



VALLES CALDERA TRUST
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FOR INFORMATION:
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**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD EXTENDED FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS CONSIDERING
LIVESTOCK GRAZING ON THE VALLES CALDERA.**

The Valles Caldera Trust has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed multiple use and sustained yield of forage resources of the Valles Caldera National Preserve. The EA was made available on December 19, 2008 for a 45-day public review and comment period. The Trust has received requests for an extension of this comment period to ninety days based on the length of the document and its release over the Christmas holiday.

In response, the Trust has extended the comment period through February 12th. In addition, the Trust will provide an additional 30-day public comment period which will permit the public to review and provide comment not only on the EA, but also on the Trust's response to initial comments and the findings made by the Trust. This will permit a total of 85 days for public review and comment.

The length of a public comment period regarding an EA and whether to provide a comment period for a review of their findings is at the discretion of Trust. Environmental laws and procedures provide guidance to ensure that adequate time is provided for the process but do not include exact timeframes. The Trust's new Executive Director, Gary Bratcher, quotes recent guidance provided to Federal land managers from the Council for Environmental Quality in stating that "one of the primary goals of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is to encourage meaningful public input and involvement in the process."

Typically a 30-day comment period is provided for an EA, "The Trust allowed a 45-day comment period on this EA because it is a rather lengthy document" Bratcher notes. However, the number of requests prompted the Trust to add the additional time for review and comment.

The EA can be downloaded from the Trust's web site, www.vallescaldera.gov; a link is provided on the home page. The EA is a 250 page detailed report which includes a 10 page Executive Summary of the key elements and findings of the EA. For your convenience the Executive Summary is also available as a separate document.

To request a copy of either document via surface mail: call 505-661-3333, send an email request to comments@vallescaldera.gov, or submit your request in writing to P.O. Box 359, Jemez Springs, NM 87025. Please include your physical mailing address and state your preference for either a CD or printed copy.

The EA provides information about actions being considered by the Trust including: continued allocation of the Preserve's grass and forage, grazing on the Preserve by domestic livestock and other uses of forage including the harvesting of seeds and grasses, repair and maintenance of the Preserve's ranch infrastructure including fences and water systems, and improvements to some of the non-historic ranch buildings and outbuildings. The Trust is proposing to adopt goals and establish objectives and outcomes to guide management and to measure direct, indirect and cumulative effects to the Preserve's ecological condition over time.