

VCNM ----- PROPOSED VISITOR CENTER(S)

I prefer Alternative 3 Entrada del Valle, but I think that you also should pursue, Alternative 2 Banco Bonito, perhaps later on. I DO NOT FAVOR Alternative 1 (no public access) or Alternative 4 Vista del Valle.

Alternative 3 Entrada del Valle: This would provide a large visitor center w/lots of trail access visible and accessible directly from the highway. This is similar to Bandelier, where headquarters provides a museum, visitor info and gift shop, plus trail access. Much friendlier than the current limited or no trail access. Environmental impact minimal because people already access the staging area via that dirt road plus the old ranch buildings were located in this area also. I'm a little unclear how far down the road the center would be, but you need the visitor center visible and accessible from the highway for disabled & elderly visitors. The current situation is very confusing to people driving by unless they have examined your website, which a lot of folks out for a casual tour of the Jemez would not have done.

Hotel: I'm sure a lot of people oppose the idea, but I really think you need to put a hotel near the visitor center or where the old ranch buildings were, similar to the Old Faithful Hotel in Yellowstone. It's a long drive out there to the Valle, and especially for your night/winter/New Year's Fire & Ice events, it's a pain and somewhat unsafe to be driving back down the mountain on icy roads and w/large elk/deer/wildlife roaming around the road in the dark. You need a restaurant and a bar also. This would greatly increase visitor business and would be booked months in advance. Again, the impact would not be huge as that road is currently used plus the ranch buildings used to be there.

Alternative 2 Banco Bonito: The smaller visitor contact center, even a version scaled-down from the current proposal, is a very good idea because it is so far away from the Alt. 3 location, basically on the other side of the caldera. A lot of people turn around and go back to Albuquerque before they even hit the Valle Grande (I have friends from school who have lived in Alb for over 30 years and have never seen the Valle!). Banco Bonito would be a great place to snag those folks and generate more interest, plus it would be GREAT to have some free open trailheads here. I am assuming that the info/education center for the Valle will remain in Jemez Springs to attract interest from folks who originally were only visiting Jemez Springs?

Alternative 4 Vista del Valle: Having hiked the Coyote Call/Rabbit Ridge Trails many times, I totally oppose putting structures in this beautiful area. I agree that the views are spectacular, but PLEASE leave the elegant sweeping meadow that opens those trails untouched by buildings and signs. The parking would be very congested or would require further paving, ruining the gorgeous meadow, plus it is all quite slanted so a lot of awful leveling would be required. If safety concerns favor putting in an underpass so folks could go under the road from the main Valle area in order to hike Coyote Call, the underpass would be ok (would animals use it at night I wonder?). At most, a sign area showing the trail and its communication with Bandelier could go here just at the trailhead.

THANK YOU FOR INVITING COMMENTS! Tina S