

Chapter 5 Consultation and Coordination



The intent of NEPA is to encourage the participation of federal and state-involved agencies and affected citizens in the assessment procedure, as appropriate. This section describes the consultation that occurred during development of this EIS. This chapter also includes a description of the public involvement process, a summary of the comments received during the public and agency comment period for the Draft EIS, and the selection of a preferred alternative based on review and analysis of public and agency input. Finally, this chapter includes a list of the recipients of the draft document and a list of preparers of the analysis.



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5. Consultation and Coordination

The VCT undertook the following activities to involve the public and agencies in preparation of this EIS.

Public Involvement Activities

Public Scoping

Soon after the preserve transferred to federal ownership, the VCT held listening sessions with the public in 2001. Most people had never been to the preserve and had no frame of reference, so the VCT undertook an effort to introduce people to the landscape. The information from these sessions helped identify public concerns and desires and helped the VCT move forward with planning efforts.

In 2006, the VCT formally initiated access and use planning, which led to public workshops hosted by the VCT in 2007 to identify goals and assess sites for development. These workshops were held in Jemez Springs, Pojoaque, Los Alamos, and Rio Rancho, New Mexico, and consisted of open houses with staffed stations and facilitated workshops. Preserve staff members tried to solicit as much public feedback as possible about the landscape and potential changes to it within the framework of the act that established the preserve. Following these meetings, the VCT facilitated another workshop to identify values and activities, balancing various recreational activities and management actions. Information gathered at these workshops helped define the scope of analysis for this EIS.

Public Notification

The VCT published a notice of intent to prepare an EIS for a public use and access plan in the Federal Register Friday, August 28, 2009. The VCT posted information to its website, released a letter dated August 13, 2009, and released flyers inviting the public to give input on the EIS by attending public workshops or submitting comments online through the VCT website. The VCT held public workshops September 14 and 15, 2009, described in more detail below.

Public Workshops

The intent of the public workshops for this EIS was to solicit feedback on the preliminary conceptual alternatives the VCT had identified. The first meeting was held September 14, 2009, at the Hilton Garden Inn in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The second was held September 15 at the Santa Fe Community College in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Both meetings began at 5:30 p.m. and concluded at approximately 8:00 p.m. The general format of the meetings included an open house, where attendees could visit several stations with background information and descriptions of the various planning elements the preserve had identified to incorporate into alternatives development. The elements consisted of access, capacity, activities, level of development, financing, and values. VCT staff members and consultants were available to describe the process and answer questions. After each open house, the VCT presented a brief overview of the planning process, followed by group discussions.



Public Alternatives Meeting

The VCT hosted public meetings in Santa Fe and Jemez Springs, New Mexico, to solicit public input on the alternatives developed for analysis in the EIS. The meetings were held March 1, 3, and 5, 2011. The first was held in Santa Fe; the latter two were held in Jemez Springs at the VCT administrative offices. The meetings combined short presentations and open house areas where people could talk to VCT staff members. Brief overviews and presentations were supplemented by more detailed information available in both hardcopy and electronic formats. This information was available at the meetings, on the VCT web site, or by mail (upon request).

Other Public Outreach Activities

In preparation of the public workshops that followed the publication of the notice of intent, the VCT created an area of its website devoted to presenting information about elements the VCT had identified to help guide the development of alternatives. This web page was designed to allow users to provide comments and feedback about each planning element (access, capacity, activities, development, financing, and values) in order to help build the alternatives. Each element was fully described with a narrative and summary table. The public was able to register and enter comments that were visible to all site users. The website also included an overview, videos, maps, and a glossary of terms. As with the comments received during public meetings, the VCT considered the comments received on this interactive web page in the development of the alternatives. This web page was updated prior to the March 2011 alternatives meetings to provide detailed information about the purpose and need, proposed action, alternatives eliminated, and the alternatives being considered in detailed analysis. The public was provided



an opportunity to comment on these sections of the analysis through an interactive forum hosted on the web page. Following the comment period the web pages remained active throughout the analysis.

The Spring/Summer 2009 edition of the preserve's newsletter, *La Ventana en los Valles*, included an article on the back cover announcing the start of the public access and use planning process (VCT 2009i). This article described the study conducted by the Economics Group of Entrix, which identified possible alternatives the VCT could pursue to meet its goals of environmental and financial self-sufficiency. The article announced that these alternatives, along with others, would be available for public input through open houses planned for that summer. The article noted that the intent of the open houses was to "invite public participation and interaction with VCT specialists who will provide exhibits and interpret the access and use combinations. The public testing of these combinations will stimulate new ideas and concepts that will potentially add to self-sufficiency and long-term management of the preserve."

In August 2009 the VCT published a document titled Public Scoping Information on its website for the public access and use plan, which consolidated key documents from the website into a single pdf file. This included a letter to the public soliciting feedback, a flyer announcing public meetings held in 2009, a glossary of terms, guidelines for submitting comments online, a description of the initial alternatives, maps, and financing information.

The Fall 2009 *La Ventana en los Valles* newsletter included an article on the back cover about public participation in planning and decision-making as an essential component of NEPA, with specific details about how to become involved in the progression of this EIS (VCT 2009h). The article listed several methods the public could use to become involved and offer comments, encouraging participation in the public access and use planning process.

The Spring 2011 *La Ventana en los Valles* newsletter included an article about the public meetings held in March 2011 to present the alternatives to be analyzed in the EIS (VCT 2011a). The newsletter updated readers on the status of the EIS and assured them that public comments had been instrumental in developing the alternatives. The article also notified readers that the online interactive commenting feature developed on the VCT website, which had allowed people to share their comments about the EIS, had ended. The article noted that all information and reports about the EIS could still be downloaded from the website, and that readers could request that information be sent to them via surface mail by contacting the VCT via telephone or email or at its physical location in Jemez Springs.

Public Outreach Associated with Publication of Draft EIS

The VCT released the Draft EIS on June 11, 2012. The release was announced through a Notice of Availability published in the Federal Register, a legal notice published in the Albuquerque Journal, and press releases to the Albuquerque Journal and other local print, radio, and television media outlets. A newsletter was sent to 2,249 agencies, individuals, and organizations. The newsletter included detailed



information and electronic links to view the Draft EIS, find background information, attend public meetings, visit the locations being considered for development, and submit comments.

Paper copies of the complete Draft EIS, a CD, and separate executive summary were distributed to the USFS (Region, Forest, and District offices), Bandelier National Monument, and Jemez, Zia, and Santa Clara Pueblos (whose lands border the preserve). To ensure the public had access to paper copies of the Draft EIS, the complete package was also distributed to Caldera Action and the following local libraries: Los Alamos County Library, Albuquerque-Bernalillo County Library System, Cuba Public Library, Jemez Pueblo Community Library, Espanola Public Library, Santa Fe Public Library, Loma Colorado Library, and the New Mexico State Library in Santa Fe. On request, a paper copy was also sent to White Rock Public Library and Northwestern University. Packages containing a paper copy of the Draft EIS Executive Summary as well as a CD with all documents were distributed to other state and federal agencies and interested Pueblos and Tribes (see below for the distribution list).

Copies of the Draft EIS were supplemented with cover letters including information regarding the length of the comment period and how and where to deliver written comments, and a public hearing notice with the dates, times and locations of the public meetings, at which written comments could be received.

Electronic copies of the complete Draft EIS, individual chapters, and the executive summary were available on the VCT website. The VCT maintains a section of its web site dedicated to planning and public involvement. In addition to the Draft EIS, the public could access background information about the project, the VCT, or NEPA, and submit online comments and view the comments of others.

The VCT held two public meetings to discuss the Draft EIS in June 2012, during which the VCT presented an overview of the Draft EIS. VCT staff facilitated a group discussion about the Draft EIS and proposed alternatives, and resource specialists were present to interact with the public and answer questions. Attendees were able to provide comments in writing or by using a computer connected to the project web site.

The meetings were held on the following dates and locations:

- June 25, 2012: The Valles Caldera Trust Science and Education Center in Jemez Springs, NM
- June 26, 2012: The University of New Mexico – Los Alamos in Los Alamos, NM

Additionally, the VCT opened the three potential visitor center sites for members of the public and provided signage in the areas proposed for development. These areas were open to the public throughout the public comment period.



Public and agency comment periods began with publication of the Draft EIS and ended on August 14, 2012; comments could be submitted online or via surface or electronic mail. Comments submitted on the project web site were reviewed for inappropriate or unrelated content and then posted¹. Comments received via direct mailing were entered into the online database by the VCT so all comments received were available for public viewing.

The VCT received 125 separate written communications in the form of letters, email, and project comment forms. Seven of these comments were from agencies or Pueblos and Tribes, and 118 were from members of the public, including citizen groups or organizations. Copies of the written communications and responses to comments are included in Appendix A. The comments are summarized below.

Agency Consultation and Coordination

Public Agencies and Organizations

Public agencies and organizations were included in all mailings and notices distributed to the public. In addition, they received planning status updates and schedules, and were provided with contact information for further inquiry.

Cultural Resource Consultation

Tribal governments and State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) were included in communications throughout the development of the Public Access and Use Plan EIS. To avoid duplication of efforts, the VCT used the NEPA process to achieve public notification for NHPA Section 106. Concurrent notification and comment periods for were used for NEPA and NHPA.

The New Mexico SHPO was included in all mailings and notices distributed to the public. In addition, the SHPO and the Advisory Council of Historic Preservation received planning status updates and schedules, and were provided with contact information for further inquiry. It is anticipated that implementation-level and programmatic-level decisions will have unavoidable adverse effects to significant historic properties. To address this concern and to develop appropriate processes to resolve these effects, the VCT has met with SHPO to construct a programmatic agreement that addresses implementation-level and programmatic-level undertakings in multiple phases. The Advisory Council of Historic Preservation has been invited to participate in the programmatic agreement and may be included as a signatory pending their decision. Following a 30-day no-action period, which is initiated upon release of the Final EIS, ROD will be signed. The programmatic agreement will be finalized prior to the ROD.

¹ One comment was rejected because it was unrelated to the Draft EIS. The comment was redirected to the Executive Director, and the commenter was notified of this action.

Formal and informal tribal consultation has taken place throughout the planning process. Communications specific to the project included scoping, alternatives development, project updates, and distribution of the Draft EIS. The phased programmatic agreement between the VCT and SHPO specifies that tribal consultation will be included in development of all mitigation plans for resolution of adverse effect and in developing subsequent agreements for resolution of adverse effects. The VCT would work with local Tribes to identify methods of protecting important cultural features by including tribal consultation in future planning and decision-making about the programmatic elements in the plan.

Threatened and Endangered Species Consultation

Formal consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act was not warranted for this project. The USFWS was informed of the planning process in concert with the public and other agencies and organizations.

Summary of Comments on Draft EIS

During the public comment period, the VCT received 118 written comments from individuals or organizations, and 7 written comments from Tribes or government agencies. Project staff reviewed, categorized, and responded to each written communication received. In many cases one letter or email included several comments. Project staff responded to a total of 166 comments. The remainder of this section summarizes the public and agency comments.

Comments from the Public

Comments from the public fell into seven general categories. The categories are as follows:

- Stated preference
- Alternatives (applied when the commenter suggested modification of existing alternative or a new alternative)
- EIS Content
- Biology
- Cultural Resources
- Administration
- Transportation

A summary of the comments received follows, and a matrix containing the comments with responses is included in appendix A.

Stated Preferences

Many commenters expressed a preference for one alternative over another, or against a specific alternative. These preferences are tallied below. In addition to expressions of support for specific alternatives, eight people wrote to say they would like to see a shuttle system instead of personal vehicles used for access to the preserve.



Table 5-1: Stated Preferences for a Specific Alternative

Alternative	Number of Comments Expressing Preference
Alternative 1	7
Alternative 2	19
Alternative 3	29
No preference between 3A and 3B: 6	
Alternative 3A: 14	
Alternative 3B: 9	
Alternative 4	19
No preference between 4A and 4B: 2	
Alternative 4A:* 14	
Alternative 4B: 3	
Shuttle (no preference for visitor center location provided)	9

* Two commenters expressing supporting for this alternative later rescinded that support in writing. This total reflects the adjustment.

Alternatives

Several comments included ideas or suggestions for variations on the existing alternatives, or new alternatives, or features to include if an action alternative were to be selected. These ideas are summarized below:

- Only allow government vehicles off-road
- Hire Native American guides for cultural interpretation
- Encourage backcountry access (camps, scouting events, hunting/fishing clinics, etc.)
- Limit camping sites in developed areas and in the backcountry
- Enhance low-impact use (and limit use of vehicles within preserve)
- Develop a multi-use trail network within, around, and circling the preserve
- Eliminate grazing
- Build all parking and building facilities off site to protect the visual landscape
- Build campgrounds at Banco Bonito, away from the visitor center but near a water source
- Develop horse stables
- Develop a hotel for visitors
- Locate operations and maintenance facilities outside of public view
- Ban all-terrain vehicles, dirt bikes, and similar RVs from the preserve
- Allow off-road access to anglers and hunters



Additionally, several people suggested elements that would be part of an action alternative, including the following:

- Access for disabled persons
- Geologic education on formation of caldera
- Bicycle access

Chapter 2 of the EIS was revised to elaborate on these features of the alternatives. Regarding the access for disabled visitors, the EIS was revised to further stress that the VCT would comply with the ADA to provide access to disabled visitors to the fullest extent possible under all action alternatives.

Environmental Impact Statement Content

Several commenters asked for clarification of elements of the EIS, or noted gaps in the data or analysis presented. Appendix A describes how the VCT responded to all comments received on the Draft EIS. Specific topics or questions asked include the following:

- What are plans for spontaneous access of the preserve?
- How many people currently visit the preserve?
- Where is a link to agency procedures for NEPA?
- Provide more mitigation measures in chapter 2.
- How was the severity of impacts defined in the Draft EIS?

Biology

Commenters requested more mitigation for wildlife and additional information in the EIS on potential impacts to elk and golden eagles, and requested that the VCT make decisions with natural resources in mind, rather than just needs and wants of people.

Cultural Resources

Commenters expressed concerns about access to sites of cultural importance to Pueblos and Tribes (e.g., concerns about protecting those resources, and concerns about excluding non-Tribal people from those same areas).

Administration

Multiple people suggested extending the VCT's management deadline of 2015 to 2020; several comments received were related to management of the preserve by the NPS. These issues were not within the scope of the decision to be made through this EIS. Others suggested strategies for phasing development in light of funding constraints.

Some commenters expressed concerns related to public safety, such as the need to augment additional law enforcement presence with increased visitation and safety related to co-mingling hunting activities with increased visitor access.



Transportation

In addition to the many comments expressing a preference for shuttle or private vehicle access within the preserve (with the majority suggesting shuttles); other comments related to transportation included a suggestion to analyze the environmental impacts of the existing road system rather than use it as a baseline, and to disallow ATV use on the preserve.

Agency Comments

As noted above, seven government agencies or Tribes submitted written comments on the Draft EIS. The comments are summarized by sender, below.

Environmental Protection Agency

The USEPA reviewed the EIS and rated it “EC-2,” meaning the agency “has environmental concerns and request additional information in the FEIS.” Specifically, the USEPA requested inclusion of additional mitigation measures for anticipated environmental impacts, including development of a construction emissions mitigation plan, use of constructed wetlands for waste and stormwater treatment, and augmentation of the discussion of how the project could affect minority and low-income populations, particularly through job creation. Finally, the USEPA asked for more information regarding tribal involvement throughout the planning process.

New Mexico Department of Game and Fish

NMDGF requested additional analysis on the potential effects of the project, specifically increased visitor use and vehicle access on elk behavior, particularly during calving periods. NMDGF also recommended closing selected roads during elk calving periods to mitigate impacts to those populations. NMDGF also offered corrections regarding the listing status of the Jemez Mountain Salamander.

New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office

The SHPO suggested two methods of approaching mitigation plans for impacts to cultural resources, allowing the VCT a choice in structuring agreements with them regarding those resources.

Council of the Incorporated County of Los Alamos

The Council of the Incorporated County of Los Alamos solicited input from residents and submitted that to the VCT (the individual letters are summarized above in public comment section). The council then recommended adoption of alternative 3A or 3B for the preserve.

Pueblo of Laguna

The Pueblo of Laguna determined that none of the alternatives would have a significant impact at this time, but requested to be notified for review of any artifacts that may be discovered during implementation.



Jemez Pueblo

The Jemez Pueblo expressed a preference for alternative 1, the no-action alternative due to concerns about impacts to culturally significant areas. For the other alternatives, the Jemez Pueblo identified sites that hold cultural (medicinal, religious) significance.

Hopi Tribe

The Hopi Tribe recommended alternative 1, the no action alternative. The Tribe requested copies of the cultural resources surveys of potentially affected areas and proposed treatment plans for their review and comment. They also inquired about funding plans and the potential for visitor entry fees.

Board of Trustees Recommendation of Preferred Alternative

The VCT Board of Trustees discussed the preferred alternative for this plan during a public meeting held Thursday, September 20, 2012. After consideration of the potential impacts as disclosed in the Draft EIS and review of public and agency input, the trustees unanimously stated their preference for alternative 3A: Entrada del Valle Visitor Center—Primary Access via Shuttle System. The trustees noted that the site welcomed visitors into the preserve, but the location on the edge of the Valle Grande would not overtly alter the view or experience for visitors or people traveling through the area. Additionally, the trustees noted the practical aspects of the site, such as proximity of utilities (particularly water availability) and ease of entrance into and exit from the preserve for shuttles (e.g., no backtracking onto NM-4). All members of the Board of Trustees supported primary access via a shuttle system. The Supervisor of the Santa Fe National Forest stated that she believed the shuttle system would be important to maintain stakeholder's values and that the shuttle system would be best for the preserve's resources and would ultimately provide the best experience. The Superintendent at Bandelier National Monument noted that it is best to start with a shuttle system rather than change at a later time. There may be future potential of connecting the transportation systems between Bandelier National Monument and the preserve.

List of Recipients

The following agencies, organizations, and other interested parties received a complete hardcopy or CD of the public access and use plan Draft EIS and/or received letters with invitations to download more detailed information.

Recipient	Hardcopy or CD of EIS	Invitation to Download Info
Federal Agencies		
U.S. Forest Service		
Region 3	✓	
Santa Fe National Forest	✓	



Recipient	Hardcopy or CD of EIS	Invitation to Download Info
Santa Fe National Forest Ranger Districts		
Jemez	✓	
Cuba	✓	
Espanola	✓	
Coyote	✓	
National Park Service (Bandelier National Monument)	✓	
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	✓	
Tribes		
Jemez Pueblo	✓	
Santa Clara Pueblo	✓	
Pueblo of Zia	✓	
All Tribal Governor's Offices ¹	✓	
New Mexico State Agencies		
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish	✓	
New Mexico Environment Department	✓	
New Mexico Mid-region Council of Governments		✓
New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office	✓	✓
Organizations		
Caldera Action	✓	
WildEarth Guardians		✓
The Nature Conservancy	✓	
Regional and Local Agencies		
Mayors of Cities and Towns		
Jemez Springs		✓
Los Alamos		✓
San Ysidro		✓
White Rock		✓
Rio Rancho		✓
Santa Fe		✓
Cuba		✓
Sandoval County		✓

¹ Paper copies of the executive summary and full electronic copies of the Draft EIS were sent to the following: Pueblo of Acoma, Pueblo of Cochiti, Pueblo of Isleta, Pueblo of Laguna, Pueblo of Nambe, Ohkay Owingeh, Pueblo of Picuris, Pueblo of Pojoaque, Pueblo of San Felipe, Pueblo of San Ildefonso, Pueblo of Sandia, Pueblo of Santa Ana, Kewa Pueblo, Pueblo of Taos, Pueblo of Tesuque, Pueblo of Zuni, Jicarilla Apache Nation, Mescalero Apache Tribe, Navajo Nation, Navajo Nation Council, San Carlos Tribal Council, The Hopi Tribe, White Mountain Apache, Southern Ute Tribe, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, Apache Indian Tribe of Oklahoma, Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Comanche Nation, Fort Sill Apache Tribe, Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma, Pawnee Tribal Business Council, and Wichita & Affiliated Tribes.



List of Preparers and Contributors

Name	Title / Contribution
Valles Caldera National Preserve	
Jamie Civitello	Archeologist
Kimberly DeVall	Interpretation and Education Coordinator
Rob Dixon	Director, Enterprise Division
Rourke McDermott	Landscape Architect
Bob Parmenter	Director, Scientific Services Division
Marie Rodriguez	Director, Natural Resources Division/Project Leader
Anastasia Steffen	Cultural Resources Coordinator
John Swigart	GIS Specialist
Dennis Trujillo	Executive Director
David Evans and Associates, Inc. (DEA)	
Orion Ahrensfeld	Visual Simulations
Riley Atkins	Alternatives Review
Maggie Buckley	Socioeconomics, Environmental Justice—Chapter 3
Bill Byrne	Cost Estimates
Suzanne Carey	Wastewater
Ian Chase	Transportation
Mara Krinke	Quality Control
Kacey Meis	GIS Support
Craig Miller	Biological Resources—Chapter 3
Debra Perkins-Smith	Quality Control
Zachary Pope	Wastewater
Gray Rand	Biological Resources
Ed Schumm	Transportation
Rebecca Smith	Cost Estimates
Patricia Steinholtz	Project Manager, Primary Author, Document Designer
Stacy Tschuor	Transportation
Environmental Management and Planning Solutions, Inc. (EMPSI)	
David Batts	Public Involvement
Tetra Tech	
Kevin Doyle	Cultural Resources
The Final Word	
Juanita Barboa	Technical Editor / Quality Control
Sherrie Bell	Technical Editor
Laurel Porter	Technical Editor

