



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**For More Information:**

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**NEWS RELEASE**

**Valles Caldera Trust Research Program**

(Jemez Springs, NM) – The Valles Caldera Trust has reached agreement with New Mexico State University (NMSU) for a summer research program to improve growth efficiency of calves and to improve grazing use on high elevation meadows following a prescribed burn last fall.

NMSU will assess the effectiveness of prescribed burning, the strategic placement of food supplements and the use of low-stress cattle herding techniques in influencing cattle distribution and protecting sensitive resources. According to NMSU, existing research of practical value to cattle producers and other natural resource managers is either limited or not pertinent to high elevation mountain-meadow sites. The NMSU research program will benefit the Valles Caldera National Preserve, regional ranches and the scientific community. The research will study up to 200 calves grazing for up to 100 days, depending on the rate of forage consumption, within eight temporary fenced pastures, four within the Valle Toledo, the area of last fall's prescribed burn, and four within the Valle Grande, an unburned area. Each pasture will be approximately 319 acres in size with 25 calves randomly assigned and will contain three grazing segments (riparian, intermediate and upland) of about 106 acres each. In addition to monitoring cattle behavior, NMSU will evaluate the health and performance of the cattle throughout the summer.

Although the Valles Caldera Trust decided in May not to offer commercial grazing during the 2006 season due to drought conditions, it was determined at that time that small, site-specific experiments in livestock operations with a limited number of cattle would be ecologically feasible.

Dr. Manny Encinias, Range Beef Cattle Specialist at NMSU, is the principal investigator on the project. Working with Dr. Encinias will be Randy McKee, who was foreman on the Preserve when it was a privately owned ranch. Randy will be working with Sara Davidson, an Extension Associate from NMSU, and Aaron Mace, who is studying Animal Sciences at the University.

The Valle Toledo was treated with prescribed fire late in the fall of 2005. Subsequent prescribed fire monitoring projects will measure the ecosystem response to interactions between fire and grazing by elk and cattle. The U.S. Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, provided funding to evaluate fire and grazing effects. Dr. Bob Parmenter, Preserve Scientist, is overseeing 12 fire-related monitoring projects. “Livestock grazing in the Valle Toledo this season will greatly contribute to the research program” said Dr. Parmenter.

The Valles Caldera Trust operates the Valles Caldera National Preserve, formerly the privately owned “Baca Ranch.” The 89,000 acre property, located in the Jemez Mountains in northern New Mexico, was purchased by the federal government in 2000 under the Valles Caldera Preservation Act. The property is known for its huge meadows, abundant wildlife, meandering streams, and remarkable scenery. The mission of the Valles Caldera Trust is to create a successful model of land management that protects and preserves the Valles Caldera National Preserve’s unique values. Toward that end, the Trust is to operate the Preserve as a working ranch, strive to become financially self-sustaining, meet varied needs of visitors, strive to utilize and steward the multiple resources of the Preserve, and work collaboratively with its neighbors.

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