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NEWS RELEASE

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Valles Caldera Trust Boosts Science and Education Programs with New Facility

Jemez Springs, N.M. --- One of the newest science and education programs on federal land raised the bar today when the Valles Caldera Trust signed a long term lease for a new education and conference facility in Jemez Springs. The agreement between the Trust and the Servants of the Paraclete for the 15000 square foot facility will avoid spending millions of taxpayer dollars on new construction and environmental impact studies. The deal will also accelerate the implementation of a robust science and education program *years* ahead of schedule.

"Before this opportunity came along we were faced with the prospect of impacting the Preserve environment and requesting \$10-15 million of public funding during very difficult economic times," said Valles Caldera Trust Executive Director, Gary Bratcher. "Now we are providing an exceptional program that will accommodate clientele from academia, public schools, and the private sector without that taxpayer expenditure."

The Board of Trustees authorized \$306,000 from the Trust's revenue account to purchase furniture, laboratory and teaching equipment for the facility. Revenue account funds are generated from visitors' activity and recreation fees rather than appropriated tax dollars from Congress. The Trust also developed an operational financial plan to support the 25 bedroom facility and programs which will eventually achieve 100% cost recovery. In addition to lodging

and food service revenues, supplementary funding will come from school program expenses defrayed via grants such as those being prepared in cooperation with New Mexico universities and colleges.

"Numerous preliminary programs in both formal and informal education activities have been conducted since 2003" said VCT Science and Education Director, Dr. Bob Parmenter. "But those programs were limited by the lack of laboratory, classroom and lodging facilities needed for long term scientific study. Now the Trust is ready to offer permanent programs to a national audience."

The overall education program will focus on science-related aspects of the Valles Caldera National Preserve (including geology, ecology, wildlife and fisheries management, range management and livestock husbandry, forestry, biodiversity, climate change, hydrology and archaeology). However, studies will also include a wide range of other disciplines (art, photography, history, literature, poetry, music) for which the Valles Caldera provides an inspirational environment.

The "clientele" will fall into four main groups: (1) public school students (elementary through high school) and college/university students in formal educational classes; (2) general public participants in informal workshops and theme-oriented or special-topic classes; (3) organized volunteer groups (e.g., the VCNP Amigos, Sierra Club, etc.) that participate in ongoing science projects on the Preserve; (4) private, corporate, NGO, or government retreats and training programs.

"The Trust believes that the development of Valles Caldera education programs, with suitable support facilities, will provide an outstanding experience for the public," said Bratcher. "We remain committed to ensure that the Preserve becomes a sustainable national resource in research and educational programs for science, natural resource management, and other academic disciplines."

The Valles Caldera Trust education and conference facility is expected to open for business by early 2010.