of the permanent center. Member Tinsley seconded the motion. The motion was passed.

Board Action – Member Traver motioned to authorize staff to continue work with the Department of Agriculture to seek funding for a permanent visitor center. Tinsley seconded the motion. The motion was passed.

b) *Corporate Governance*

Chair Henry reviewed recommendations for new activities to better orient Board Members including Ethics and NEPA Training. The Board will also work with the staff to review in-house policies to ensure that they are complete and up-to-date.

III. Adjourn

Chair Henry adjourned the meeting at 4:00PM.