

Public Access and Use Planning Update: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

*September 18, 2009 *Updated October 26, 2011*

Thanks to everyone who participated in our public workshops held on September 14th and 15th in Albuquerque and Santa Fe!

The purpose of the meetings was to help us determine the actions and alternatives to be considered in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The meeting on Monday, September 14th, held in Albuquerque focused largely on what you do not like about the current interim program and limited access. The meeting held Tuesday, September 15th, in Santa Fe focused on what you would like to see and many thoughtful, creative, and inspiring thoughts about how we could expand access, protect resources and values, and become a unique and outstanding public resource. Again, we thank all of you for your time and participation.

In the open house and discussion setting we were able to clarify many questions regarding the current effort to develop a Public Access and Use Plan for the Valles Caldera National Preserve. Those of you who were unable to attend the workshops probably have many of the same questions; we hope the following list of FAQ is helpful.

Where are you in the planning process?

We are in the phase of planning identified in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as “scoping”. The scoping process serves to define the actions, alternatives and key issues associated with any proposal. It is formally initiated by the publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The [NOI](#) for the proposed Public Access and Use Plan (PAUP) was published in the Federal Register and posted on our web site August 28, 2009.

How did you arrive at this point in the planning process?

In December of 2006, the Board of Trustees authorized the staff to continue planning for the development of the PAUP. The [Proposed Stewardship Action](#) noted that planning was to take place in two phases: Phase I would involve the collection of information through public workshops, market analysis and site assessment. Phase II would be planning and decision making in compliance with NEPA.

In 2007 the Trust held a series of [public workshops](#); in 2008 a contractor developed alternatives of management that could result in financial self sufficiency. This [“Revenue Enhancement Study”](#) was released early in 2009. The Trust has also been assessing sites to determine where facilities, primarily a visitor center, could be developed. This has involved determining the location and



capacity of existing utilities, water and waste water considerations and sites conducive to supporting sustainable development.

How did the Trust use the information from the public workshops?

The workshop series resulted in affirming the values the public holds for the Preserve, the types of activities and programs people would like to see offered, as well as the infrastructure and facilities that people believe would be necessary to support those programs and activities.

This result of the workshops is reflected in the scenarios of development described under Alternative B. This scenario expands access for general recreational use and spontaneous use while protecting resources and values. Development is limited and opportunities for expanding special events are retained.

Is the Trust proposing to build the hotels and lodging described in the Revenue Enhancement Study?

The Valles Caldera Preservation Act sets financial self sufficiency as one of the benchmarks to measure the success of the Trust in the management of the Preserve. However, the act also provides that financial self sufficiency must be consistent with the protection and preservation of the Preserve's resources and values for future generations and with providing public access for recreation.

In a perfect world the results of the public workshops and the results of the revenue study would overlap, revealing an ideal strategy for consideration in a PAUP. In this case there is very little overlap between these two steps of information gathering. The development of a visitor center as a portal to experience the Preserve was one of the few elements each study had in common.

While the Trust is compelled to consider the level of development that could lead to financial success, we are equally compelled to ensure that any alternative considered in detail is consistent with the other purposes and the authorities within our enabling legislation.

Your comments at this point are being used along with a careful review of the authorities within the Act and the management principals adopted by the Board of Trustees in 2001 to determine what elements proposed in the revenue enhancement study may be appropriate for inclusion in the alternatives considered in PAUP.

How can we comment on the alternatives that are eventually considered?

There will be several additional opportunities to comment. As identified in the NOI, the Trust will host a public meeting to present the results of the scoping process including the actions and alternatives eliminated from consideration in the EIS as well as those to be analyzed in detail. A meeting will also be held to discuss the issues, concerns and opportunities that may be specific to the communities surrounding the Preserve. In addition, the current online forum will be revised to allow comment on specific alternatives rather building alternatives. There will also be a



comment period for the Draft EIS. The timeline for planning and decision making is provided below.

VALLES CALDERA NATIONAL PRESERVE PUBLIC ACCESS AND USE PLANNING FLOW CHART

PUBLIC WORKSHOPS (2007)
Outcome: Values and Activities
Reflected in Alternative B



REVENUE STUDY (2009)
Outcome: Alternatives for Financial Self-Sufficiency
Reflected in Alternatives D and E



NOTICE OF INTENT (August 2009)
Outcome: Scoping Process Initiated



PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS (September 2009)



ALTERNATIVES REFINEMENT AND EVALUATION (Spring 2011)



We are here → PUBLIC MEETING(S) – PRESENT ALTERNATIVES (Summer/ Fall 2011)



DRAFT EIS (Winter 2011)



PUBLIC COMMENT (Winter 2011)



FINAL EIS (Winter 2011/Spring 2012)



RECORD OF DECISION (ROD) (Spring 2012)