

Ca Ventana en los Valles

News of the Valles Caldera National Preserve
from the Board of Trustees

Board Consults Experts Regarding Working Ranch and Sustainable Forage Management



Working Ranch

We are to “operate the Preserve as a working ranch” while protecting and preserving “the scientific, scenic, geologic, watershed, fish, wildlife, historic, cultural and recreational values of the Preserve.”

In order to accomplish those goals, the Trust feels that it needs to develop a forage management plan that will integrate the needs of wildlife and domestic livestock, while protecting the health of the Preserve’s riparian areas, grasslands, and uplands. As the Trust stated in its *Framework and Strategic Guidance for Comprehensive Management*, “We define a ‘working ranch’ as an operation placing its primary emphasis on stewardship of the resource as the foundation for both ecological and economic sustainability. A working ranch:

- runs a sustainable level of livestock, adjusting numbers as necessary;
 - makes resources available for other revenue-
- (con’t on page 2)

The formerly private Baca Ranch, owned by the Dunigan family, was purchased by the federal government in 2000. Under the Valles Caldera Preservation Act which formalized the purchase, the Valles Caldera Trust has the daunting task of developing a new model of public land management. Under the Act, we are constrained by six equal goals:

- operating as a working ranch;
- protecting and preserving the site’s ecological values;
- offering public access and recreational opportunities;
- multiple use and sustained yield;
- working with our neighbors on renewable resource utilization; and
- optimizing income “to the extent that it does not unreasonably diminish the long-term scenic and natural values of the area, or the multiple use and sustained yield capability of the land.”

The Valles Caldera Trust oversees the Valles Caldera National Preserve, formerly the privately owned “Baca Ranch.” The 89,000 acre property is located in the Jemez Mountains in northern New Mexico (see map, page 3). It 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 Board of Trustees publishes this periodic newsletter to keep the public informed and engaged as we proceed with the task of developing a new model of public land management.

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The Board of Trustees is composed of seven members appointed by the President of the United States and two who serve *ex officio* (Superintendent of Bandelier and Supervisor of Santa Fe National Forest). The appointed Trustees generally serve four-year terms and, except for the Chair, receive no compensation for their work.



Anthony Armijo during the Working Ranch Meeting tour and the Jemez Pueblo cattle that are part of our current Conservation Stewardship Program. (Photo courtesy of Tracy Hephner.)

Working Ranch

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generating activities such as bird watching, hunting, fishing, and other low-impact recreational activities;

“•applies adaptive management on a day-to-day basis to ensure resource protection; and

“•monitors the impact of its activities.”

Environmental Impact Statement

The Trust has been operating an interim grazing program based on a 2002 Environmental Assessment (EA). That EA is expiring and the Board has decided to explore different options for the Preserve in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

This plan needs to consider results of the Trust's interim grazing and interim hunting programs as well as all scientific monitoring and inventory data accumulated to date to determine how best to:

- Protect and enhance our wildlife populations.
- Protect and enhance our riparian and grassland ecosystems.

- Run a sustainable level of domestic livestock as part of a demonstration of ecologically and economically healthy grazing on public land.

- Educate others regarding this new model of public lands management.

- Monitor these activities to determine appropriate day-to-day management and cumulative effects of these programs.

In an attempt to include a variety of opinions on management of the Preserve, the Board of Trustees hopes to establish a small but diverse committee of experts to help us as we begin the environmental review process under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for a forage management program. Therefore, our Grazing Subcommittee (Tracy Hephner, Barbara Johnson, and Jim Gosz) invited a number of people with diverse backgrounds to attend what we called Working Ranch Meetings to “brainstorm” to get us started on this difficult task. The Grazing Subcommittee met this summer with 17 ranchers, scientists, environmentalists, and others in an open dialogue about the best ways to proceed with the forage management plan and to develop objectives that will achieve our goals for the working ranch.

Participants in the Working Ranch Meetings included:

Anthony Armijo • Assistant Tribal Administrator,
Jemez Pueblo.

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From the Chair, Tracy Hephner

October snow flakes drifted over elk hunters at the Valles Caldera National Preserve, closing out an exceptionally busy year.

Three new members of the Board of Trustees were named by the President in May. James Gosz, John Caid and Dr. Ray

Loretto have brought a wealth of experience and talent to the Board. We await the appointment of one more member to fill the cultural history position vacated by former Chairman, Bill deBuys.

After nearly a year of service to the Trust, Executive Director Ray Powell decided to move on, apparently toward more familiar pastures. The week after his resignation, he was quoted as contemplating another run for State Land Commissioner.

The Board of Trustees named Cliff Dils, Deputy Superintendent of the Santa Fe National Forest to serve as Acting Executive Director of the Valles Caldera Trust. Cliff brings considerable skills from 20 years with the Forest Service to the task.

Progress has been rapid on a number of ongoing projects. A national search has been underway for the next Executive Director of the Trust. The closing date for applications was November 15, 2005. We hope to have a new Executive Director early in 2006,

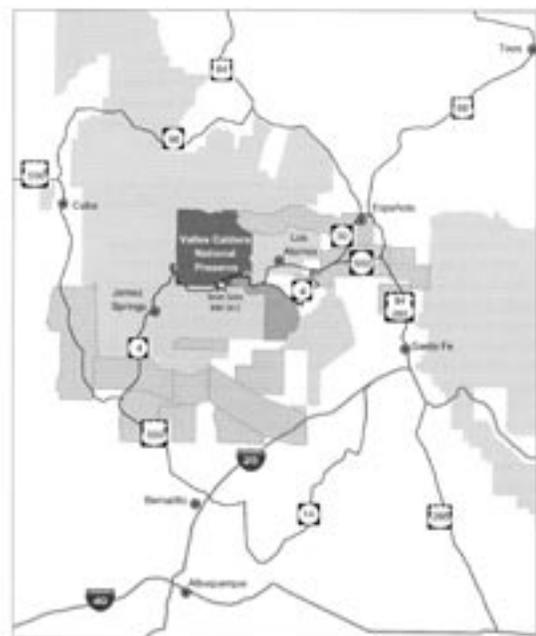
The Valles Caldera National Preserve's *Master Plan for Interpretation* was delivered this summer. Primarily designed as an internal document, the plan will guide staff and contractors in choosing materials and designing improvements appropriate to the Preserve. The plan identifies special viewscapes and historically significant locations. It will be an essential resource for future discussions on the experiences we offer to our visitors. The *Master Plan for Interpretation* has been posted on the Valles Caldera website.

The next step in planning for visitor experiences is an opportunity for folks to come share their stories about the landscape that is now the Valles Caldera

National Preserve. The Trust has had the benefit of a book by local author Craig Martin, *Valle Grande, A History of Baca Location 1*. Another book, planned by Mary Caldwell of Ponderosa and Catherine Coulter of Santa Fe, will focus on the people of the Valle Grande. In a collaborative effort, the Trust will hold an Open House next spring to collect stories, copy photos and artifacts, and celebrate the human history of the Preserve.

The Board of Trustees has been hard at work this summer, devoting several days a month to work sessions and public meetings. The Congressional deadline of 15 years to financial sustainability is visible on the horizon. Compliance with federal regulations is time-consuming, expensive, and completely necessary. Executing the goals in the Valles Caldera Preservation Act, and the management principles in our own Comprehensive Management Framework, with recognition of our limited financial and human resources, means every decision must be thoughtful and balanced.

We are approaching our tasks with energy and enthusiasm. We look forward to working with you all to assure the future of the Valles Caldera National Preserve.



Location Map

■ Valles Caldera National Preserve
 ■ Banderol National Monument
 ■ Indian Pueblos
 ■ Santa Fe National Forest

Mileage to the Preserve Main Gate:
 from Albuquerque: 75 miles
 from Santa Fe: 53 miles
 from Los Alamos: 18 miles
 from Jemez Springs: 20 miles

Staff Profile: Rob Dixon, IT Manager

Name: Rob Dixon

Title: IT (Information Technologies) Manager

Duties:

The IT Manager's responsibilities are divided into six main areas; public websites, computing, data management, radio communications, telephone communications and identifying technologies that could save the Trust time, money, or improve the working environment. For each of these areas, the IT Manager is responsible for the operation, writing policies, defining requirements, planning, implementation, training, maintenance, security, auditing, upgrading, decommissioning, and disaster recovery.

The goal of this position is to ensure that the Trust will have the technologies available to aid the staff in the performance of their tasks. This position identifies and defines the technology needs of the Trust, is responsible for the entire life cycle of these technologies and identifies alternative technologies or new ways to use current technologies.

How long have you been at the VCNP?

Two years last September.

What's your background? (Life before the VCNP)

- Grew up in Clayton, New Mexico.
- Four years as a Navy combat medic.
- Three years at Metabolic Life as Purchasing Manager, Inventory Control Manager, and Help Desk Technician.
- Three years at Los Alamos National Laboratory as Systems Administrator.

What do you do for fun?

Tracking, hiking, skiing, mountain biking, and sailing. Practicing primitive skills and demonstrating them to others. Joining a search and rescue team.

One memorable moment from this past summer at the VCNP?

Teaching the tracking workshop and watching people's expressions as they finished the blindfold exercise. You could see it in their eyes; they really connected with the land.



Rob instructs participants in the Kids' Elk Workshop on survival techniques. (Photo courtesy of Rodger Berends.)

What is the best part of your job?

Physically, it's getting to be out on the Preserve. Mentally, it is knowing that the world is watching our successes and failures, and that each of them has the ability to change the way the world manages the land. Granted, not everyone cares about our experiment, but there are people throughout the country watching.

What is the biggest challenge of your job?

Convincing outdoor-oriented people that technology can help them.

Two things are going to survive this organization: the data we create and the land itself. A natural disaster could destroy most of what we have done on the land, but the data will show what we've learned and accomplished long after we are all gone.

*If you would like to receive a copy of the Comprehensive Management Framework, or notices regarding events, public Board meetings, or planning for management of the Valles Caldera National Preserve, contact
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505-661-0400 (fax)
www.vallescaldera.gov*



Elk Hunting Workshops for Kids



From the big city of Albuquerque to the mountain village of El Rito, alarm clocks were set early for the kids attending the Elk Workshops in September at the Preserve. Arriving at 8 a.m. with a parent or guardian in tow, the kids tumbled out of the vans, ready for a full day of hands-on experiences.

Preserve Manager Dennis Trujillo made the introductions and talked a little about the unique nature of the Valles Caldera National Preserve. Ranch Manager Randy McKee shared some elk-hunting success stories, with eye-popping photos of what the kids called “major elk.”

Split into groups by kidmeister Mick Trujillo, one group headed outside with the Trust’s IT Manager Rob Dixon. Rob has the ultimate high-tech job in the Trust organization. In his spare time, he practices the ultimate low-tech; survival skills in the wild. With the help of wife Stephanie, Rob taught the kids how to identify their most important needs if stranded in the wild. Shelter was #1, and with considerable energy the kids assembled a one-man shelter with a protection factor of up to 20 degrees below zero.

Inside, New Mexico Game & Fish Educator Mark Birkhauser held his group enthralled with a laser hunting practice on moving targets on the big screen. Less a test of marksmanship than one of ethical choices, each young hunter stood before his peers selecting and executing shots under a variety of scenarios. Adult companions clapped for each shooter and looked more than a little envious.

Food is on every kid’s mind, and a big barbecue dinner provided by the Preserve quickly disappeared at the picnic tables under the tall pines of the Casa de Baca Lodge. Dr. Ed Sceery, of Sceery Game Calls,

*[Above left] One of the participants in his one-man shelter.
[Above] Participants looking for materials for their shelters.
(Photos courtesy of Tracy Hephner.)*

entertained the kids with elk stories and elk noises, generously sharing both his knowledge and his game calls with the young participants. Rodger Berends, Manager of Sportsman’s Supply in Albuquerque, added to the goody bags with a “hunter-in-a-bottle,” survival essentials neatly packed in an unbreakable water bottle.

Late in the afternoon, it was back in the vans for what was, for the adults anyway, the highlight of the day. As the sun goes down, the elk come out, and folks were ready to see the real thing. Recreation staff guided the vans to prime viewing areas, and finally, deposited some pretty tired young campers back at their vehicles. Event organizers collapsed on the couches at the Lodge. Some gleefully finally tried out Mark’s laser challenge, as others cleaned up, cooked and contemplated the second workshop the next day.

The Elk Hunting Workshops for kids is a volunteer effort, headed by the Trust’s Recreation Coordinator Martin Pacheco and Los Alamos National Lab Community Relations Office Chief-of-Staff Mick Trujillo with substantial assistance from Randy McKee, Trust staff members Dennis Trujillo, Rob Dixon, Kimber Barber, and many others. This special event is truly a team effort.

Winter 2005-2006 Recreation on VCNP

December						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
					S/SS	WR/S/SS
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
WR/S/SS			S/SS	S/SS	WR/S/SS	WR/S/SS
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
	WR/S/SS	WR/S/SS	WR/S/SS	S/SS	WR/S/SS	WR/S/SS

January						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
WR/S/SS	WR/S/SS				WR/S/SS	WR/S/SS
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
WR/S/SS					S/SS	WR/S/SS/MS
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
WR/S/SS	WR/SS				S/SS	WR/S/SS
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
WR/S/SS	S (Free)				S/SS	WR/S/SS/NS
29	30	31				
WR/S/SS						

February						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
					S/SS	WR/S/SS
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
WR/S/SS					S/SS	WR/S/SS/MS
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
WR/S/SS					S/SS	WR/S/SS
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
WR/S/SS	WR/SS				S/SS	WR/S/SS/NS
26	27	28				
WR/S/SS	S (free)					

March						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
					S/SS	WR/S/SS
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
WR/S/SS					S/SS	WR/S/SS
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
WR/S/SS					S/SS	WR/S/SS
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
WR/S/SS					S/SS	WR/S/SS
26	27	28	29	30	31	
WR/S/SS					S/SS	

FREE!

Starting December 16 and throughout the winter season 2006, the Coyote Call Trail and all areas on the south side of State Hwy 4 are open for skiing, **free of charge**, and may be used 9 a.m.-4 p.m., 7 days a week. Parking may be limited.

Overnight skiing will be offered for the first time this year for weekends, through a lottery system. For more information, see our website.

Legend: S=Cross-Country Skiing; SS=Snowshoeing; NS=Dark Night Skiing; MS=Moonlight Skiing; WR=Wagon Ride.

Fees: Day passes to Ski or Snowshoe are: \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors, and \$5 for children 6-15 (children under 6 are free). Half-day passes are: \$6 for adults, \$5 for seniors, and \$3 for children 6-15 (children under 6 are free). Wagon rides are: \$30 for adults, \$24 for seniors, \$15 for children. Reservations are required.

For further information, see our website:
www.vallescaldera.gov



Photo courtesy of D. Rourke McDermott.

Working Ranch

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Will Barnes • Botanist, conducts long-term monitoring on the Preserve.

Matthew Gachupin • Biological Technician, Jemez Ranger District, Santa Fe National Forest, from Jemez Pueblo.

Jim Hall • Los Alamos County Councilor.

Marv Jensen • Manager, Vermejo Park Ranch (Turner Property).

Stephan Kohlmann • Elk Biologist, Wildlife Management Division, New Mexico Game & Fish.

Amy Lewis • Hydrologist, including regional water planning, Santa Fe Watershed, Jemez y Sangre Water Plan.

John Mack • Resource Management Specialist, Bandelier National Monument.

Joe & Peggy Maddox • Ranch and Education Managers, the David West Station for Holistic Management.

Palemon Martinez • former Valles Caldera Trustee; member, Northern New Mexico Stockman's Association.

Bob Nordstrom • Board Secretary/Treasurer, Torstenson Family Wildlife Center, the management group for the Double H Ranch.

Brett O'Haver • Rangeland Management Specialist, Bureau of Land Management, Cuba District • conducts range readiness surveys, noxious weed control on the Preserve.

Marty Peale • Coordinator, Valles Caldera Coalition.

Peter Sundt • Conducts monitoring on the Grey Ranch.



Tom Waddell • Ranch Manager, Turner Enterprises, Inc., NM Ranch Properties, Inc.

Gary Ziehe • Special Assistant, U.S. Forest Service, Region 3.

They came up with many good ideas about how the Preserve might be managed, and we had some lively discussions about recreation and science as well as forage management.

One idea was the "Working Ranch"/Interim Experimental Program, which said:

"Increased (>600) cattle numbers would not negatively affect the system and would allow the ability to use cattle as a tool, allow it to be economically neutral (at least) or generate money to pay for other programs."

Elk

Another idea was to develop an adaptive elk management program to test hypotheses about the current low recruitment rate of the population. Such a program would apply harvest in an experimental fashion, coupled with monitoring of population growth, recruitment, and individual conditions of elk to:

- Stimulate productivity and sustainable harvest opportunities;
- Reduce elk-related conflicts on adjacent calving areas and winter ranges.

It was determined that we need more information about the elk herd. Ground survey data is needed in addition to standardized aerial surveys. We need to monitor pre- and post-season calf numbers and develop a protocol for collecting age and body condition data from harvested animals. We should consider a sampling of all

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[Above] Brett O'Haver shows the group something on the map at one of the stops on our tour. [Left] Randy McKee points out conditions on the Valle Grande. (Photos courtesy of Tracy Hephner.)



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Working Ranch

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harvested animals prior to leaving the Preserve. Samples should include body condition, age, reproductive status, and Chronic Wasting Disease status.

Participants also discussed habitat improvement, e.g., woodland management, fire, to improve elk and deer herd health and to manage the distribution of elk. They felt that the Trust needed: a timber plan and fire (prescribed burning) plan; to consider a deer habitat restoration program; to be able to assess the value to the Preserve from habitat improvement. There were questions about otter, beaver, and cutthroat trout restoration programs.

Conclusions

Over all, it was felt that the Trust needs to:

- orchestrate the tools to achieve the goals.
- be fair and equitable.
- relate to neighboring lands.
- provide a service to the public.
- remember that we are a *National Preserve*.
- vary the management of different programs to improve the status of others that need the most improvement.
- recognize that all goals of the Act may not be able to be maximized simultaneously.
- recognize that multiple goals may be synergistic (whole greater than sum of parts).
- recognize that recreation has impacts on the Preserve (and science).
- recognize that impacts from recreation can be managed.

- recognize that these all can be tools to achieve what you want.
- recognize that the education and training and demonstration projects may have sufficient value to warrant federal support. "Unique values of the Preserve may warrant federal funding to generate knowledge, education."
- recognize that major sources of income may be wildlife and cattle. Do we restructure management and staff to address major sources of income?
- recognize that we need to Manage People!

We hope to conduct further meetings next year, both on forage management and on recreation, with possibly one on forest management. If you or someone you know would be interested in participating, please contact Barbara Johnson, lunah3@comcast.net.



[Above left] A lone bull elk. (Photo courtesy of D. Rourke McDermott.) [Above] A herd of elk in the Valle Grande. (Photo courtesy of Rodger Berends.)