

From: Yvonne Delamater <ydelamater@earthlink.net>

Date: February 4, 2010 7:47:36 PM MST

To: countycouncil@lacnm.us

Subject: please support National Park Service management of Valles Caldera National Preserve

Dear County Councilors:

As you know, Senator Bingaman requested that the National Park Service (NPS) study the feasibility of the NPS taking over the management of the Valles Caldera National Preserve (VCNP). The report was released recently (<http://VallesCaldera.com/wp-content/uploads/documents/NPSReconnaissanceReport.pdf>) and looks very favorably upon this action.

For us and other hikers, it's been 10 long years since the VCNP was created and yet we don't feel any closer to being allowed to enjoy and explore this so-called public land. After 10 years, we aren't even allowed to buy an annual pass to access the Preserve year-around as we do at Bandelier National Monument.

A Valles Caldera National Preserve, professionally managed by the NPS, would be a shining jewel in the crown of our Jemez Mountains and a magnet for visitors! As one of the gateway communities to the Preserve, greater visitation at the Valles Caldera would provide a tremendous boon to the tourist industry in Los Alamos (as well as make countless Los Alamos recreationist ecstatic!)

As it is now, visitation at the VCNP is underused and confusing. Out of state visitors can hardly believe it when they gaze upon the beautiful Valle Grande from NM-4 and are told either that the Preserve is closed (which it is an unseemly amount of time) or that they can drive in two miles but no further. Local recreationist are constrained to either participate in the closely scheduled activities offered by the Valles Caldera Trust or go elsewhere. As a form of protest, we've gone elsewhere but are not happy about that.

We would like the Los Alamos County Council to support the National Park Service taking over management of the Valles Caldera National Preserve.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Yvonne and Norman Delamater
960 Otowi Pl.
Los Alamos, NM 87544

From: "Tina Sibbitt" <aoctrs@nmcourts.gov>
To: <countycouncil@lacnm.us>
Cc: "Sen. Jeff Bingaman" <senator_bingaman@bingaman.senate.gov>; "Senator Tom Udall" <Senator@tomudall.senate.gov>; "Congressman Lujan" <NM03BLIMA@mail.house.gov>; <wallace@losalamos.com>; "carlos cisneros" <carlos.cisneros@nmlegis.gov>; "richard martinez" <richard.martinez@nmlegis.gov>
Sent: Thursday, February 18, 2010 12:05 PM
Subject: National Park status for the Valle Caldera

> Dear Los Alamos Councilmembers: I hope you will support changing the
> Valle Grande/Caldera to national park status as opposed to its current
> situation of being expected to pay for itself. The Valle has always
> beckoned Los Alamosians, and the current limited access is better than
> nothing, but it could do so much more. Being part of the National Park
> System would open the door to greater public access, hopefully in a
> smart and strategic manner to preserve the natural beauty and resources there.
> Elevated status and greater patronage of the Valle would only enhance
> the Los Alamos economy with lodging and food options for those
> visitors. There is no reason the large number of people currently
> visiting Bandelier shouldn't spend a little more time to visit the
> Valle if it was as open as Bandelier. Please look for ways to
> officially support this proposal as it goes forward.
>
> Thank you,
>
> Tina Sibbitt
> 923 Tewa Loop
> Los Alamos, NM

-----Original Message-----

From: Tina R. Sibbitt [mailto:aoctrs@nmcourts.gov]
Sent: Friday, March 05, 2010 1:48 PM
To: ~County Council
Cc: Sen. Jeff Bingaman; Senator Tom Udall; Congressman Lujan; wallace@losalamos.com; carlos cisneros; richard martinez
Subject: Re: National Park status for the Valle Caldera

In my prior message on this, I forgot to mention the activities I would like to remain or be allowed should the status change to a national park or preserve: hiking, biking, snowshoeing, X-country skiing, horses, dogs on leash in a very limited area, sleigh rides.

I oppose hunting because I don't want to be shot by some idiot hunter. Although I realize that hunting license fees support our open lands, many people have been shot by hunters in Montana and other heavily-hunted places. I don't want to worry about bullets or arrows when hiking, especially in the beautiful fall.

I oppose cattle grazing because it ruins the water and the landscape and drives out wildlife.

Fishing and camping, if allowed, should be limited to certain areas and highly monitored. I worked in the Bosque del Apache Wildlife Refuge for an entire summer and personally had to clean up filthy diapers, food waste, cigarette butts and dangerous fishhooks and smelly bait trash in the fishing areas. I have seen both activities create disgusting trash and trample down pretty areas. Hefty fines should attach and rangers should have the ability and power to ticket then and there. I'd be very happy if smoking was banned.

I oppose motorcycles, ATV's, and snowmobiles because they are noisy, dangerous because people insist on driving them at high speeds, and destructive to the environment because they tear up dirt and destroy bushes, etc.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment. I thought that last night's "Listening Session" at Fuller Lodge was quite interesting.

Tina R. Sibbitt 923 Tewa Loop Los Alamos NM 87544
tsibbittsibblaw@unmalumni.com

From: Tom & Carlyn Jervis [mailto:jervidae@cybermesa.com]
Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2010 4:34 PM
To: Stewart, Kelly
Subject: VCNP Listening Sessions

Kelly,

I am the President of Caldera Action, a 501 (c)(3) organization with more than 20% of our members in Los Alamos. I, and other members of our Board of Directors, have been involved in efforts to protect the Baca Location # 1 for many years, well before the acquisition of the property by the Federal Government in 2000.

Caldera Action and its predecessor organization, the Valles Caldera Coalition, have been deeply involved with the Valles Caldera National Preserve since its inception—and before. We have worked with the VCNP staff and have closely watched the struggles of the Preserve as it has tried to deal with the conflicting demands of the original legislation and a continually changing Board of Trustees.

This experience has led us to conclude that the long-term preservation of this landscape cannot be achieved by the present trust structure, even with some significant “tinkering” with the original legislation as proposed by the Board of Trustees. We therefore developed draft legislation to transfer the VCNP to the National Park Service and presented that legislation last year to the New Mexico Congressional Delegation.

As the originators of the Park Service Plan, we would like the opportunity to address these listening sessions for about 8 minutes near the beginning of each session. Can you allow us this indulgence?

Tom Jervis

Kelly,

Attached is an electronic copy of our testimony. The "short" version is my oral statement with supporting organizations.

Please let me know when the Council is planning to take up the resolution.

Tom

Caldera Action

Protecting a Unique Natural and Cultural Landscape

March 4, 2010

Chairman Wismer, members of the Council, my name is Tom Jervis. I live at 109 Daybreak in Santa Fe, but as many of you are aware, I lived in Los Alamos for over 25 years. I am the President of Caldera Action, a 501 (c)(3) organization with about 20% of our members in Los Alamos.

Caldera Action is inspired by the majesty of the Valles Caldera; we envision the restoration and protection of its unique natural and cultural heritage so that present and future generations can experience the sense of wonder that comes from individual discovery in this ecologically and culturally significant landscape.

Caldera Action and its predecessor organization, the Valles Caldera Coalition, have been deeply involved with the Valles Caldera National Preserve since well before the acquisition of the property by the Federal Government in 2000 and since acquisition. We have worked with the VCNP staff and have closely watched the struggles of the Preserve as it has tried to deal with the conflicting demands of the original legislation and a continually changing Board of Trustees.

This experience has led us to conclude that the long-term preservation and public enjoyment of this landscape cannot be achieved by the present trust structure, even with some significant "tinkering" with the original legislation as proposed by the Board of Trustees. We therefore developed draft legislation to transfer the VCNP to the National Park Service to be operated as a *Preserve* where hunting and fishing would be allowed and presented that legislation last year to New Mexico's Congressional Delegation.

We are joined in this effort by a large number of local, statewide, and national organizations who have formally indicated their support for this position. A list of those organizations is included in our written statement.

I will summarize the reasons for our initiative briefly. A more complete discussion of the above points is included with our written testimony, which I request to be placed in the record.

Our proposal is based on three main points:

First, the *trust model* established for management of the Valles Caldera National Preserve is fatally flawed.

Specifics, include:

- the requirement for financial self-sufficiency that has biased public access opportunities, resulted in fees higher than those charged at similar public lands (and likely to increase in the near future), and that even the Trustees have admitted is not practicable;
- the political appointment process that leads to constantly changing guidance for the professional staff of the Preserve and prevents the development of a long-term vision for the Preserve;

- the absence of a federal agency that advocates for the Preserve's needs in Washington so the New Mexico Congressional delegation must fund the Preserve with earmarks each year; and
- the requirement that the Preserve procure private liability insurance for its operations, severely limiting public access to the Preserve.

These shortcomings could in principle be solved by tinkering with the existing legislation as the trustees propose.

However, the Trust's *management of the Valles Caldera National Preserve has failed to realize the requirements of the legislation. Specifics include:*

- that the Trust has failed to produce the comprehensive management program required by the enabling legislation with the result that individual program plans have been disconnected from one another and from an overall vision of the purposes of the Preserve;
- that the Trust has consistently refused to operate in full public view, regularly holding closed meetings without justification;
- that the Trust has been slow to address public requests for increased access opportunities, and the Preserve lacks even the most basic infrastructure for public access and protection; and
- that in ten years, the Trust has provided no permanent rest rooms, no visitor center, no potable water system, no general transportation plan, and only the beginnings of any plans for these essential facilities.

On the other hand, there are many *advantages of National Park Service management for the Preserve. The Park Service would:*

- bring almost 100 years of experience with managing a wide variety of landscapes specializing in scientifically based land and visitor management services;
- integrate the Preserve into the National Park System budget process through the Department of the Interior;
- provide comprehensive land and visitor management planning by developing a general management plan for the Preserve and then preparing specific management plans for visitor services, natural resource management, and for programs such as grazing, fire, and cultural resources protection;
- provide visitor services using their long experience with management of the public;
- provide a professional management infrastructure to support the staff at the VCNP, replacing the current volunteer political appointees;
- continue to provide sensitive protection for active Native American cultural use sites, prehistoric sites, and protection and restoration of historic sites on the Preserve;
- provide law enforcement and fire management integrated with larger natural resource management and protection programs included in a general management plan; and
- provide science-based natural resource management, continuing and enhancing the science and education programs developed under Dr. Bob Parmenter at the VCNP. Bandelier has a larger scientific staff than the Caldera for a smaller area.

Our proposed legislation will help to ensure that this magnificent national preserve will be permanently protected and professionally managed by the National Park Service for the benefit and enjoyment of all citizens of New Mexico, the nation, and visitors from around the world. Managed by the National Park Service, the Preserve would begin to realize the promise of being a genuine economic asset for neighboring communities, including Los Alamos.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Council, we commend the Los Alamos County Council for developing this resolution and ask only that it be strengthened and made explicit in its endorsement of National Park Service management of the Valles Caldera National Preserve.

-----Original Message-----

From: Martin MacRoberts [mailto:mdjm@comcast.net]

Sent: Thursday, February 25, 2010 8:33 AM

To: Stewart, Kelly

Subject: Valles Caldera

I believe that the Valles Caldera and Bandelier National Monument should be combined into a single entity in the NPS. The two share a common boundary.

Combining them would eliminate the need for separate management and lower the total personnel requirements.

Martin MacRoberts
2982 Orange
Los Alamos NM
mdjm@comcast.net

From: Susan Schauer [mailto:schauer@cybermesa.com]
Sent: Friday, February 26, 2010 5:42 PM
To: Stewart, Kelly
Subject: valles caldera

Hi Kelly,

My family – four of us – would like the Valles Caldera to become part of the National Park system and be administered by the National Park Service.

We think the current arrangement has not made the Valles accessible enough for recreational use for New Mexicans. The property is open only at very limited and specific times and for very limited and specific uses. The charge to enter the property is very high: \$10 per person for a family to hike is ridiculous! In New Mexico, a poor state, this will keep all the locals out (except those from Los Alamos). We can get into Bandelier for \$10 per car, and if we buy an annual pass, it is much, much less. We understand that this was an experiment, and that the Trust had to re-invent the wheel in a sense, and that they worked very hard and made a lot of progress. However, it shows no sign of providing, in the foreseeable future, the accessibility to the public that the original legislation mandated.

The NPS has the manpower, management skills and specialized knowledge that we believe would allow them to do a good job managing the Valle and keeping it open for use by the public at a reasonable charge.

We hope the Los Alamos County Council will vote in favor of this change in management of the Valle Caldera.

Thank you!

Susan Schauer

-----Original Message-----

From: JEAN M DEWART [mailto:jdewart@q.com]

Sent: Saturday, February 27, 2010 6:09 PM

To: ~County Council

Cc: senator_bingaman@bingaman.senate.gov; senator_tom_udall@tomudall.senate.gov

Subject: Future of the Valles Calder National Preserve

Hello Los Alamos County Council,

I would like to voice my strong support for adopting the Valles Caldera into the National Park System as a Preserve.

The natural values to be preserved in the Valles Caldera are consistent with the mission and management expertise of the National Park Service. The National Park Service has evaluated the Valles Caldera for suitability and feasibility for becoming part of the NPS system - and they conclude that it is a very appropriate change.

The Trust has made a valient effort to become financially self-sustaining, but they have not succeeded. Many of the ideas that have been put forth by the Trust for financial sustainability do not contribute to the preservation of the natural values for which the Valles was originally designated. In addition, the political appointment of the Board of Trustees is not consistent with managing the Preserve for the greatest good of the public.

Los Alamos County is in a unique position to support the development of the Valles Caldera as a National Park Preserve. The community is very interested in increasing opportunities for the public to participate in outdoor recreation in the Valles, and Los Alamos is a natural "gate-way" city. Community members are active participants in the volunteer organizations supporting the Valles Caldera and are active participants in all of the activities now provided.

I hope the County Council will positively support the Valles Caldera becoming a National Park Preserve.

Thank you.

Jean Dewart
300 Manhattan Loop
Los Alamos, NM 87544

-----Original Message-----

From: Robert McFarland [mailto:rdmcf@gte.net]

Sent: Monday, March 01, 2010 10:24 AM

To: Stewart, Kelly

Subject: Valles Caldera

I have believed from the beginning that the National Park Service should manage Valles Caldera. They are the only organization that would protect it as it should be. Since being a volunteer at Bandelier National Monument I have been struck by the great geologic connection between Bandelier and the Valles Caldera. Combining the two into a single National Park would give the public a complete picture of the geological history and the human history that resulted.

Robert D McFarland
Los Alamos

-----Original Message-----

From: Bill Partain [mailto:wpartain@swcp.com]

Sent: Monday, March 01, 2010 5:58 PM

To: Stewart, Kelly

Subject: Valles Caldera future

The most vocal people want to turn VC into some type of Park Monument to be administered by Bandelier.

MY ADVICE: DON'T DO IT. LET IT GO TO THE NFS LIKE IT IS SUPPOSED TO WHEN IT FAILS.

Los Alamos really, really needs a major access to the rim trail. That would draw a ton of people. The views are stupendous and it's a hard hike from the bottom. If it goes to Monument they will just zoom past just like they do now for Bandelier.

If people promise this rim access to Los Alamos DON'T BELIEVE THEM! It's all about power. They are the Wilderness Crowd. They will do everything they can to limit access to the few that are young enough that they can backpack in from the bottom.

The people behind the Park Monument idea are lying about fishing and hunting access. They will tie it up with some many regulations that no one will be willing to go through the hassles.

The VC is not pristine. It's been overgrazed by 1000's of sheep and cattle for the past 300 years. It's been logged numerous times. The pristine label is again the let's lock everything up into wilderness.

And ironically, the first thing that Bandelier would do if they acquire it is to BURN IT.

My wife and I vote for transferring it to the Santa Fe National Forest.

William L. Partain
Barbara Partain
83 Barcelona Ave.
Los Alamos, NM 87544

-----Original Message-----

From: Bill Partain [mailto:wpartain@swcp.com]

Sent: Friday, March 05, 2010 7:24 PM

To: Stewart, Kelly

Subject: Pipeline Rd. Protection

Los Alamos depends on the gas line that crosses the Valle Caldera. A take over by the U.S. Parks could place maintenance and future upgrades of this important infrastructure in jeopardy.

As a side note there is a decent road from Los Alamos up to the rim of the Valle Caldera and then down into the VC via switchbacks, across the VC and a connection with a NFS road on the west side of VC. This could be one of the gateways to the important rim trail that would draw visitors to Los Alamos.

Another issue that Los Alamos should be aware of is the potential to lose either more of the VC to the surrounding Pueblos. When VC was formed the whole NE corner of the Baca grant was given to the Santa Clara Pueblo. You can bet with another change in status all the surrounding pueblos will want a share. Unfortunately, when the pueblos get ownership they prohibit any public use.

The National Forest Service is the best steward for this piece of property.

William L. Partain
83 Barcelona Ave.
Los Alamos, NM 87544

-----Original Message-----

From: Stephen Blair [mailto:stephengblair@msn.com]

Sent: Monday, March 01, 2010 7:38 PM

To: Stewart, Kelly

Subject: Valles Caldera National Preserve comments

Kelly (and the Los Alamos County Council),

This email is to strongly endorse the idea that the Valles Caldera National Preserve be transitioned to the National Park Service.

I believe that the simplest solution is to make the Caldera part of Bandelier National Monument, but that should be a decision left to the Park Service.

I believe that such a move is in the best interest of the Preserve as well as all Americans that may use the Caldera. While a worthy idea, the Valles Caldera Trust idea has simply not worked out as hoped, and options such as the National Forest Service would simply not result in sustained management of the area in a natural state. I am aware that some Native Americans do not favor the NPS, but feel that is it important that the area be open to use by both Native Americans and others.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment.

Stephen Blair
115 La Vista Drive
White Rock, NM

-----Original Message-----

From: Mary Barr [mailto:barr_mary@yahoo.com]

Sent: Tuesday, March 02, 2010 4:20 PM

To: Stewart, Kelly

Subject: Valles Calderas administration

My two bits on administration of Valle Calderas:

- 1) as a stand-alone entity, it is doomed to failure
- 2) maintained as a 'historical park', i.e. as working ranch, it would fit within the NPS envelope, but this would limit access of the general public to wide swaths of land
- 3) its traditional use for cattle grazing & fishing fit within the Forest Service envelope. Incorporation into Santa Fe National Forest would allow the highest level of public access.

So, my first choice is NFS. There may be some good drivers to separate the 'ranch' sections for historical park and the remainder for SF national forest.

Thanks,
Mary Barr
2163 34th St.

-----Original Message-----

From: Gary Salzman [mailto:gcsalzman@cybermesa.com]

Sent: Wednesday, March 03, 2010 7:37 AM

To: Stewart, Kelly

Cc: Joan Salzman

Subject: Future of Valle Caldera

Kelly,

My wife, Joan, and I are hikers, a group that has been systematically excluded or severely restricted in access to the Valle. I vote strongly in favor of the National Park Service taking over the Valle Caldera. We wrote a hiking book in 2006 entitled "Hiking Adventures in Northern New Mexico." We indicated in the book that the Valle was closed to hikers. That is still effectively true. The few hikes allowed are pathetic. The current Valle operators occasionally allow mountain bikers full access to the Valle. This is never done for hikers.

The "science" center that the current operators set up in Jemez Springs could easily be replicated in the National Park Service (NPS) Visitor Center located in the Valle.

The NPS could run a low budget operation (in conjunction with Bandelier Nat. Mon.) by putting porta potties at trailheads and letting hikers have full access to the Valle. This is likely to bring a lot more visitors to the Valle than the present restricted operation.

The present operators just don't get it. They believe that they are providing public access, but they aren't.

Best regards.

Gary Salzman
505.672.1943

From: Greg Miliatis [mailto:greg@streamline-corp.com]
Sent: Wednesday, March 03, 2010 4:49 PM
To: Stewart, Kelly
Subject: Valles Caldera National Preserve management plan

Although I won't be able to attend the upcoming hearings on the management of the Valles Caldera National Preserve, I'd like to voice my thoughts.

In order to better protect the Valles Caldera National Preserve, management should be transferred to the National Park Service. Valles Caldera has a wealth of recreation opportunities, and the Park Service is uniquely qualified to manage this jewel of New Mexico.

Since its purchase, the Valles Caldera has allowed only extremely limited recreational opportunities, which is a shame, given its majestic scenery and wildlife. Transferring the management to the Park Service would open up this wonderful place, while protecting its resources.

Thank you for your consideration.

Greg Miliatis

From: Silver, Robert [mailto:rsilver@nmsu.edu]

Sent: Wednesday, March 03, 2010 5:35 PM

To: Stewart, Kelly

Cc: Jeff Arterburn

Subject: Comments to the Los Alamos County Council is considering Valles Caldera National Preserve resolution

Dear Kelly Stewart

I wanted to comment on the proposed discussion by Los Alamos County Council for new management of the Valles Caldera National Preserve for the record.

- All parties agree that the Valles Caldera is unique. I believe that is because it was well taken care in private ownership as well as by the Valles Caldera Preserve. That it is not self sufficient is not all that bad given its other attributes. As a taxpayer I would support a subsidy for the Preserve.
- Given the U.S. Forest Service's mediocre performance elsewhere to adequately protect public lands, I would strongly disagree with allowing that agency to manage the Preserve.
- I disagree that under new management hunting and fishing would improve. Hunting and fishing opportunities are already excellent and one reason is that there are access restrictions. While these restrictions are unpopular, they work to the benefit of the wildlife, which why the Preserve is unique.
- I enjoy the hunting and fishing under the current restrictions offered by the Preserve and I would not support turning the Preserve into a National Park if hunting and fishing would be prohibited as it is in many national parks.
- I strongly disagree with opening the Preserve to full access such as in a national forest. Open access would quickly ruin the features that make the Preserve so special. Please keep the Preserve accessible with reasonable accommodations so that the average taxpayer may enjoy it today and in the future.

Sincerely yours

Robert Silver

3255 Arrowhead Rd

Las Cruces, NM 88011

From: Zane Dohner [mailto:zhdoehner@yahoo.com]
Sent: Wednesday, March 03, 2010 6:58 PM
To: Stewart, Kelly
Subject: Valles Caldera Preserve

Yes, I encourage and support your resolution that the management of the Valles Caldera Preserve be transferred to the US National Parks or Forest Service and that hunting and fishing be allowed on the Preserve.

Yours,
Cosmos Dohner

From: Matt Montoya [mailto:matt@soonerbandb.com]
Sent: Thursday, March 04, 2010 11:43 AM
To: Stewart, Kelly
Cc: dusty perry; robert sr espinoza
Subject: Valles Caldera

Kelly

I have hunted the Valles Caldera 3 times. I have been fortunate to take 3 bulls in the caldera with archery equipment. I am very concerned with what I have seen happening to the elk herd in the Caldera since 2004, 2006, and 2008. Also went in 2009 with a buddy who drew a hunt. I have seen a degradation of the hunt quality and elk herd due to pressure from certain organizations on the Caldera and it affects the sportsman in a negative way. So much in fact I may not put in for hunts in the Caldera anymore.

I would prefer it moved into the National Forest with a Wilderness designation only, or left to be ran as a working cattle ranch with predator control as it was intended to be with a Wilderness access (Like the San Pedro Parks).

Predators are taking over the Caldera. Bears and coyotes. No working cattle ranch on the face of the planet does not control the predator population. This is a disservice to the Sportsman who support the Caldera. Because of the Calderas tendency to pacify the special interest groups pressuring the Caldera to limit the actions that support the elk herd I would vote for a National Forest Designation with no vehicle travel in the VC allowed; except for official forest use and patrol.

Please let me know of any other way I can voice my opinion in this matter?

Thanks
Matt

Matthew Montoya
Sooner B&B
www.soonerbandb.com
505-320-8436

From: Rick Light [mailto:ricklight.rxl@gmail.com]

Sent: Thursday, March 04, 2010 10:17 AM

To: ~County Council

Cc: senator_bingaman@bingaman.senate.gov; senator_tom_udall@tomudall.senate.gov

Subject: Future of the Valles Caldera National Preserve

Dear Los Alamos County Council:

As President of the Los Alamos Mountaineers, I am writing to express our sincere support for the transition of management of the Valles Caldera National Preserve into the National Park Service.

The Los Alamos Mountaineers is an organization founded in 1952 dedicated to the safe and responsible enjoyment of mountaineering and other outdoor activities. We wish to express our gratitude to U.S. Senators Jeff Bingaman and Tom Udall for requesting on June 25, 2009, that the National Park Service assess the potential for including the Valles Caldera National Preserve in the National Park System. We believe that the National Park Service is far more experienced and better equipped to manage public lands than is the current management organization of the Preserve.

According to the Valles Caldera Preserve's web site, "The Valles Caldera Trust was created by the Valles Caldera Preservation Act of 2000 to preserve and protect the historic Baca Ranch of New Mexico's Jemez Mountains. The groundbreaking legislation that provided for the federal purchase of this 89,000-acre ranch nestled inside a volcanic caldera also created a unique experiment in public land management." The Los Alamos Mountaineers consider this land management experiment to be a failure because it has consistently been overly restrictive to public access and recreational uses of the land.

Precious little has been accomplished since August 2002 when the Preserve's board of trustees first took responsibility for managing the Preserve to improve access for recreational activities such as hiking, climbing, cross country skiing, mountain biking, and camping. Under the current management practices, recreational use continues to be tightly constrained and monitored to a suffocating extent in a costly and inefficient manner. There has been very little investment in trails, roads, parking, or visitor facilities, perhaps reflecting management priorities other than recreation and public access. To be clear, we do NOT want this beautiful backcountry area to become a motor vehicle playground. It's wildness, scenic beauty, and remarkable quiet need to be protected while allowing for more low-impact recreational use.

In our experience, National Parks, Monuments, and Preserves offer a far superior experience for visitors with a proper balance between the needs for conservation, protection, access, and recreation.

The Los Alamos Mountaineers supports the efforts of Caldera Action, <http://www.caldera-action.org/> a local organization that advocates for increased access and the restoration and protection of the Valles Caldera Preserve. We support their advocacy for a transition to Park Service management, however, in our view there is already ample emphasis on restoration and protection, but insufficient emphasis on access for recreational uses of the land.

We sincerely hope the Council will actively support and promote the Valles Caldera becoming a National Park Preserve.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely yours,

Rick Light, President, Los Alamos Mountaineers
2571 36th Street
Los Alamos, NM 87544
505-662-7710

From: **Robert Gibson** <rgibson@swcp.com>
Date: Fri, Mar 5, 2010 at 6:34 AM
Subject: Re: Future of the Valles Caldera National Preserve
To: Rick Light <ricklight.rxl@gmail.com>

Rick,

Thank you for sharing the views of the LA Mountaineers on this topic. While I can agree with most, I have one comment and one question. As an experimentalist, I rarely regard an experiment from which something is learned as a "failure." Experiments often do not produce the expected or desired outcome. That's why they are called experiments.

My question is more important and one with which I have wrestled since the initial discussions of the Federal government acquiring the Baca Ranch in the late 90's. One of the reasons the VC is such a special place is that it has not been "loved to death" by unrestricted public access, as have some areas of many of our national parks. NPS generally does not restrict access. How would the Mountaineers suggest managing the VC to allow much greater or totally open access without adversely affecting the experience?

--Robert

From: Rick Light [<mailto:ricklight.rxl@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, March 10, 2010 4:25 PM
To: Gibson, Robert
Cc: ~County Council
Subject: Re: Future of the Valles Caldera National Preserve - reply requested

Councillor Robert Gibson
Los Alamos County Council
Dear Robert,

Thank you very much for your reply to the Mountaineers' letter in support of transitioning the management of the Valles Caldera Preserve to the National Park Service. I appreciate your concern about unrestricted public access, and your request to the Mountaineers for suggestions in this regard. I forwarded your question to the Club's Board of Directors, and this letter is a summary of our responses.

First I should say that the Mountaineers also share your concern about the need to protect and preserve special places like the Valles Caldera. Specifically, the Mountaineers do not favor "unrestricted access," or "free access," or similar approaches that could damage this important natural resource. We are only asking for the right to access the Preserve for low-impact use at any reasonable time and place by paying a reasonable fee, in the same way that we currently access all other public lands. We offer the following suggestions for ensuring that increased access doesn't lead to overuse:

1. As we understand it, legislation that establishes a national preserve under the NPS includes a list of allowed and dis-allowed uses that the NPS must follow in drafting management regulations. In anticipation of this process, the Mountaineers have provided their suggestions for appropriate allowed low-impact uses such as hiking, backpacking, camping, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, rock climbing, mountain biking, and an (already proposed) winter/summer hut system. The Mountaineers have also suggested that motorized sports should not be allowed.

2. We also appreciate the need for limiting the number of people in very popular and fragile areas, and we suggest that this also be done in the Valles Caldera, if needed in the future. In general we believe that the NPS does a good job of managing public access to public resources. Specifically, the NPS often does restrict access to prevent overuse. For example, I personally enjoy leading annual Mountaineers backpack trips to the Grand Canyon, and to obtain a permit for backcountry areas I have to make reservations well in advance. But note that the NPS (unlike the Valles Caldera) does not restrict when or where we can go, it just sets a limit on the number of people who can be there at any given time.

3. We would also suggest that the NPS identify areas of overuse in existing national parks, determine the root causes of the damage, and then suggest solutions or controls that could have prevented the damage. These controls could then be examined for application to the Valles Caldera.

4. Lastly, we would suggest that if the NPS assumes management of the Valles Caldera, they should divide the preserve into different areas based on the appropriate level of public usage. This is already done in most NPS parks and preserves, where day-use areas are set up to accommodate most of the visitors. These areas are the most impacted, but are usually small in comparison with the overall area of each park. In the Grand Canyon, for example, their management policies preserve the backcountry nature of remote areas by not supporting maintained trails or visitor facilities in those areas, yet in the high-volume visitor-center area (Grand Canyon Village) there are good paved roads, facilities, and visitor information available. In the case of the Valles Caldera, the geography is well-suited to a similar approach. There is a good opportunity to design a modern day-use area in the Valle Grande, near State Route 4, that can accommodate the vast majority of users and take pressure off the rest of the area. The back valleys are naturally isolated from the Valle Grande by Redondo Peak and its outlying hills. These areas could be managed for hiking, camping, and other quiet, low-impact activities, perhaps using a system similar to that of the Grand Canyon backcountry access permits. (Note that the Trust's new proposed Public Access and Use Plan, as described on their website, includes low-impact options like our suggestion, but also includes some worrisome high-impact options that would provide paved roads for easy public access deep into the Preserve. We, however, do not support paved roads beyond an established high-volume visitor-center area.) We hope that these comments and suggestions are helpful to you. And again, we hope that you and your fellow Councillors can adopt a strong resolution in favor of this transfer.

Sincerely Yours,

Rick Light, President, Los Alamos Mountaineers

-----Original Message-----

From: William Stanley [mailto:pkanc@comcast.net]

Sent: Thursday, March 04, 2010 2:38 PM

To: Stewart, Kelly

Subject: Valles Caldera management

To whom it may concern:

I was pleased to learn that the Los Alamos County Council is considering a resolution supporting a change in the management model for the VCNP. While I have great respect for the efforts of the trustees and staff of the Preserve to simultaneously protect this natural resource and generate a sufficient income stream to offset costs of operation, as required by the laws establishing the Preserve, there are numerous indications that the funding model for the Preserve is inappropriate and unsustainable. As a sportsman who has hunted and skied in the VCNP, I view it as an irreplaceable public resource that deserves to be publicly supported, not on emergency basis but in a stable and predictable fashion. It is a public good: we should support and manage it as such.

Many of the revenue-generating strategies of the VCNP will never prosper. For example, since the VCNP does not control any low-altitude winter pasture, its summer-time cattle operations depend on leasing to a large number of small scale low-land cattle operators. Cattle arrive in the Valle Grande in highly variable condition and health, many are ill-adapted to high altitude, and the VCNP spends a great deal of staff time and money "doctoring" the animals. Thus we have an activity that imposes stress on the natural system of the VCNP, that will never produce a sufficient net revenue stream to support the protection, upkeep, and management of the Preserve.

The structural defects in the funding scheme for the Preserve have resulted in a variety of proposals to increase revenue by such means as making hunting tags on the Preserve equivalent to private land tags, effectively making them available only to the very wealthy. We must not allow this public resource to be privatized in this manner, simply to satisfy the demands of a financing scheme that was never appropriate to an extensive, rural, wild-country preserve.

Thank you for considering these views.

William Stanley
1431 Aliso Dr. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87110

From: George Jennings Jr. [mailto:georgejenningsjr@live.com]
Sent: Friday, March 05, 2010 5:47 AM
To: Stewart, Kelly
Subject: VCNP Comment

Kelly, 3/5/2010

YES Park Service AS A PRESERVE ONLY. Bandalier is way too restrictive! Preserve can allow camping, campfires, etc. etc.

My VCNP/R objectives:

- Allow the public to experience a true wild environment at several levels: car, foot, horse, bike, backpacking/camping.
- Allow wilderness enthusiasts opportunity to explore, photograph, and spend time wandering around the Preserve.
- Wildlife management
- Wilderness appreciation.
- Sustainable operation - nature, preservation
- Allow access only after completion of a VCNP User's Training Class, scaled to fit the type of access - less for cars, more for horses and mountain bikes, more for overnight backpackers, etc.
- **The Valle Vidal is a good model. If the NPS can't meet that model, I favor the USFS using that model (or similar).

A couple of follow-on thoughts to my 9/9 Comment

Additional VCNP Objective*:

- Foster Wilderness and Nature Awareness and Appreciation.
- Foster appreciation of the heritage of the great American West - of the Indians, pioneers, cowboys, and ancient inhabitants of the VCNP areas, as well as of the geography, geology, climate and history of the VCNP Ranch.

None of the plans get to a level of implementation detail on how to accomplish the Objectives above.

Backpacking is a good start - even if along the extensive trails and roads network - but off the trail access is truly important to be able to explore and get to know and appreciate the VCNP. At a minimum, this could be accomplished by allowing backpacking access along the trails/roads systems, and allowing off-trail day trips for exploring, when it will not interfere with the VCNP wildlife management objective. Likewise on horseback. However, not for off-trail mountain biking.

A good question is how will groups - like Boy Scout Troops (I'm Scoutmaster of Los Alamos Troop 222) - be handled. The Valle Vidal not only allows them but has allowed them to build trails, including a mountain bike trail, and establish 4 "encampments", thus fulfilling their management objectives. While I'm not sure what the "right" policy would be on group backpacking and camping, it certainly fits with the above objective - as this may be the only way a lot of boys and young men and women ever get to experience the wild VCNP Ranch.

Secondly, campfires are important when conditions permit. Not only do they remove excessive dead and down fuelwood from camping areas, but they are essential to the American outdoor camping experience, as done by our forebears, including indians, pioneers, cowboys, explorers, etc. In the training session for backpackers they can be informed about existing campsites and (use of established) fire rings, how to put out a campfire, and how to know if they are permitted (especially important for pay station access), etc. But to just say - as does Bandalier National

Park - there will be no campfires - is a disservice to the public (and Bandalier itself destroyed far more forest by its own improper decision to do a controlled burn against the indicators and advise of others in May of 2000 than any camper's campfire). Yes Santa Fe National Forest has experienced some forest fire due to camper campfires - but the difference is that even German tourists (who caused one by leaving a campfire burning when they left) would be educated in a **pre-access VCNP** training session, and will sign in and out prior to accessing the precious VCNP.

Thanks for taking the comments!

==George==

From: Sallye Sibbitt [mailto:sallyes@mosaic-arch.com]
Sent: Friday, March 05, 2010 12:21 PM
To: Stewart, Kelly
Subject: Valles Caldera National Preserve

Dear Ms. Stewart,

The Valles Caldera is a fascinating and beautiful area and I love and treasure it, as do many New Mexicans. I believe the Valles Caldera should become a National Park, to increase access and enjoyment for all, to preserve the Valles for future generations, and I believe it will provide economic benefits for the surrounding towns.

Please enter my views into the public record.

Thank you for your attention.

--

Sallye Sibbitt
939 Tewa Loop
Los Alamos, NM 87544

From: Sallye Sibbitt [mailto:sallyes@mosaic-arch.com]
Sent: Friday, March 05, 2010 2:10 PM
To: Stewart, Kelly
Subject: Valles Caldera Preserve

Dr Ms. Stewart:

I forgot to mention in my previous message, the activities I would like to be allowed if the Valles becomes a National Park or National Preserve. Hiking, biking, snowshoeing, sleigh rides, cross-country skiing, horse riding, scientific study and education, dogs on leash in a designated area or designated trails, and camping in designated areas. Special events would be cool - moonlight walks, etc.

I don't want cattle grazing due to damage to the area beyond the value of the fees earned (why should my tax dollars subsidize a rancher??) and I don't want hunting because, as a hiker, I worry that I will get shot during hunting season, so I can't utilize the natural areas as I would like during some of the most beautiful weather of the year.

Sallye Sibbitt
939 Tewa Loop
Los Alamos, NM

From: MAHLON WILSON [mailto:MAHLONTW@MSN.COM]
Sent: Friday, March 05, 2010 1:38 PM
To: Stewart, Kelly
Subject: Valles Caldera management.

Please enter the below comment into the record.

I recommend that the Valles become an addition to the National Forest system.

The Valles is one big fire trap waiting for the proper combination of wind and lightning. It is so overgrown with trees that it is virtually impossible to walk off-trail, the downed timber and brush have squeezed out the grasses. There are few birds and rodents that can live in this environment. The meadows have waist-high grass in the fall that could burn too quickly to fight.

The logging and grazing must return to the Valles to reduce the fuel load and the forest service is the only organization with the mentality to manage in the proper fashion. The Forest Service utilizes the forests for their productive value and this helps support the local communities.

The Park Service has a mentality of lock the door and let nature do its thing. Consequently too many trees, big fires, and too much big game.

It is time to admit that the Valles experiment is a failure, and always will be.

Mahlon Wilson

Mahlon T. Wilson
4 Arbol Ct.
Los Alamos NM 87544-3803
mahlontw@msn.com
505-672-3349
Mahlon cell 505-670-1183

-----Original Message-----

From: David Bruce [mailto:dbruce86@gmail.com]

Sent: Friday, March 05, 2010 4:07 PM

To: Stewart, Kelly

Subject: Valles Caldera Comment

Kelly:

I am a frequent user of Valles Caldera thorough the various events conducted by the Trust.

Although I am satisfied with management of the Valles by the Trust, I would prefer the following management options:

1. The National Park Service: If managed like Bandelier, probably a good balance of preservation, conservation, and public access control.
2. The National Forest Service: In some ways, my least favorite. The NFS's "Land of Many Uses" approach might let too many people do too many things in the Valles. However, see #3 below.
3. The Valles Caldera Trust: Cannot see how the Trust can remain financially viable.

Regards,

--

David Bruce
580 Camino Encantado
Los Alamos, NM
505-662-3790

-----Original Message-----

From: Amy Galbraith [mailto:amyegalbraith@gmail.com]

Sent: Friday, March 05, 2010 5:29 PM

To: Stewart, Kelly

Subject: Valles Caldera

I'm writing to support changing the Valles Caldera to be managed by the National Park Service. It definitely should be preserved and the uncertain current status isn't very good.

Thank you,

Amy Galbraith
1485 Camino Redondo
Los Alamos, NM

-----Original Message-----

From: John Sarracino [mailto:marcerino@vla.com]

Sent: Friday, March 05, 2010 5:30 PM

To: Stewart, Kelly

Subject: Valles Caldera

I support having the National Park Service take over management of the Valles Caldera. The Valles Caldera Trust has not earned my trust.

John Sarracino

From: Ross Lemons [mailto:rossandnancy@worldnet.att.net]

Sent: Friday, March 05, 2010 7:16 PM

To: Stewart, Kelly

Subject: Valles Caldera National Preserve

Los Alamos County Council,

I think every effort should be made to transition the management of the Valles Caldera National Preserve to the U.S. National Park System. At present it does not serve the public well, nor is it likely to become financially self sufficient in the reasonable future.

The National Park System is very effective in preserving and managing scenic areas for the public. It has a wealth of experience and a size that makes economies of scale possible. Combining the Valles Caldera National Preserve with Bandelier National Monument into a National Park has a lot of merit from my point of view. The historical sites in Los Alamos related to the Manhattan Project might also be included, providing a history from the cliff dwellers to the atomic age.

Sincerely,

Ross Lemons

-----Original Message-----

From: charles r walthers [mailto:dichuck1@juno.com]

Sent: Friday, March 05, 2010 7:39 PM

To: Stewart, Kelly

Cc: dichuck1@juno.com; davidb_87544@yahoo.com

Subject: VCNP Management

Dear LA Council Members,

My wife Dianne and myself both prefer a transfer of management responsibility to the NPS. Accordingly, we believe the management philosophy should be one of preserving animal and plant systems and allowing public access for activities consistent with that goal. The original goal of an economically self sustaining entity we believe to be flawed because economic development and preservation are inherently contradictory. Try making Yosemite self sustaining without allowing condo development.

Chuck and Diane Walther, 44 Timber Ridge

From: brixig@aol.com [mailto:brixig@aol.com]
Sent: Saturday, March 06, 2010 4:50 AM
To: Stewart, Kelly
Subject: Valles Caldera

I favor the National Park Service to administrate the Valles Caldera.

Brigitte Graser
625 Totavi
Los Alamos, NM 87544

From: RICHARD DONNA YACTOR [mailto:dyactor@msn.com]

Sent: Saturday, March 06, 2010 9:30 AM

To: Stewart, Kelly

Subject: comment on valles caldera future management

Thanks for putting your email address in the weekly county newsletter.

I favor the Forest Service managing the Valles Caldera. It should become part of the Santa Fe National Forest.

The current Valles Caldera management is overly concerned with saving the land from the people and keeping their jobs. All they have done is put up better barbed wire fence to keep people out. Years ago, I requested that they consider allowing a hikers to go from the ski area to the top of canon de valle and from the top of canon bonito to camp may. I never got a response.

Hiking almost anywhere north and west of Los Alamos, one can easily observe the extensive and long lasting devastation due to the Cerro Grande fire that was started by the inept pyromaniacs in the National Park Service who thought creating a meadow was more important than the town of Los Alamos. They should not be rewarded for their past mistakes by getting more land to burn.

The Forest Service is responsive to the needs and desires of all people, not only tree huggers. They manage the land reasonably well. I can only hike the devastated forest service land north and west of town or further west in the Jemez with my dog because dogs are not allowed in Bandelier or the Valles Caldera probably because they are not a native species like coyotes. The National Park Service apparently wants to be able to burn only pristine land. I guess that the Valles Caldera tree huggers just prefer coyotes.

Thanks,

Richard Yactor
1980 Camino Redondo
Los Alamos, NM
505-662-9525
March 6, 2010

-----Original Message-----

From: John R. Davey [mailto:davey@lanl.gov]

Sent: Sunday, March 07, 2010 2:31 PM

To: Stewart, Kelly

Subject: Valles Caldera future status

Kelly,

I am responding as a Los Alamos resident of 18 years, Pajarito Ski Club member of 18 years, and as a avid hiker, fisherman, and X-country skier. I would eventually like to see the Valles Caldera operated by and become a part of the National Park system.

I think the previous management, study period, and operation has simply resulted in mis-spent money, generation of entropy, and bureaucratic paralysis. And for the longest time the Valles Caldera was inaccessible to widespread low impact public use. It was controlled and restricted like private land.

I think the National Park Service would be the best managers/operators of the Valles caldera.

Thanks,

John Davey
1720 17th St.
Los Alamos, NM 87544

From: ep365@aol.com [mailto:ep365@aol.com]
Sent: Tuesday, March 09, 2010 8:35 AM
To: Stewart, Kelly
Subject: Valles Caldera Comments

Hi Kelly-

I feel the same way today I have for the past 10 years, even more so having seen the trust at work.. I think the Valles should become part of the National Forest and opened up to the public that payed for it. I resent the fact that it has been closed for years and I must pay to access it on the trust's schedule. This land is not pristine, it was heavily logged in the past. Open it up. Why can't I bike or hike or ski up pipeline road and continue on into the Valle? Why is that a crime?

My 2 cents worth.

thx, ep.

Eric Powers
3232 Woodland Road
Los Alamos, NM 87544
412-8984

-----Original Message-----

From: Sarah Gustafson [mailto:sarahgus@cybermesa.com]

Sent: Tuesday, March 09, 2010 12:28 PM

To: ~County Council; Wismer, Michael; Stover, Sharon; Bowman, Nona; Chiravalle, Vincent; Gibson, Robert; Phelps, Ralph; Wheeler, Mike

Cc: Stewart, Kelly; Diane Noveroske

Subject: VCNP Management comments

Dear Councilors:

I will not be able to attend tonight's VCNP Listening Session, so am sending a few comments by e-mail. The VCNP is one of my favorite places on the planet, so I have watched its management with great interest over the years as an avid hiker, volunteer with the Preserve recreation program, and environmental educator with PEEC. It is the latter hat I wear as I write to you today.

Since 2007, I have helped teach PEEC's Nature Odyssey, a week-long day camp for elementary-aged kids in the VCNP. I'd like to share a couple of Nature Odyssey anecdotes that speak to weaknesses inherent in the current management model.

(But first, two disclaimers: 1) I am writing as a private citizen, not as an official PEEC representative, and 2) VNCP's staff have been extremely supportive of PEEC's environmental education programs. Broader efforts at public education are limited not by their expertise or dedication, but by the management constraints they operate under.)

Before we take the kids into the Preserve each summer, we spend a little time talking to them about how special the place is and how important it is for us to have as little impact as possible, particularly in the streams and stream-side habitats. Basically, we try to give them an ethical foundation for their behavior so they can explore, study, and interact with the environment in a way that does not disturb it. We revisit this theme every day.

When we arrived in Valle Grande on the last day of camp a few years ago, a couple hundred cows were milling in and around the East Fork where the entry road crosses the river. After hearing the "walk-softly-in-the-stream-bed" message repeatedly, the kids were upset to see the cows pooping in the water and trampling the sides of the stream bed. As they asked questions like "How come the cows get to walk in the water without being careful?" "How come the cows get to wander anywhere they want?" and "How come the cows get to stay overnight?" it became clear that, although the kids were concerned about the impact the cattle were having, they were just as concerned with the relative lack of restrictions the cows enjoyed. Basically, they were jealous of the cattle's visitor experience!

Each year, we have a little closing party on the last day of camp. During one, we asked the children to share what they thought was special about the Preserve. This led to a remarkable discussion about

Preserve management and how to make the place available to more people without losing those qualities—such as solitude and lack of development—that make it so special.

At one point, the kids started talking about the relative costs and benefits of taking a family vacation in the Valles Caldera versus going to Disneyland. A 10-year-old girl summarized the discussion by saying "You can build a Disneyland anywhere, but you can't just build another Caldera if you ruin this one." Based on the extensive commercial development proposed by the Trust last fall, I question whether the current Trustees—operating under the constraints of the current legislation—can take to heart this simple but salient point.

I believe resource management, environmental education, and public access/visitor services would all be improved under the tried-and-true management model of the National Park Service. Therefore, I urge you to support the transfer of VCNP to the NPS.

Thank you for soliciting public comment on this matter!

--Sarah Gustafson
52 Osito Street, Los Alamos, NM 87544

From: David Moss [mailto:wdmoss53@gmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, March 09, 2010 7:37 PM
To: Stewart, Kelly
Subject: Valles Caldera

Friday 03/09/2010

The first time I rode in a car through the Valle Grande from Los Alamos to Albuquerque, it was a dirt road heading southwest in the mountains after the Dome turn off and onto the Town of Jemez Springs. I was seven.

The pavement resumed there. My dad who worked at the labs told me that stretch of road, which we had drove on, was the Baca Ranch (a land grant). This was in 1960. A hard road was constructed connecting these two places and sometimes on the weekend we would go watch the construction progress if we were not skiing. After this the land on either side of the roadway was off limits.

Bill Clinton came to town, and then surprised us with buying the Baca Ranch, with Taxpayer's money, cool I get to go fishing and camping there with my kids and wife after 47 years of looking at it only. It's the peoples land now. (In fairness all of my time was not spent here with going to school, paying and all, and trying the OUTSIDE NM for a while). But I love the fact that I grew up here, worked here with a great job, and being productive for the country, still live here. We need more space for this 'Family fishing and camping adventure' and this sounded like the ticket. The existing campsites in the mountains are full all the time now. After the fire I could **not** take my kids to the LA reservoir to fish anymore after work. Ten years later, the land on either side of the roadway is still off limits.

I connected to the Valles Caldera web site tonight.

Fishing.

First available time is May 22, 2010, a Saturday with only 4 lucky fishing permits issued (you need to book reservations in advance), after sending your money in you still need to buy a NM fishing license only available in the town of WR. What a deal. Snow Rides?? What no paint ball? They have a hike for 15 people on Wednesday. Send money, they will guild you.

I do not mind paying money to buy a reasonable user fee (five bucks) for day or camping use, or an annual pass for trash pick, restrooms and maintenance, but please let me camp, fish or hike, and walk around on any given day. Maybe! Let me decide at 3 in the afternoon that I want go there and do it.

The place is being run like a resort.

Give me a BREAK! People want more space. With a increased population in the USA, world, which we have, this needed. We already bought this place. Ten Years Ago.

Everybody wants health care reform. At least I can see the land I want to access. Did someone other than the American Congress and Senate do this to us ??

Change needs to happen. Open the Valles Caldera to the people who pay taxes, all hikers, campers, bikers, fisher-persons, hunters and photographers. The country wants to experience good clean streams, water, open land, sky, animals, stars, campfire smoke and a great outdoors breakfast with bacon and all.

I still cannot go to the reservoir in Los Alamos after the FIRE. I once could even camp there in the old days.

The Kids are all gone and done with college and do not live here anymore. Maybe our grandchildren can enjoy something when visiting here.

And be sure to vote. The NPS Preserve option seems to be better.

PS. We still need to allow hunting of big and small game on this American land. It's our heritage.

Just post the hunting times and date for safety reasons. Most people are done camping at this time of the year anyway. Maybe, close down some sections open to the public for a month, those without hunting license.

If I owned the land I would Dam up the stream and make a big Lake. Use my boat close to home and fish.

Thanks. Just kidding.

Wm David Moss
2920 Arizona

From: Lynn and Norbert Ensslin [mailto:lynn.norbert@comcast.net]
Sent: Wednesday, March 10, 2010 9:28 AM
To: Stewart, Kelly
Subject: Comments on the Valles Caldera National Preserve

Kelly, thank you for the opportunity to send you comments on the proposed transfer of the Valles Caldera National Preserve to the Park Service. The comments below are those that I gave last night at the listening session in White Rock. Because you were taking notes, you may not need these, but here they are just in case they are useful to you. Thanks, Norbert Ensslin.

Comments given at the County Council listening session on the Valle Grande, White Rock, March 9, 2010, by Norbert Ensslin, 3097 Woodland, Los Alamos

All of the outdoor people in Los Alamos that I know, including most members of the Los Alamos Mountaineers, many members of the Pajarito Ski Club, and members of the Nordic Ski Club, have been frustrated for many years by the lack of access to the Valles Caldera. In fairness, access to the Trust has improved somewhat in the past few years. The recreation schedule now provides some days for mountain biking, hiking, and cross country skiing. Some of the Mountaineers have also interacted directly with the Recreation Program Manager for the Trust, and he has been able to approve some special cross-country ski tours. We are very grateful for his support, and indeed every Valles Caldera staff member that we have met has been very friendly and helpful. We hope to do more ski tours in the future, and we have been asked to do some cross-country ski clinics next year at the Valle Grande.

However, it is clear to those of us who have interacted with the Trust that they have to operate within some very strict constraints. From our point of view, the most serious constraint is that every entry into the Preserve must be guided, monitored, or controlled in some fashion because the Preserve is not under the government's umbrella insurance policy. Other constraints on the time, place, and exact location of any trip are sometimes very restrictive. Indeed, this is surely the most restrictive public land anywhere in the country!

What would it be like to visit Bandelier under the same restrictions? For example, suppose that you would like to visit Bandelier with some friends or family members. You could go to Frijoles Canyon freely, but only on weekends. If you wanted to hike elsewhere, you would need to schedule this as a special event, apply a month in advance, and have a minimum of 10 people for safety and to make it worthwhile for the Park to allow the event. If access to Bandelier were this restrictive, it would attract far fewer visitors and be of little benefit to the local economy.

My personal impression is that the Trust model is caught between two mutually contradictory pressures: (a) the desire to strictly limit access to avoid lawsuits or other problems, and (b) the desire to increase access to try to achieve financial self-sufficiency. These two contradictory drivers help explain why the Trust sometimes gives the unpleasant impression of being a private land preserve that caters to visitors who pay a lot of money and who are not held to the same restrictions. AND, it suggests that just changing the law so that the Trust doesn't have to be financially self-sufficient won't help us gain access, because it will remove the main incentive to increase visitation.

The Trust was purchased with public funds, and is supposed to be available to the public. Specifically, the Mountaineers would like the right to access the Preserve for low-impact use at any reasonable time and place by paying a fee, in the same way that we currently visit Bandelier. Because we can't do that now, it is almost as if the Valles Caldera doesn't exist! Everyone I know goes to Chama, Taos, or Colorado all the time, but rarely tries to go to the Valle.

For these reasons, the Mountaineers have endorsed the efforts of Caldera Action to have the Trust become a preserve under the National Park System. We have written letters to our Congressional delegation, and are continuing to write letters. Some of us have joined Caldera Action. We have signed the petition proposing the transfer, and I'm hear to speak on behalf of the transfer. I urge the County Council to help to bring about this transfer by approving a strong resolution in favor.

From: Jack & Darlene [mailto:jdcrane@valornet.com]
Sent: Wednesday, March 10, 2010 2:12 PM
To: Stewart, Kelly
Subject: Listening Session #2, Los Alamos County Council

Council Members

I am Jack Crane and live on Sulphur Creek on the southwest corner of the Preserve. I am a board member of Los Amigos de Valles Caldera and have done volunteer work on the Preserve since 2001. I had intended to submit a letter for your review that Los Amigos recently sent to our State Senators listing what we feel are deficiencies in the NPS study; for my own reasons I did not. The letter will be submitted separately before March 14. It can be found on our website www.losamigosdevallescaldera.org if you wish to preview it. I do have several personal comments concerning the meeting.

1. The NPS was requested to study the feasibility of taking the Preserve into their system and did not respond to the fourth criterion of their policy requirements as outlined in item one of the Los Amigos letter to the Senators. Why NPS might not make that evaluation is obvious from a study of that criterion.
2. Speakers generally do not understand the enabling legislation of the Preserve and the full restrictions it places on management; they only respond to how they want it to be.
3. As one person basically stated "I want what I want and I want it now" and they think the NPS is the solution to their wants. They do not know and perhaps do not care that it could take years to do the studies required for NEPA action and years to obtain funds to operate, maintain, renovate and construct the infrastructure the NPS regulations might require in order to serve their desire for generally unrestricted access. As one NPS representative too simply stated, legislation would need to be passed and studies made before they can determine how it would be managed. In the end people may not get what they thought they were going to get.
4. I would like to see the concept of the Trust continue with more than a "tweaking" of the legislation. I am not too concerned with the political appointee aspect of the Trustees and a larger number might be more cumbersome. Energy should be focused on:
 - a. removing or changing the self-sufficiency requirement
 - b. simplifying funding by including the Preserve as a unit in the normal federal budget allocation process probably within the National Forest System
 - c. resolve the liability issue which is so restrictive to Preserve activities

Ten years (eight really) is not a long time for the Preserve to have started from scratch and accomplish their charge. We should give the Preserve ample time and resources to fulfill their unique mission in land management.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jack Crane

From: Barbara Calef [mailto:bfcalef@yahoo.com]

Sent: Wednesday, March 10, 2010 3:12 PM

To: Stewart, Kelly

Subject: Valles Caldera

I attended the meeting about the future of the Valles Caldera on Thursday, but had to leave before the public comment period. I would like to say that I am very dissatisfied with the way the Preserve is currently being run.

While the personnel I have encountered have always been courteous and eager to share information with me and my friends, I feel that access is much too restrictive and too expensive. We should be able to purchase an annual pass, or, better yet, to use our National Parks Pass. I want to hike and ski on existing trails, and would like also to see some more trails cleared, especially on Rabbit Ridge all the way to Rabbit Mountain.

I do not want tax money spent on fancy lodgings. Please support the move to put the Valles Caldera under the supervision of the Park Service!

Barbara Calef
4777 Sandia Dr.
Los Alamos

From: Barbara Johnson [mailto:lunah3@comcast.net]
Sent: Thursday, March 11, 2010 2:21 PM
To: Stewart, Kelly
Subject: Letter from Los Amigos de Valles Caldera

We are submitting the attached copy of the letter we sent to our U.S. Senators regarding management of the Valles Caldera National Preserve in response to your request for comments. Thank you for your consideration.

Barbara Johnson, Vice Chair
Los Amigos de Valles Caldera
3250 La Paz Lane
Santa Fe, NM 87507
505-474-6689
lunah3@comcast.net

Supporting the Valles Caldera National Preserve
for present and future generations

February 24, 2010

HAND DELIVERED

The Honorable Jeff Bingaman
119 East Marcy St., Suite 101
Santa Fe, NM 87501

The Honorable Tom Udall
120 So. Federal Place
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Re: Valles Caldera National Preserve

Dear Senators Bingaman and Udall:

Los Amigos de Valles Caldera has been following the responses to your joint letter requesting the National Park Service to review the feasibility of the Service taking over management of the Valles Caldera National Preserve.

First and foremost, we would like you to understand that Los Amigos will always work to volunteer its time and resources to the improvement of the Preserve no matter what management avenue the Federal Government chooses for its operation, e.g., National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Forest Service, or as presently envisioned, the Valles Caldera Trust.

However, we are concerned about several things with regard to a potential change in management:

One. The fourth and final criterion used by the Park Service in determining whether they should manage an important natural resource when it is already being managed by another federal agency was noticeably left unanswered. According to National Park Service Management Policies 2006: "To receive a favorable recommendation from the Service, a proposed addition to the national park system must (1) possess nationally significant natural or cultural resources, (2) be a suitable addition to the system, (3) be a feasible addition to the system, and (4) require direct NPS management instead of protection by other public agencies or the private sector. These criteria are designed to ensure that the national park system includes only the most outstanding examples of the nation's natural and cultural resources. These criteria also recognize that there are other management alternatives for preserving the nation's outstanding resources. . . . There are many excellent examples of the successful management of important natural and cultural resources by other public agencies, private conservation organizations, and individuals. The National Park Service applauds these accomplishments and actively encourages the expansion of conservation activities by state, local, and private entities and by other federal agencies. Unless direct NPS management of a studied area is identified as the clearly superior alternative, the Service will recommend that one or more of these other entities assume a lead management role, and that the area not receive national park system status." According to the letter transmitting the latest NPS report, "The scope of this report is limited to the first three criteria, and the need to be leased, rented, or granted to anyone on such terms as to interfere with free access to them by the public: Provided, however, That the Secretary of the Interior may, under such rules and regulations and on such terms as he may prescribe, grant the privilege to graze live stock within any national park, monument, or reservation herein referred to when in his judgment such use is not detrimental to the primary purpose for which such park, monument, or reservation was created, . . ." (16 U.S.C. 3). In other words, hunting or

grazing rights could be allowed only for 30 years and may be abrogated at any time if it was decided that it interfered with “free access.” In the case of the Preserve, such an action would be likely to bring protracted legal wrangling. Of course, if hunting or grazing is allowed, it will probably bring legal wrangling as well from groups like Caldera Action.

Four. The land use conflicts cited above also include the use of parks by Native Americans for their traditional cultural and religious practices. The Park Service has a regrettable history with regard to relations with Native Americans as detailed in such books as *Indian Country, God’s Country: Native Americans and the National Parks* by Philip Burnham (Island Press, 2000) or *American Indians and National Parks*, by Keller and Turek (University of Arizona Press, 1998). We are concerned that our friends at Jemez and Santa Clara Pueblos or other affected pueblos will no longer have the access to their cultural and religious sites that the Trust has given them. We know that Jemez Pueblo has already expressed their concern to you about this. In addition, “A highly polarized debate has emerged in the conservation literature about whether national parks in lesser developed countries should follow a strict protectionist model or find ways to accommodate the development and livelihood needs of local people. A number of social science critiques of national park practice and policy in lesser developed countries have argued that one of the chief problems facing national parks in particular, and biodiversity conservation in general, has been the USA national park model, often termed the ‘Yellowstone model’. This model, in which local and indigenous people and uses have been excluded from parks, has been blamed for harming local people, providing benefits to developed country interests at the expense of local people, high costs of park protection, and ineffective biodiversity conservation (Machlis & Tichnell 1985; West & Brechin 1991; Pimbert & Pretty 1995).” [The USA national parks in international perspective: have we learned the wrong lesson? **Environmental Conservation** (2001), 28:4:300-304, Cambridge University Press]. (Emphasis added.) These are still relevant concerns for Northern New Mexico today, as I am sure you know.

Let us re-emphasize that our sole objective is to maximize the most effective management system for the Preserve, particularly since over the past few years, the existing management has produced a marked improvement in the resource from its condition when purchased in 2000. As there are arguably at least five to ten more years under the current statutory scheme, it would seem that there is no apparent need for a “rush to judgment” on changing the management system. We look forward to an in-depth discussion of this matter with you, as we are all concerned with the overall health of this very important and beautiful natural resource.

Very truly yours,
Doug Fraser, Chair
Board of Directors
Los Amigos de Valles Caldera

Board of Directors:

Doug Fraser, Chair 505/474-7615;
Barbara H. Johnson, Vice Chair 505/474-6689;
Anthony R. Armijo, Secretary 575/834-7359;
Larry Icerman, Treasurer 505/473-2102
Ben Chavarri 505/753-7326
Jim Counce 575/829-3885
Jack Crane 575/829-3648
Peggy Gautier 505/988-7307
Steve Stoddard 505/662-0482
3250 La Paz Lane □ Santa Fe, New Mexico 87507 □ 505/474-6689

-----Original Message-----

From: A,E,A Jacobson [mailto:beepbeep@cybermesa.com]

Sent: Saturday, March 13, 2010 10:39 PM

To: Stewart, Kelly

Subject: Comments on Valles Caldera National Preserve

Congress enacted Public Law 106-248, which is referred to as the enabling legislation, in the year 2000. As a result, 89,000 acres of unique-on-planet-Earth geography and geology was saved from being sub-divided into vacation home lots and summer-use-only golf courses. It was, I quote, "An Act To authorize the acquisition of the Valles Caldera, to provide for an effective land and wildlife management program for this resource within the Department of Agriculture, and for other purposes."

Potentially, not much of interest to anyone other than timber harvesters, summer cattle grazers, and turkey and elk hunters is implied by that acquisition authorization unless "for other purposes" is investigated.

In the category of "other purposes," scientific research activities associated with the Preserve have grown to exceed what any reasonable person could have imagined in 2000. The opposite is true for purpose (3) of the title "to provide opportunities for public recreation." To date, only two trails, Coyote Call and Valle Grande, whose total distance is approximately 4 miles, and on neither of which will a hiker be farther than 600 meters from State Road 4, are open to spontaneous hiking. And to a person not familiar with the area or who has not looked at the Preserve's website, the trailhead signs imply they are not open for spontaneous hiking. The signs' wording is "Access Only with a Valid VCNP Permit." Phone number and website address are shown on the signs, but neither is useful at those points unless one has a satellite telephone. Across State Road 4 from the Valle Grande trailhead a sign on the fence reads "Valles Caldera National Preserve Temporarily Closed to the Public." It is one of dozens or hundreds of such signs attached to the Preserve's boundary fencing.

The Trustees lost sight of the fact that Public Law 106-248 requires that making money is secondary to meeting other requirements of the law. As a result they have tried valiantly for seven and a half years to figure out ways to make money. All things considered, it may be good that they have made that a high priority. Otherwise, the discussion now taking place might not have occurred until the 15th year, the 18th year, or possibly beyond 20 years. The Trustees have now acknowledged that, short of turning the Preserve into a high end amusement park, it cannot be financially self-sustaining. It's time to entrust oversight of the 89,000 acres to the National Park Service. Whether it should be a Preserve, a Park with grazing and hunting allowed, whether Bandelier National Monument at the same time should have its status elevated to a Park, perhaps with hunting allowed to protect archaeological resources from elk damage, I can't say. These options should all be discussed. But, after 10 years of government ownership and with the additional knowledge of the place gained in that time, it is now clear that the Preserve is more appropriately located under the umbrella of the Interior Department than the Department of Agriculture.

Why it was placed under the Department of Agriculture in the first place is perhaps because the people writing the legislation thought Baca Location No. 1 was a ranch. It is not now and never has been a ranch. The term "ranch" means year-round animal husbandry. The only ranching function ever provided by the third of the property that is grassland is summer forage for mostly sheep until the end of WWII, and mostly for cattle since then. The grassland can be used for summer high-altitude rangeland research and high-altitude domestic livestock research and for summer pasture for local livestock producers if the replacement legislation is written to permit those activities.

Activities on the Preserve are supposed to be fairly accessible to all. The elk hunting and turkey hunting are not. Looking at the VCNP's web page this evening and adding up numbers, a person able to hunt with bow and arrow, muzzleloader, and rifle can purchase 200 lottery tickets for Fall 2010 hunts for a total cost of \$3500.00 (The more you're willing to pay, the less it costs per ticket.) The probability of a person holding 200 tickets being drawn for a hunt is considerably better than for a person who is financially able to purchase only 1 mature bull or either sex ticket for \$30.00 or an antlerless ticket for \$20.00. The elk belong to the public and the opportunity to hunt should not be limited by one's financial means. This is a direct result of the Trust's selective reading of the enabling legislation that financial self-sufficiency is required at the expense of the other goals.

It's even worse for turkey. Total elk permits is 250. Total number of turkeys that can be harvested this spring is 19. Eight permits can be purchased outright for \$1950.00 each. One permit is awarded to the highest bidder at an Auction in Reno, Nevada. The other 10 permits are available to purchasers of lottery tickets priced at \$20.00 each. There is no limit to the number of tickets an individual may purchase. Just like the elk, these are public birds on public property, and all citizens should have an equal chance at the limited opportunities to hunt them. The \$1950.00 price includes room and board on the Preserve. Lodging and food on public land should not be competing with providers in the communities of La Cueva, Jemez Springs, and Los Alamos.

It's time to replace the Trust experiment. It hasn't worked. If financial self-sufficiency, the reason for starting the experiment, has been determined by the Trust not to be possible, there's no reason to continue with the experiment.

-----Original Message-----

From: JEAN M DEWART [mailto:jdewart@q.com]

Sent: Sunday, March 14, 2010 10:19 AM

To: Stewart, Kelly

Subject: Los Alamos Ski Club comments on the future management of the Valles Caldera Preserve

To: Los Alamos County Council;

You have requested community comments concerning the future management of the Valles Caldera National Preserve.

The Los Alamos Ski Club owns and operates the Pajarito Mountain Ski Area, adjacent to the Valles Caldera National Preserve. We support the proposal for the Valles Caldera National Preserve to become a National Park Service Preserve.

As you know, the Los Alamos Ski Club has been working with Los Alamos County and the NM Department of Tourism to increase the number of visitors to our Ski Area, to support our organizational goal of promoting skiing and snowboarding. Our mutual goals include increasing visitors to the County and the Ski Area, both from within New Mexico and from throughout the United States. We have teamed with the Valles Caldera on both skiing and hiking events, and we are planning to increase and improve these opportunities in the future.

We believe that management by the National Park Service will enhance the usage of the Valles Caldera and this will result in a benefit to Pajarito Mountain Ski Area and Los Alamos County as the adjacent communities. The status of the Valles Caldera as a part of the National Park System is a natural marketing opportunity to draw additional visitors to Los Alamos County and Pajarito Mountain Ski Area - supporting goals of both the Ski Area and the County.

We also believe that if the Valles Caldera becomes a National Park Service Preserve, the Valles will benefit from being associated with a national organization focused on public participation. This focus will be mutually beneficial to Pajarito Mountain Ski Area and Los Alamos County in providing quality recreation opportunities.

Therefore, the Los Alamos Ski Club Board of Directors recommend that Los Alamos County formally supports the proposal to bring the Valles Caldera National Preserve into management by the National Park Service as a NPS Preserve. We thank you for the opportunity to provide input to this process.

Sincerely,

Jean Dewart, President, Los Alamos Ski Club

-----Original Message-----

From: Adelaide Jacobson [mailto:jacobean@cybermesa.com]

Sent: Sunday, March 14, 2010 11:40 AM

To: Stewart, Kelly

Subject: Valles Caldera

Please count me among the many residents of Los Alamos County who believe that the National Park Service is the best entity to govern the Valles Caldera National Preserve. I ask my Los Alamos elected officials to support legislation that would effect this change.

Thank you.

From: James Fitzgibbon [mailto:fitz72212@yahoo.com]
Sent: Sunday, March 14, 2010 3:47 PM
To: Stewart, Kelly
Subject: Valles Caldera

Kelly,

I would like to see the National Park Service operate the Valles caldera. The access would be more available to me than under the current operations and high fees and select times of access.

I vote for the Park Service for operation of the Valles Caldera.

Thank you,

Jim Fitzgibbon

From: Eva [mailto:evap1162@yahoo.com]
Sent: Sunday, March 14, 2010 4:03 PM
To: Stewart, Kelly
Subject: Valles Cardera



I support the National Parks and Recreational to be the Owners of the Valles Caldera. No More of what we have now. Please let the National Park take care of it. We want to be able to use it, and enjoy it.

From: TK Thompson [mailto:tktinm@msn.com]
Sent: Saturday, March 13, 2010 2:45 PM
To: Johnson, Stephani
Cc: Steve Stoddard
Subject: Letter to LA County Council re Valles Caldera

March 13, 2010

Topic: Valles Caldera Listening Sessions

To: Members of the Los Alamos County Council

After attending the March 4 session in Los Alamos and the March 9 session in White Rock it became obvious to us that the Caldera Action advocates are presenting many half truths, if not outright falsehoods, in their arguments advocating the National Park Service takeover the management of the Valles Caldera National Preserve. Several of the ones we noticed are discussed below; the Caldera Action proponent's comments are shown in ***bold italics*** followed by our corrections.

"...financial issues are a second priority..." – The issue of financial self-sufficiency and the ability to charge use fees are mentioned in at least 6 places in the founding legislation which can hardly be considered of "secondary importance". It is considered one of the founding principles of the originating legislation and nowhere is labeled a secondary objective, and most probably was a key point leading to the Congressional approval of the legislation.

"...the preserve has not implemented its own fire and police..." - Dennis Trujillo, in the Tuesday March 9 listening session, pointed out that the founding legislation specifically calls out using neighboring US Forest Service fire and police functions which have been implemented for some time.

"...The Preserve still does not have domestic water availability..." - Dennis Trujillo also pointed out that a potable water system is operational in the ranch headquarters area.

"...there are no permanent restroom facilities at the Valles Grande Staging Area..." – Vault toilets, similar to what's used by the US Forest Service, have been installed at the Valles Grande Staging Area and are in use. These have a waste vault that is buried ~5 to 6 feet in the ground and are considered permanent installations.

"...you could only mountain bike on the Preserve only 2 times last summer..." – There were 2 major Cruise the Caldera mountain bike weekends last summer where 80 miles of trails were open to bikers along with having 6 -10 aid stations scattered throughout the Preserve for their benefit and safety. Additionally, mountain biking was available every other weekend at the Banco Bonito Staging Area this past summer.

This list is by no means exhaustive or complete; it just illustrates some of the inaccurate statements used to justify the National Park Service takeover of the Valles Caldera National Preserve.

It is our experience, while working as volunteers and employees of the Preserve, that most people are extremely satisfied with their Preserve experience as illustrated by their voluntary donations and

financial support of Preserve activities. The Preserve last year generated about 20% of their operating expenses from activity and use fees, etc. National Parks such as Yellowstone only generate about 12 % of their expenses. This, to us illustrates that the Valles Caldera experiment in public land management is proving at least partially successful in what was originally intended by Congress!

It appears to us that the anti-Preserve people have their basic problems with the founding legislation and are trying to blame the Valles Caldera Trust for this. Such statements as "...a 100 million dollar cow pasture..." cannot be blamed on the Trust, which is just carrying out the "working ranch" directives in the founding legislation.

The Trust has an exemplary relationship with local Pueblos as mandated in the founding legislation. Their environmental restoration activities on the Preserve have received national and international attention, with monetary grants being received for the continuation of these important activities.

We believe that Los Alamos County Council has a fiduciary duty to the citizens to act in the best interest of the County. To this end, we request Council to verify the accuracy and truthfulness of all statements made by the advocates of the National Park Service takeover of the Valles Caldera National Preserve before joining them in any legislative endeavor. To not do this would be an abrogation of your duty to be fair and impartial overseers of Los Alamos County! We have copied this letter to Caldera Action in the hope they use more facts rather than fiction in their arguments against the Valles Caldera Trust!

Respectfully,

Steven Stoddard
T. K. Thompson

From: Dorothy Hoard [mailto:dorothyh@swcp.com]
Sent: Sunday, March 14, 2010 5:02 PM
To: Stewart, Kelly
Subject: Comments to Council on Valles Caldera management

March 14, 2009

To: Los Alamos County Council
From: Dorothy Hoard
11 Los Arboles Los Alamos

SUBJECT: Management of the Valles Caldera National Preserve

I sincerely urge the council to support transfer of the Preserve to the National Park Service, which has the most appropriate mandate for managing federal lands with extraordinary scenic, cultural, and scientific values.

I am forced to conclude that the present system of a board consisting primarily of private citizens is unworkable for something as complex as the management of federal land. I have attended many (not all) board meetings since the board was first constituted in 2001. I found the meetings to be discouraging and often dysfunctional. Even worse, I cannot conceive improvement in the performance of subsequent boards even with some modifications to the existing enabling legislation that presently requires the Preserve to become self-sufficient.

I feel that management of federal land is so burdened with regulatory requirements and constraints, not to mention the conflicting expectations of the owner-citizens, that it is unreasonable to expect a set of amateurs- no matter how intelligent and well meaning- to perform competently. Board terms are for four years, limited to a maximum of two terms; only one person has ever been reappointed to a second term. Terms are staggered so that every two years, a new board membership is constituted, which seems to set back any momentum of the previous board. The board does have two federal professional managers. In talking with them, I find they feel their presence is only as advisors. They admit that they have not had any influence in directing management decisions of the board other than to tell members what they cannot do under federal laws.

Here are some examples in support of my perceptions:

The first board was tasked with setting up the most basic management structure. It could not perform that task in its four years. Original and subsequent management decisions have been based on the needs of the moment with no logical overarching guidance plan and no priorities. The board has not yet set up a general management plan, a forest management plan, a recreation management plan, a fire management plan. It has a so-called interpretive plan and business plan on its website, but these are simply long lists of unprioritized options with no timelines or mandates.

To this point, it seems that the boards have been dominated by the personality of the chairman. The **first** chairman was an ardent conservationist who set the tone of limited public access. The **second** chairman was a rancher who sincerely believed that the Preserve could become self-supporting from grazing fees; she directed all the resources of the Preserve toward that end. We had open arguments at board meeting concerning board priorities. It seemed that the attitude of the board was that the citizens of America paid \$101 million for a seasonal cow pasture. The recreation program for public access was left to its own devices and suffered under

this regime. We describe the **present** board as the business board. The leaders actively advocate extensive recreational development in the caldera. This board did put out an Environmental Impact Statement now in process. Public reaction seems to oppose the development approach as inappropriate for the Jemez Mountains, but the boards have a past record of ignoring public preferences.

Lack of a fire management plan ought to be of grave concern to the council. I have had opportunities to investigate the east wall of the caldera just over the rim from Los Alamos County. It has very heavy fuel loads; a wildfire there could well advance over the ridge into the Lab and townsite, given the vegetational recovery after the Cerro Grande Fire. I have been to several board meetings where staff presented fire plans. (We never had the opportunity to read them.) The board found some disagreement to the plans and, as far as the public could tell, shelved them. I was told by an authoritative source that when the board discovered that the Forest Service was obliged by contract to put out every fire on the Preserve at the Forest Service expense, the board felt that was a suitable fire plan. (At the White Rock Council Listening Session, Ranch Manager Dennis Trujillo said that a Fire Management Plan will be released soon. I hope so and urge Council to have your fire people read it carefully.)

The most common complaint I hear, which was well-articulated at the two Council Listening Sessions, is lack of public access. The Preserve insists that it has adequate public recreation. However, its public access model is very limited and the board shows no sign of broadening that model. Guided tours are very good and not offered elsewhere in the area except the ruins tour in Bandelier. Conversely, unguided tours on the Preserve are regimented and restricted in area and especially in time. Hikers are loaded in a van, dropped off at a trailhead, and told they will be picked up in four hours. Some can make the hike in two hours and have to wait; other can not make the hike in four hours so keep the other hikers waiting. Until 2009, fishermen were delivered in vans and left on their piece of stream despite thunderstorms. Only hunters have free access within designated hunting units. The board claims similar recreational activities are available on surrounding federal lands, so the Preserve is under no obligation to provide them. This is not so. There are no comparable expansive grassland in the Jemez Mountains; it is the grasslands that attract the most public interest.

When we, the public attending board meetings, disagreed with a board policy, we have been told face to face we that it doesn't matter what we think. That statement is entirely correct. The board is not accountable to the President of the U.S. who appoints them, the Secretary of Agriculture whose agency owns the land, the New Mexico Congressional delegation (which member, if they disagree?) who find funding, or public citizens who pay the bills. It doesn't matter what any of us think about the management of this particular piece of public land.

I feel this situation is untenable with no remedy feasible under the current management regime.

Kevin Holsapple
LA **From:** Kevin Holsapple [mailto:kevin@losalamos.org]
Sent: Sunday, March 14, 2010 5:59 PM
To: Stewart, Kelly
Cc: ~County Council; Mortillaro, Anthony
Subject: Input for Valles Caldera management item

Hi Kelly --

I believe that you are the collector of the input that was requested by today -- please accept attached input

Kevin

CDC/Los Alamos Chamber of Commerce
190 Central Park Square
Los Alamos, NM 87544
kevin@losalamos.org
505-661-4806

visit our websites:

<http://www.fyiLA.com> -- Los Alamos area search engine, news, events, coupons, jobs, business info, links

<http://visit.losalamos.com> -- Los Alamos area online visitor guide

<http://locate.losalamos.com> -- Los Alamos area online relocation guide

<http://LABizInfo.com> -- Los Alamos area online business resource guide

<http://locateinLosAlamos.com> -- Los Alamos area online business relocation info & assistance

190 Central Park Square, PO Box 1206
Los Alamos, NM 87544
505-662-0001 (fax) 505-662-0099
lacdc@losalamos.org

March 14, 2010

Los Alamos County Council

PO Box 30

Los Alamos, NM 87544

Subject: Comment Concerning Future Management of Valles Caldera

Dear Council:

Please accept our organization's comment on the question of the future management of the Valles Caldera property. Our organization operates several programs having strong interest in this matter. The Los Alamos Chamber of Commerce is an association of about 300 businesses, organizations, and individuals interested in positive community and economic development and our Los Alamos Meeting and Visitor Bureau program operates visitor centers in Los Alamos and White Rock and is an important resource for understanding visitation and tourism in our area.

We believe that the most desirable management option coinciding with the interests of the Los Alamos community is for the Valles Caldera to become a National Park managed by the National Park Service. This option presents several advantages:

The National Park Service option is by far the best from the standpoint of promoting visitation and tourism to the area. The NPS "arrowhead" is a powerful brand that far exceeds those of forest service and the

Valles Caldera Trust in terms of attracting interest and visitation.

□ The NPS mission of “safeguarding America’s special places” stands in contrast with the role of the Forest Service in consumptive use of resources. In contrast with the VCNP Trust, the NPS works with small businesses to provide concession opportunities whereas the VCNP is motivated to develop captive services that do not provide such opportunities. These attributes of the NPS are best aligned among the three management options with our community’s interests in realizing economic benefit from visitation and tourism

□ In our experience in Los Alamos County, the involvement of the NPS in our community has far exceeded that of the other proposed management entities. Based on this experience, we believe that it is more likely that the NPS would be interested in working closely with our community for mutual benefit.

Page 2

March 14, 2010

Please note that we do not expect the Valles Caldera to become “Los Alamoscentric” in any of the scenarios. We think that Los Alamos is a natural eastern gateway to the Valles and the Jemez Mountains just as we recognize that Jemez Pueblo and Jemez Springs are natural western gateway communities. We understand that it will be important for whatever management entity that is selected to reach out in both of these directions. We encourage that as general input regardless of the choice that is made.

We think that there is an opportunity to collaborate with the selected entity on a joint visitor center (or centers) in Los Alamos County. Such a facility would be a natural first stop for visitors to Los Alamos and would feature not only the Valles Caldera, but also Bandelier National Monument, the Bradbury Science Museum, the Los Alamos Historical Museum, the Pajarito Environmental Education Center, area Pueblos, and area recreational attractions. We are currently the operator of the visitor center here and we would welcome the opportunity to collaborate on a joint visitor center. We believe that this would enhance the visitor experience as well as enable economies of operation.

Thank you for listening to and accepting our input. Our organization stands ready to assist the County and the selected management entity for the Valles Caldera .

Sincerely,

Kevin Holsapple

Executive Director

On behalf of the Board of Directors of LACDC

-----Original Message-----

From: Steven Reneau [mailto:stevereneau@comcast.net]

Sent: Sunday, March 14, 2010 6:12 PM

To: Stewart, Kelly

Subject: VCNP

I was unable to attend the LA County public meetings on the Valles Caldera National Preserve, but am glad email comments are being solicited by the County on the preferred future management of this unique piece of ground in our backyard.

I have spent a fair bit of time on the Preserve, partly as part of a 3-person geology team preparing a new geologic map of the caldera, but also as a member of the general public (skiing and hiking). I care about this piece of the Jemez, and have been worried and disappointed about the path taken by the Trust in at least a couple ways. One is with the limited public access, after 10 years of patience (?), or impatience is perhaps a better word). The second is with the apparent emphasis on cows above people, to the detriment of the the landscape. The increased trampling and degradation in the last 2-3 years after increasing the numbers of livestock has been striking and saddening.

I think the current management structure and mission is doomed to failure, and needs to change. The rotation of trustees every 2 years, and their status as political appointees, will help ensure there is no continuity in management and frequent politically-motivated changes in management directives. Neither is good for the land. And the idea of making this area financially self-supporting, while perhaps ok in concept, will never work without massive development which would totally alter the character of the Preserve.

Transferring management of the Preserve from a politically-appointed Board to the National Park Service has many benefits and no drawbacks that I can see. The increased public access that would result from NPS management couldn't but help Los Alamos businesses from increased out-of-town and out-of-state visitation, as well as increasing the quality of recreational opportunities for residents. Because of this, I strongly encourage the County Council to support transferring management of the Preserve to the NPS.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this topic.

Steven Reneau
12 Karen Circle
White Rock

From: Greg Kendall [mailto:greg_kendall@yahoo.com]
Sent: Sunday, March 14, 2010 11:43 PM
To: ~County Council; Stewart, Kelly
Subject: Comment on Management of the Valles Caldera National Preserve

To the Los Alamos County Council,

I have volunteered very extensively with the Valles Caldera over the past six years, I've been co-director of a large scale mountain biking event there and I am the founding Vice Chairman of the Los Amigos de Valles Caldera (friends of organization). I have seen how things are done by the Trust up close and personal.

I am very much in favor of the Valles Caldera being managed by the National Park Service, specifically I am in favor of combining Bandelier Monument and the Valles Caldera National Preserve into a single unit, the Bandelier Valles Caldera National Park and Preserve. These lands should both be National Park/Preserve level. Washington has the will to do this currently. (This would be a similar structure to Colorado's recently created Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve.)

We have National Park level attractions in our own backyard that can make Los Alamos a world wide destination and yet we don't take advantage of the amazing resources that can be a huge economic benefit for our region and state. We need get active and end this failing experiment in land management and get started making this land work for our benefit and the benefit of the public at large.

The people that work for the Valles Caldera work exceptionally hard to try to make the Preserve what we all hoped it would be when it was purchased for public use. Unfortunately, the enabling legislation created a management by political whim situation. With constant turnover in Trustees (and as a result, also Executive Director turnover), the Preserve has been managed like a rudderless ship, making sharp changes in strategic direction every few years as new Trustees and Directors bluster and blow to make their mark on the Preserve. Just when some of them start to get an inkling as to how to manage public lands, their term on the Trust is over and a new babe in the woods takes the vacated seat.

The current Trustees have decided that the only way to make the Preserve pay for itself (their current overarching goal), is to turn it into a high scale "rich persons" hunting preserve, by building a luxury lodge and changing state legislation to auction off expensive hunting tags out of state. Their model is the Chama Land & Cattle Company, a profitable private lodge and hunting operation.

To show how ridiculous the whole thing is, you can look at the Glamping plan (Glamor Camping), which is where luxury tents are setup with comfy sleeping accommodations and prepared gourmet food ... think Arabian Nights in the San Antonio. These are the kinds of plans that are being hatched in what is becoming a desperate scramble to break even.

It is unfortunate that the original legislation that created the National Preserve did not put the Preserve into the National Park System as is normally expected for our national lands, but instead created a political appointee board and specified that the Preserve pay it's way by 2015. At the time, this deal was a necessary compromise in order to put the property into the public's hands and to keep it from being developed or ruined by logging and mining operations. The conditions that required this misguided compromise no longer exist. We can make things right now. We need to let National Park land managers, who's careers are dedicated to doing this job right, take over.

If we are going to demand that our public parks and preserves pay their own way then we might as well sell them off and let developers make them profitable. The whole point of public lands is that they are a shared resource supported by the taxpayers at large. The Valles Caldera can not support itself unless it is converted into a very restricted use resource for those willing to pay high prices. After ten years of existence, the Preserve is still a highly restricted use resource. Only approximately 15,000 people were counted accessing this amazing property over this last year. That is a rounding error compared to Bandelier National Monument's numbers.

If you try to hike up to the top of our Canada Bonita to see the world class views, before you can get to the views you are stopped by a barbed wire fence with a sign that reads "Valles Caldera National Preserve - Temporarily Closed." Unfortunately, under the Trust system it is temporary in the geologic time-line sense. If you try to hike from the top of Pajarito Mountain to Cerro Grande, you run into the same barbed wire and signs and you can not proceed with to an incredible world class hike of amazing views and terrain, unless you are willing to risk a \$150 fine for walking on our public land.

It's a travesty that we in Los Alamos and our guests and visitors can not hike our own mountain rims with their world class trails and views. The Trust can't figure out how to make money allowing hiking on our publicly owned rims and so they are unwilling to open this land up. Under the National Park system I can guarantee this problem will be eliminated.

Please support the National Park System management of the Valles Caldera National Preserve. Teddy Roosevelt will look down and be proud of you if you do.

Thanks,

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