

# INTRODUCTION

## *How should this document be used?*

This document, which for ease of reference we will call the framework, has four purposes. It

- Sets forth the long-term goals that the Valles Caldera Trust (VCT) has adopted for its stewardship of the Valles Caldera National Preserve (VCNP);
- Sketches the range of possible programs the trust will consider implementing in pursuit of those goals;
- Provides strategic guidance and sets priorities for the design, development, and implementation of the trust's programs; and
- Shares with the interested public key information about the preserve and the trust in order to contribute to constructive and open dialogue about the preserve and its management.

The framework is intended to describe issues and options central to the evolving management of the preserve. It is not intended to treat those matters in detail, let alone resolve them—those are tasks that

will require thorough, project-by-project analysis. The trust will perform this analysis in accordance with the internal planning procedures it has adopted, which are discussed in chapter 5. These procedures will in turn guide the trust's fulfillment of its obligations under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other laws. Because it sets forth the core values and goals that the trust's programs must honor, this framework should be considered the starting point for those analyses. Although the framework constitutes only a first step in the development of detailed programs, the ecological and cultural significance of the VCNP and the uniqueness of the VCT as a model for public land management make it an important first step.

The clearest expression of the trust's values is to be found in the management principles it has adopted, which are reproduced in the box on page 13. These principles are an essential part of the

foundation on which this framework is built, and their development was a signal event in the early history of the trust.

In the late winter and spring of 2001, as one of its first official acts, the board of the Valles Caldera Trust initiated a series of seven public “listening sessions” in communities throughout the region. The board held two listening sessions in Albuquerque and one each in the Jemez Valley, Santa Fe, Los Alamos, Española, and Ghost Ranch. The board’s purpose was to learn as much as possible about the hopes people held for the preserve and to solicit ideas about the kinds of goals and programs that should dominate management of the preserve. Digests of those listening sessions are available on the trust’s Web site at [www.vallescaldera.gov](http://www.vallescaldera.gov).

In late April 2001, as the listening tour was drawing to a close, the board held a retreat at Bandelier National Monument (heavy snowmelt prevented use of the preserve) to reflect on the commentary it had received at the listening sessions and to explore areas of general agreement among board members. In the course of the Bandelier retreat, the trustees discovered that they were substantially united in the set of values that they wished to bring to the task of management. They expressed these values as a draft of 10 management principles,

which they periodically revisited over the ensuing months. Ultimately, having made only minor changes to clarify the original draft, the board formally adopted the management principles at its public meeting on December 13, 2001.

The board believes that these principles should guide the evaluation of management decisions relating to the preserve and that the principles themselves should inform and unify the programs of the preserve.

In these management principles the board expresses appreciation for the complexity of the preserve. The members acknowledge the richness of the land’s cultural and ecological character, and they implicitly conclude that the best way to respect and conserve that richness is by approaching the challenges of management with an ethic of restraint. In general, this means starting programs on a small scale, expanding them carefully, and monitoring their impacts alertly as development proceeds. In this kind of approach, every significant management undertaking becomes a kind of experiment, and the trust hopes that its management will be seen in exactly this light. In fact, readers will find that the word *experiment* occurs many times in this document. Congress explicitly called for development of “an experimental management regime” for the preserve

## MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES OF THE VALLES CALDERA TRUST

- 1. Future Generations.** We will administer the preserve with the long view in mind, directing our efforts toward the benefit of future generations.
- 2. Protection.** Recognizing that the preserve imparts a rich sense of place and qualities not to be found anywhere else, we commit ourselves to the protection of its ecological, cultural, and aesthetic integrity.
- 3. Integrity.** We will strive to achieve a high level of integrity in our stewardship of the lands, programs, and other assets in our care. This includes adopting an ethic of financial thrift and discipline and exercising good business sense.
- 4. Science and Adaptive Management.** We will exercise restraint in the implementation of all programs, basing them on sound science and adjusting them consistent with the principles of adaptive management.
- 5. Good Neighbor.** Recognizing the unique heritage of northern New Mexico's traditional cultures, we will be a good neighbor to surrounding communities, striving to avoid negative impacts from preserve activities and to generate positive impacts.
- 6. Religious Significance.** Recognizing the religious significance of the preserve to Native Americans, the trust bears a special responsibility to accommodate the religious practices of nearby tribes and pueblos and to protect sites of special significance.
- 7. Open Communication.** Recognizing the importance of clear and open communication, we commit ourselves to maintaining a productive dialogue with those who would advance the purposes of the preserve and, where appropriate, to developing partnerships with them.
- 8. Part of a Larger Whole.** Recognizing that the preserve is part of a larger ecological whole, we will cooperate with adjacent landowners and managers to achieve a healthy regional ecosystem.
- 9. Learning and Inspiration.** Recognizing the great potential of the preserve for learning and inspiration, we will strive to integrate opportunities for research, reflection, and education in the programs of the preserve.
- 10. Quality of Experience.** In providing opportunities to the public, we will emphasize quality of experience over quantity of experiences. In so doing, while we reserve the right to limit participation or to maximize revenue in certain instances, we commit ourselves to providing fair and affordable access for all permitted activities.

(see Appendix A: Valles Caldera Preservation Act, sec. 102[a]12 and [b]4), and nearly every aspect of the Valles Caldera Trust, from its overall structure to its methods of handling minor purchases, is experimental in some respect. The trust has been obliged to break new ground in a multitude of areas. This certainly holds true for its approach to planning. This framework and the program of comprehensive management of which it is a part are unique to the VCNP and have not been applied elsewhere. Members of the public accustomed to following and commenting on the plans of other federal agencies should not expect a close duplication of that experience here. Instead, they should expect to participate in an experimental effort to implement a thrifty and flexible planning process that is designed to absorb new learning rapidly and to adapt continuously to changed conditions. They should further expect a process to which they can materially contribute through constructive participation. This, at least, is the desire of the trust, and we hope that the broad community of the preserve's friends and supporters shares that desire. The process will be a success only if the trust and its stakeholders work toward these goals together.

This document is the first step toward describing two of the three

parts we will use to convey comprehensive management of the preserve. The first sections of the framework provide the initial steps toward developing the documentation we will call the "state of the preserve" (see page 133) by laying the foundation describing the resources as we currently understand them. As we gain more knowledge of the resources and their condition, we will be developing efficient methods for understanding the impact of our management on these resources. We will also be documenting that understanding through periodic revisions and updates to the "state of the preserve."

The later chapters of this document begin to formally lay out the board's strategic guidance for the trust in its management of the preserve. These are very conceptual goal statements that list the programs and projects the board feels are most important to initiate in the next several years. In most of these identified programs and projects, there are short lists of issues and questions that the board expects the trust to consider before deciding when and how to put these programs in place. This is one of the areas where the public can be most helpful to us now, by helping to identify those issues and questions that we will consider as we plan and decide if and how we are to implement these programs and

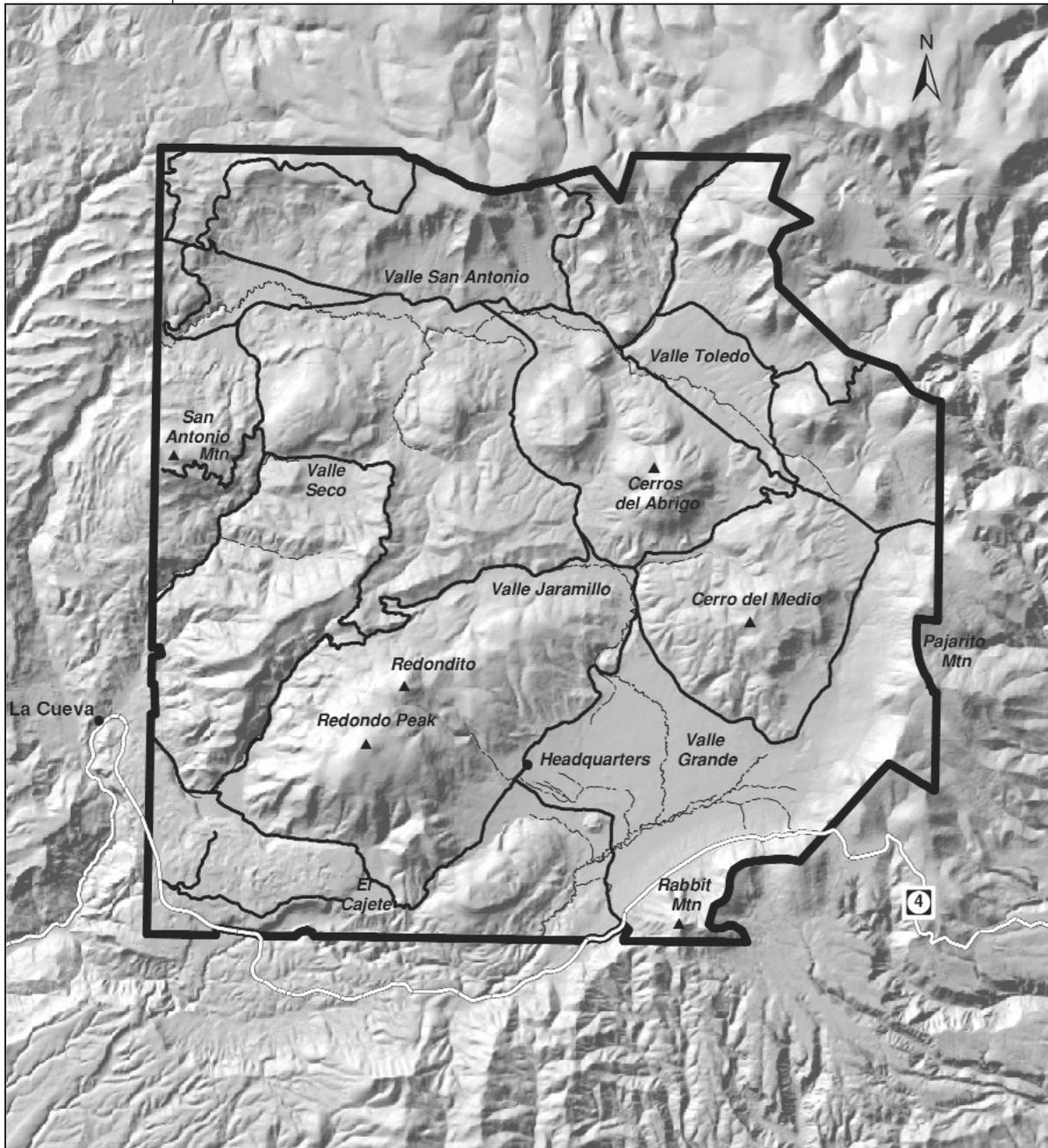
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projects. In addition, the public can help by identifying other programs and projects we should consider over the next several years.

The final part of documenting comprehensive management will be the records we keep on actions and activities we will initiate on the preserve. This documentation will be known as stewardship registers, which are described more fully later. These records will become available to the public as the trust proposes, analyzes, and implements programs and projects on the preserve.



**Gunnison's prairie dogs are common in the grasslands of the VCNP.**



### Geographic Features



-  Preserve Boundary
-  State Road 4
-  Preserve Open Roads
-  Stream, Perennial