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NEWS RELEASE

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Valles Caldera Awards Grazing Contract

NMSU, JEMEZ PUEBLO and NMBCPA Proposal Selected

Jemez Springs, N.M. ---A joint proposal presented by New Mexico State University, Jemez Pueblo and The New Mexico Beef Cattle Performance Association (NMBCPA) was selected for the Valles Caldera National Preserve 2009 grazing season. The Executive Director, in collaboration with board members and staff, reviewed the five proposals submitted taking into consideration the economic, environmental and social benefits of each proposal and their respective herd management plans.

"All proposals we received were reviewed and each brought its unique approach to the grazing program," said Gary Bratcher, Executive Director of the Valles Caldera Trust. "However, the plan selected includes community, educational, economic and scientific elements that extend benefits beyond the borders of the Preserve."

The proposal submitted by Dr. Manny Encinias of NMSU, in partnership with the Jemez Pueblo and NMBCPA establishes the framework for providing cow-calf pairs, virgin bulls, and replacement heifers in the 2009 program. The group proposal specifies 500 Animal Units (AU's) to a maximum of 1500 AU's at a flat rate of \$52.00 (AU) for the season. The NMSU plan also

calls for the development of a grazing plan to benefit both the natural resources and performance of grazing cattle. "The intent is to incorporate a grazing system which minimizes the use of grazing resources along riparian areas and emphasizes the use of the resources away from the perennial waterways," says Encinias.

"The plan is essentially a diversified breeding stock operation with extensive hands on management by NMSU and the partners", said Bratcher. "It creates an enterprise that can dramatically improve the production of livestock for high elevation ranching, promote economic development in the region, and allows the Preserve to further enhance the self-sustaining, environmental, and cultural goals set by the Valles Caldera Preservation Act."

The primary objective of the proposal is focused on the development of a high altitude performance testing facility for virgin bulls and replacement heifers. The Preserve pastures have always been attractive to cattle growers, but the high altitude provides a unique feature. "There is a nationwide market demand for progressive genetics that meet industry standards for performance and also have an ability to thrive at high elevations" said Encinias. "Before the Trust accepted our proposal there was no high altitude facility in the U.S. where seedstock could be objectively evaluated on a 100% forage-based diet. Now we have one."

For 48 years, NMSU's Cooperative Extension Service and Agricultural Experiment Station in Tucumcari, NM has managed and housed the state's only seedstock performance testing facility, in cooperation with the NMBPCA. The NMBPCA is an organized group of seedstock producers in the Southwest focused on marketing industry-leading genetics to improve the quality of commercial cow-calf operations. During this time membership has developed an international recognition for their centralized performance testing facility. Their role in this partnership is based on a commitment to objectively evaluate the performance of quality seedstock that will thrive at high elevations.

Partnering with NMSU gives the Trust the opportunity to team with the state's Land Grant University, providing access to the region's leading natural resource and livestock production scientists and producer-educators. This partnership will explore potential revenue generating opportunities for the trust, including but not limited to the development of feed supplements and mineral formulas for high elevation beef production.

Dr. Encinias, a beef cattle specialist with NMSU, will team with colleagues from Las Cruces and the greater Cooperative Extension Service network of agricultural agents in north-central NM to launch an aggressive educational program for the beef cattle producers in the region. The program will emphasize progressive and sustainable practices in the areas of natural resource management, herd improvement, and cooperative, value-added marketing for local cattle. "Our outreach goal is to establish the VCNP as an example of how to manage and improve grazing resources and profitability of beef cattle operations at high-elevations," said Encinias.

A vital component of this proposal is the participation of the cow-calf producers from the Jemez Pueblo Livestock Association (JPLA). Encinias and the JPLA have a long-standing working

relationship relative to the management of their cow-calf production systems on the Pueblo. The inclusion of the JPLA will give NMSU the demonstration herd necessary to quantify changes relative to cattle quality and marketability, typical of cow-calf operations in the region.

The Jemez Pueblo and its Livestock Association will further benefit from participation in the program through a summer rest period of its pastures to improve the condition of grazing lands. The result will be a healthier, stronger, and more profitable herd as well as a more resilient home rangeland.

“The program not only improves our cattle and our cattle management over time but it also provides rest and enhances the condition of our rangelands on the Pueblo,” said David M. Toledo, Governor Jemez Pueblo. “This is an excellent example of the Valles Caldera’s commitment to work with the Pueblo and community.”

The final number of AUs permitted to graze this summer will be determined once forage and precipitation data is completed in late May or early June. Herd numbers may also be adjusted according to changes in precipitation and forage during the grazing season. Though not identified in the proposal, NMSU, NMBCPA, and JPLA will evaluate additional opportunities to include other local livestock producers to achieve the outlined objectives.