



Caldera Action

Protecting a unique natural and cultural landscape

August 13, 2012

Marie Rodriguez
Valles Caldera National Preserve
P. O. Box 359
Jemez Springs, NM 87594

Dear Ms Rodriguez,

We submit the following amendments to our comments of July 16, 2012 as part of the official record on the Trust's current Public Use and Access Plan Draft Environmental Impact Statement (PAUP-DEIS). These comments come as a result of our Board field trip to the Caldera. We want to thank you and Bob for the time you took with us in visiting and talking about the Vista del Valle (VdV) and Entrada sites.

Caldera Action is a 501(c)3, citizens group dedicated to the long-term conservation of the Valles Caldera National Preserve (VCNP, the Preserve) and appropriate public access to the VCNP. We have around 100 members in 7 states and the District of Columbia and another 100 subscribers.

These comments are intended primarily to expand on our earlier comments. However, we do want to rescind our preference for the VdV site—Option 4-A—and, based on our site visit, to designate the Entrada site—Option 3-A—as our preferred alternative.

In addition to our previous comments, we:

- strongly encourage the VCNP staff to plan for very limited private vehicle access to the VCNP. The special qualities that much of the public finds attractive at the Preserve are the quiet, the good chance of seeing variety of wildlife, and the sense of wildness that persists in the place despite past uses. All of these qualities can only be maintained by limiting motor noise, and the intrusion of vehicles to the backcountry. The VCNP has a sense of quiet and solitude that is a rare experience for people today.

Private vehicle access to the Preserve may be appropriate for hunters for game retrieval (providing they stay on established roads), groups, and for persons with disabilities who need special provisions. Ranchers tending cattle should have access with carefully considered limits. Otherwise a shuttle system such as the one the VCNP now provides but with flexibility and continuous improvement would serve the public well. These shuttles could be adjusted to protect nesting wildlife, elk habitat or other environmental concerns such as road conditions that could lead to stream pollution or road damage. In the future, electric vehicles could be used to further limit noise and pollution;

- agree with the use of planning visitor projections of about 120,000/year. This may be optimistic given that the Harbinger analysis performed for CA, NPCA, and NMWF projected 64,000 visitors/year, but is in the same ballpark and a reasonable planning horizon;
- change preference to the Entrada site in light of access, hiking possibilities, solar aspect, visual impact on rest of the Preserve, and the more intimate feel of the site, with trees and large rock outcrops. This site also supports greater opportunities for pedestrian access to the Preserve directly from the site;
- suggest minimizing access road impact, perhaps using a one-way loop for access to parking;
- agree with lightning safety concerns expressed by the VCNP staff with respect to trails to the East Fork originating at the VdV site.

We thank you for the opportunity for further comment on the proposed PAUP-DEIS. We reiterate our commendations for the progress that has been made since the initial scoping process in 2009.

Sincerely,



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cc: Valles Caldera Trustees
Office of Senator Jeff Bingaman
Office of Senator Tom Udall
Office of Representative Ben Ray Lujan
Office of Representative Martin Heinrich