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NEWS RELEASE

**Valles Caldera Trust Recaps 2011 Challenges
Transition, Fire and Surprising Numbers Highlight
Annual Report to Congress**

(Jemez Springs, NM) – The dramatic peaks and valleys which comprise the Valles Caldera National Preserve (the Preserve) provide an appropriately descriptive metaphor for the Valles Caldera Trust’s (the Trust) *Report to Congress for Fiscal Year 2011* (October 1, 2010 through September 30, 2011). Increases in visitation, revenue, and education programs were tempered by the devastating impact of the Las Conchas Fire that scorched more than one-third of the landscape. The report discusses the challenges presented by the fire, reviews the accomplishments and progress made from 2007-2011 and presents the outlook for 2012.

“It was a year of great challenges for the Trust,” said interim Executive Director, Dennis Trujillo. “But mixed with those challenges were even greater successes and achievements by the Trust and its staff.”

One of those achievements was the 13% increase in visitation despite the cancelation of 252 events and the suspension of summer activities through the month of July. In addition, most of the activities in the burned areas were prohibited for the remainder of the summer and the San Antonio Creek fishing program closed for the rest of 2011. Also noteworthy was the 10.8% increase in overall revenue in the face of the opportunity cost of lost income from the impacted events. Increased store sales and education programs hosted at the Science and Education Center bolstered revenue to more than \$795,000 for the year.

During 2011 the Trust deployed a technology based counting system on the Preserve to ascertain how many visitors not counted through reservations and manual recording frequent the Preserve. For example the 2010 count of almost 25,000 was based on visitors who participated in a scheduled activity or visited the two staging areas. However, the counter technology deployed in

2011 expanded the sample to the entire Preserve with a more accurate count. The result was a reasonable estimate of 97,552 visitors for 2011, which is almost four times the number counted by the former method in 2010. It also translates into an average cost of \$6.34 to each 2011 visitor which is down from \$45.00 per visitor reported in 2007

“We took a very conservative approach to analyzing the data,” said Trujillo. “The results were surprising and will be a great tool for planning public access and use. The Visitor Count Report describes our method in detail and the more than 160,000 visitors we didn’t add to the total.”

The Report to Congress also discusses the status of the Preserve’s natural and cultural resources, and the goals for 2012 which is described as a year of transition from interim management to comprehensive management. Key elements of the transition will be the development of a Strategic Management Plan (SMP) which will describe the broad management goals and direction of the agency through 2018. An Annual Performance Plan (APP) will also be developed to align budgets and work plans with the goals set in the SMP.

The Trust expects the SMP to be submitted to the Office of Management and Budget for approval by the end of February.

The complete Valles Caldera Trust 2011 Report to Congress can be found on the VCT website at: <http://www.vallescaldera.gov/about/trust/docs/AnnualReportCongress2011.pdf>

A copy of the Visitor Count Report is available on the Trust website at: <http://www.vallescaldera.gov/about/trust/docs/VCNPVisitorCountReport.pdf>

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. The ranch 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 Trust is to create a successful model of public land management that protects and preserves the unique values of the Valles Caldera National Preserve. Toward that end, the Trust will operate the Preserve as a working ranch; strive to become financially self-sustaining; meet the varied needs of visitors; strive to use and steward the multiple resources of the Preserve; and work collaboratively with our neighbors.

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