



VALLES CALDERA TRUST
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR INFORMATION:

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**VALLES CALDERA TRUST MAKES GRAZING DECISION
80 PERCENT OF FORAGE RESERVED FOR WILDLIFE AND ECOSYSTEM**

The data was compiled, the assessment made and alternatives presented. The end result is an allocation of 80 percent of the forage to the ecosystem and wildlife of the Valles Caldera National Preserve while the remainder is available for multiple uses by the Valles Caldera Trust, including domestic livestock grazing. Trust Executive Director Gary Bratcher based his decision on a recently completed Environmental Assessment (EA) and extensive comments received by the public.

The EA considered a number of utilization options for the remaining 20 percent of the forage. Several alternatives were crafted and based primarily on public comments. Alternative A considered taking no action at this time. Alternatives B, C, and D varied in the amount of forage to allocate to domestic livestock and the types of grazing programs that would occur. All alternatives included a baseline for improving ecological conditions over time and required programs to at least break even financially. Each alternative included the maintenance of fences and water source management. Alternatives C and D were considered with and without upgrades and repairs to a barn and two out buildings.

Bratcher selected Alternative D with the additional upgrades to facilities. Under this alternative, programs will be developed to optimize potential revenue and provide the greatest administrative efficiencies. Bratcher believes this alternative best meets the “working ranch” function put forward by Congress. “I find this alternative to be most compliant with the Valles Caldera Preservation Act,” he said. Quoting from the Act Bratcher added, “It is the best model for ‘optimizing the generation of income based on existing market conditions, 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’.” Bratcher noted the optimization of income generation is a critical element in achieving the legislated goal of financial self-sufficiency.

The management of fences and maintenance of earthen water tanks will protect natural resources and reduce conflicts between grazing and recreation programs including fishing. The EA limits long-term commitments and activities that would reduce the Trust’s flexibility to respond to changing conditions including climate change. A Request for Proposals is available on the Trust’s website for ranchers interested in grazing the high country this summer. The final EA, Bratcher’s decision, and other documents are available on the Trust’s website, www.vallescaldera.gov. Links are provided on the home page.