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**Valles Caldera Trust
Minutes of the Public Meeting – 9/29/2009
New Mexico State University
Las Cruces, NM
9:00AM – 12:00Noon
1:00 PM Public Comment Sessions**

Board Members Present

Stephen Henry, Chair
Daniel Jiron
Raymond Loretto
Jason Lott
Virgil Trujillo

I. Welcome and Introductions and Board Business

Call to Order

Chair Steve Henry opened the meeting at 9:15 AM, welcomed and introduced the Board, staff, and public attendees.

Report on 9/28/2009 Executive Session

Chair Henry reported on yesterday's Board's Executive Session. He reported that the Board reviewed the GAO Report and will forward their response to Congress on October 31. Congress will then release the full report to the public. The Trust has received an appropriation of \$3.5 million for FY10. The Board approved the budget and it is available to the public upon request. The Board elected new officers: Steve Henry, - Chair, and Ed Tinsley - Vice-Chair, and Raymond Loretto - Secretary.

Explanation of Public Meeting Requirements

Chair Henry reported on a new arrangement at the public meetings intended to better accommodate public comment. Today the meeting will adjourn at noon and the specific public comment opportunity will begin at 1:00PM.

Attendee Betsy Barnett, Caldera Action, asked if the full Board and staff will remain present and if the comments will be included in the meeting record. (Chair Henry responded yes.) Barnett also asked if the Public Use and Access Plan's funding is in the FY09 Budget. (Dennis Rino, Chief Administrative Officer responded yes.)

Approval of Agenda

Chair Henry asked the Board for agenda approval. **Virgil Trujillo motioned and Raymond Loretta seconded the motion. The agenda was approved.**

Approval of Minutes

Chair Henry asked the Board to approve the June 11 Public Meeting minutes. . **Member Dan Jiron moved and member Loretto seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.**

Authorize Future Executive Session

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

II. Presentation of Programs in Collaboration with New Mexico State University (NMSU)

2009 Summer Grazing Program - High Elevation Breeding Stock Program – Dr. Chris Allison

Dr. Allison reported that the purpose of the program was to evaluate the performance and heritable risk of acquiring High Altitude Disease (Brisket Disease) in growing bulls and heifers and to offer for sale a percentage of the bulls who have adapted well to the altitude. Dr. Allison reported that 25% of bulls and 10% of the heifers were sent home. High altitude is designated at above 7000 feet. This research is widely applicable to 11 western states. The sale of the bulls is scheduled for October 10. Brisket disease is fairly widespread - 20% of Angus breeds can be impacted.

Ungulate Grazing on Riparian Ecosystems – Dr. Colleen Caldwell

Dr. Caldwell reported on a study conducted between 2004 – 2008 evaluating grazing livestock and elk impacts on aquatic ecosystems. In 2004 enclosures were established on the San Antonio and Jemez watershed that allowed a variety of access: elk and cattle, cattle alone, and no grazing. The study asked if grazing would cause an increase in shallow rooted vegetables that would decrease stream stability. This would then increase the stream's width/depth ratios. The cattle and elk population volumes were considered "light" during the study period. The study found there was no difference in stream bank stability. The study also assessed grazing's impacts on fish populations and if grazing impacted their location preference. The study again found no grazing impact on location preference or growth rates. The study found that the San Antonio watershed has high gradients, more spawning areas, and high quality food, and is dominated by brown trout. In the Jemez, natural Rio Grande **Chubs** and Rio Grande Suckers dominate. Dr. Caldwell recommended that the Trust continue light stocking rates and moderate habitat restoration to reduce width/depth ratios.

Dennis Trujillo, Preserve General Manager, asked if Caldwell's students would be available for restoration projects. (Caldwell responded yes.) Member Loretto asked if the watershed was healthy. (Caldwell responded that a detailed look at the bugs and chemistry could give you better information but she reported that the watershed is in overall good shape.) Attendee Dave Menicucci, Caldera Action, asked if it is possible to stock the East Fork with brown trout. (Caldwell responded that it might be possible- although at this point it is not certain without further study.) Oscar Simpson, New Mexico Wildlife Federation, asked if there were any concerns with hooking mortality rates. (No) Attendee Simpson asked if there are plans for stream area willow re-vegetation. (Bob Parmenter, Director Science and Education, responded that it is not clear if willows were historically on the Preserve in any significant densities, therefore it is a future management question.) Member Loretto asked if it was possible to introduce native cut throat trout in the Jemez. (Caldwell responded that it is perhaps possible in the Jemez with minor restoration but brown and rainbow trout would need to be removed.)

Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Program (WHEP Program) – Ms. Summer Eaton/Dr. Samuel Smallidge

Dr. Smallidge introduced Ms. Eaton of 4H Clubs to present on the WHEP program's National Invitational at the Valles Caldera on July 23-29, 2010. Children, 8 – 19 years old from all over the country will attend to compete by developing management plans based on presented scenarios. They expect approximately 150 kids. The event will include an education day, contest day, and fun day. Last year 16 states participated.

Member Loretto asked if there are opportunities for general public participation. (Eaton responded that the event is focus on 4H participants.) Chair Henry added that additional information can be found on the WHEP.org website.

Website Design – MBA Candidates – Dr. Kevin Boberg

Last June, member Ed Tinsley asked Dr. Boberg at NMSU if several of his MBA candidates would develop a proposal for improving the Preserve's website. The students were asked to address Terry McDermott's, Communications and Marketing Manager, objectives to improve the commenting system, video capacity and text messaging capability. Frank Blecha a recent MBA graduate reported that the prototype they proposed will provide a roadmap from which the staff can augment their current system.

III. Report to Board of Trustees on Programs and Activities 2009-2010

Preserve Operations – Mr. Dennis Trujillo, Preserve General Manager

Trujillo noted that the Preserve Operations report will include updates on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Funding, 2009 Wild Turkey Hunt, and Recreation Program Activities.

a. *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Funding.*

Trujillo reported that the Trust has received \$750,000 to support forest restoration activities in Redondo Canyon and areas adjacent to Highway 4. Trujillo commented that from 1963 – 1972 the Preserve conducted clear cutting logging activities, thus many areas are comprised of even-aged trees. Currently there are 1345 trees per acre in Redondo Canyon compared to historical densities of 28 – 48 trees per acre. Further, because of fire suppression, the resource carries 20 tons per acre of debris compared to historical weights of 5 – 7 tons. The project will use local resources to reduce densities. Trujillo commented that details are posted on the website and the proposal is open to public comment at this time.

b. *2009 Wild turkey Hunt.*

Dennis Trujillo reported on the two hunting packages offered in 2009. The "Deluxe" hunt (7 slots) included a three day/four night package with lodging for \$1950. The "Lottery" was for 9 slots plus one raffled chance through the New Mexico Wild Turkey Federation.) Four turkeys were harvest by the deluxe hunters, and three by the Lottery hunters. The number of lottery participants was consistent with previous seasons but each participant bought fewer chances this year. In 2009 197 chances were purchased compare with 302 chances sold in 2008. Mick Trujillo, **Hunt Manager** added that there are 300 – 500 turkeys on the Preserve and that the season's revenue totaled \$3940. Mick Trujillo also reported that they receive very positive feedback from participants.

Member Trujillo asked if the program monitored opportunities. (Mick Trujillo responded that the hunters saw many birds but approximately 8 out of 10 opportunities were missed.) Member Loretto asked if there was any data on group size. (Mick Trujillo answered no and Bob Parmenter added that they are currently conducting research on the turkey populations to study behavior, feeding and migratory patterns etc.)

c. 2009 Summer Recreational Activities

Rob Dixon, Outdoor Recreation Planner, presented on the summer season activities. The summer season spans from May 21st – October 18th. He also remarked that the Preserve is open seven days a week from 8:30AM -5:00PM at the Valles Grande Staging Area and open Saturday and Sunday from 8:45 – 4:00 at Banco Bonito. He reviewed the Core Events and Special Events for the season. Core events include tours, fishing, hiking, elk hunting, biking, horseback riding, astronomy, and turkey hunting. He reviewed the potential visitor slots and revenue for each activity which totaled 21,707 potential visits at \$674,200. The Preserve conducted special events such as the Mountain Bike Fun Ride, Marathon, Equestrian Endurance Race, Pasture Rides, Fly Fishing Workshops, Photo Adventures, and Outdoor Skills Workshops. Special events also include a Spirit of the Mountain Run (in cooperation with the Jemez Pueblo and Department of Health) and the Elk Festival which will host free outdoor classrooms for participating schools. The potential visits for the above activities total 1508 with \$86,700 in income. Casa Blanca Lodge and the Bunk House will be available for rentals from May 21st to November 30th. Potential facility rentals and store revenues could total \$45,000 and \$60,000 respectively. The potential income from all recreational activities is \$4,865,900. Actual revenues will be presented at the December meeting. Reservations are required for many of the above activities and Dixon noted that reservations are low this year to date. On-site registration the day of the activity is possible if slots are available. Hiking activities requiring no reservations include two spontaneous hike and two free trails off Highway 4. Dixon added that in 2010 a no reservation shuttle system will support additional trail options. A lottery method is used for other activities such as the Photo Adventure and Elk Hunting. Cross country skiing, snow shoeing, and other winter activities open the day after Christmas. Detailed information about summer and winter activities are on the website.

Attendee Betsy Barnett asked Dixon to clarify current rates for hiking. (Dixon responded that the Highway 4 hikes are free, the guided hikes are \$15 and the other unaccompanied hikes are charged the \$10 entrance fee.) Barnett asked about the lengths of current unguided hikes. (Dixon responded that the Preserve currently has hikes ranging from 1.5 to 7 miles.) Barnett asked if the activities such as ATV's and snow mobiles listed in the fifth alternative of the Public Use and Access EIS will be allowed in 2010. (Dixon responded no.)

Science and Education – Dr. Robert Parmenter – Director Science and Education

Dr. Parmenter presented on the following topics: Summer Monsoon, 2009 Fall Range, Fisheries Monitoring, Bio Bug Blitz, High School Science Teachers Training, and Elk Calf Mortality Study, and the Science and Education Facility, and National Science Foundation (NSF) Critical Zone Observation Grant.

a. 2009 Monsoon Season

Parmenter reported that this summer's precipitation was average. He added that the monsoons were timed weekly which assisted in preventing excessive drying at any one time.

b. Forage Monitoring

The Trust's science staff and volunteers primarily from the Sierra Club and the Forest Service are currently conducting stubble height monitoring of the entire Jemez Mountain Region (not just the Preserve) to assess forage availability for 2010.

c. Fisheries Monitoring

Parmenter reported on ongoing monitoring of the Preserve's fisheries focusing on population structure, diversity etc... The study began in 2003 at 6 sites and consists of spring/fall activities such as weighing and measuring the fish in the study area. Current assessments find that the brown trout are steady and sustainable in the San Antonia watershed but more variable in the East Fork of the Jemez. The rainbow trout in the East Fork are currently stable. The Rio Grande Sucker population is trending down in the East Fork but the **Rio Grande chub** population is stable. The suckers that have been reintroduced are not reproducing.

d. Bio Bug Blitz

This summer the Trust teaming with the USDA Systematic Entomology Lab, the Smithsonian and outside volunteers (including children) have conducted four intensive weekend insect collection sessions targeting different biotic regions in the Preserve. Parmenter reported that current efforts have collected hundreds of species including a new generation of wasps previously unknown to science. Next summer will host the third and final summer of the study.

e. High School Science Teachers Continuing Education

A consortium of fourteen partners (lead by The Santa Fe Institute) received a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant to support sixteen science teachers' participation in a weeklong on-site summer continuing education program. The teachers were drawn from the twenty-nine northern New Mexico's public school districts. Bunked at the Lodge, they participated in a training program that integrated physics, chemistry, biology, and earth science to better understand watershed processes. For example they studied stream geomorphology and aquatic insect diversity. The program aims to enhance new curriculum development in science classrooms. The NSF has provided additional funds to continue with the program in the future.

f. Elk Mortality Study

The Trust, in cooperation with New Mexico Fish and Game, are conducting a study to better understand the low calf/cow ratio on the Preserve. To date they have captured 36 calves. Sixteen calves (44%) have died – 3 from mountain lions, 3 from bears, 2 from coyotes, 2 from maybe coyotes, 1 from liver infection, 1 from trampling, and 4 from unknown causes.

g. New Science and Education Facility

The new Science and Education Facility will be open in December 2009. The facility with 25 bedrooms and a dining facility will enable children throughout the country to visit the Preserve for education opportunities. The first group scheduled hails from Chicago.

h. National Science Foundation Critical Zone Observation Grant

The Preserve is participating in a climate impact study assessing the transformational behavior of energy, water, and carbon in a critical zone.

Member Trujillo asked if the Preserve has ever studied mule deer populations. (Dennis Trujillo responded that the mule deer population is currently very low on the Preserve. In the future, the

Trust could create a management plan for their reintroduction although there are no current plans.) Member Trujillo asked if the public has expressed interest in hunting mule deer and bear. (Dennis Trujillo responded that there is some interest but the current population levels do not support a hunting program.) Member Trujillo asked if there have been any studies of the bear population. (Dennis Trujillo commented that Fish and Game has some numbers but bears and mountain lions have huge ranges.) Member Trujillo asked if any cattle have been killed by predators. (Dennis Trujillo responded no.)

IV. Public Comment Session

Attendee Betsy Barnett, Caldera Action, and Dave Menicucci, Caldera Action, presented an Executive Summary of their review of the comments made by the public at the 2007 Workshops conducted to secure input regarding the future management of the Preserve. She commented that Mary Orton Company LLC was contracted to conduct the meetings and list the comments without a crucial analysis of trends. Barnett reported that they therefore decided to analyze the comments to determine patterns. . She described their methodology and presented the resultant pie charts which indicate the overwhelming desire of attendees to see the Preserve managed for natural values and to preserve it in its natural state. She expressed concern that the Public Use and Access EIS Alternatives do not adequately reflect the public's desire for the Preserve's future. She also commented that there was very low attendance at the two recent Santa Fe and Albuquerque 2009 Public Use and Access Plan EIS input sessions - 14 and 16 attendees respectively.

Barnett further commented on behalf of Caldera Action that in addition to not supporting the alternatives they contend that the current NEPA process is illegitimate in the absence of a general management program as required by the 2000 legislation. Barnett concluded with a recommendation that the best management scenario for the Preserve would be to turn it over to a federal land management agency.

The Board, staff, and attendees Betsy Barnett and Oscar Simpson then discussed concerns with the low attendance at the EIS public sessions and the difficulties in using the website for EIS input. Barnett emphasized that neither the meetings nor the website make it clear that the public can amend the presented options or even present new options. Dennis Trujillo added that the specific impacts of the alternatives will be analyzed later as a part of the EIS process. Member Jiron added that the website is just one tool for input, letters can also be submitted. He clarified that the website is one new way of maximizing the information provided and interactivity with the public. The request to extend the current comment period was tabled in lieu of conducting an enhanced effort to seek additional public input such as emailing constituencies to notify them of the pending deadline as well as to clarify the range of mechanisms for input and the ability to expand and add alternatives to the EIS.

Steve Henry asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Member Loretto moved and member Lott seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 1:55PM.